EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Education provision in Uganda’s refugee response sites has received significant attention in recent years, with a range of learning support programs being offered. However, one significant learning problem remains unsolved - a problem that is both immediately evident in classrooms and fundamental to learning success: the lack of consistently effective communication between teachers and learners, due to a mismatch in the languages available. The language barrier facing children in the classroom is one of the major challenges to effective education among refugee children (Government of Uganda 2018: 14; Hicks and Maina 2018; Education Consortium 2019).

The mismatch in languages not only blocks effective learning, but it also puts classroom teachers in a virtually unmanageable teaching environment. They may respond by trying to find an African language that some of the learners may have in common; more often, they resort to entirely English-medium instruction. In some cases, language assistants are engaged to help in the classroom, but this solution has not produced the desired results. As a result, effective education is exceedingly difficult to achieve.

One of the most damaging pedagogical effects of this classroom language mismatch is the obstacle it poses to the acquisition of reading skills. Reading is known to be the foundation of success in formal education (Ng 2006); but research indicates that reading with meaning requires competency in the language of the text (Grabe 2009; Trudell and Adger 2014: 12). Where the language of instruction is English, the refugee learners do not possess the language competency needed to successfully learn to read.

For all these reasons, the mismatch between the linguistic repertoires of the learners and the medium of instruction in the classroom must be addressed. Solutions have been
attempted, but of them has proven adequate to address the enormity and complexity of the challenge. This report proposes a solution that targets the language and literacy challenge specifically: *A Bridging Programme that will raise children’s language and literacy skills, preparing them to successfully integrate into formal schools or AEP centre classes.*

**Language and literacy skills**

Stakeholders agree that refugee children would benefit tremendously from enhanced English fluency and literacy skills. However, English fluency and literacy skills, while both language-related skills, are not acquired in the same way. Language learning is a matter of mastering new vocabulary, grammar and spoken sounds. Reading and writing skills involve decoding print, mastering letter/sound correspondences, and being able to take meaning from text on a page. All of these skills must be learned in a language that the learner understands, if reading is to be an effective tool for further learning.

Research has shown that the use of an unfamiliar language has been shown to be the slowest and least effective way to teach a child reading - or any other subject (McCarty 2012; Glewwe, Kremer and Moulin 2009: 112). On the other hand, use of a language of instruction that the child speaks produces dramatic improvements in learning outcomes (Kim, Lee and Zuilkowski 2019: 17; Wagner 2017: 129; Fafunwa et al 1989: 141). These improved outcomes are especially evident in reading and writing skills acquisition (Kioko et al 2008: 20).

**Language as a resource**

In the current refugee context in Uganda, language is being considered an obstacle to effective learning and communication. However, in fact language fluency can be recognized as a skill and a resource. In line with this approach to language as a resource, the recommendation of this investigation is a Bridging Programme with three aims: raising children’s English fluency, particularly oral English; teaching reading and writing in a language that the children speak; and enhancing mathematics skills, in a context that will help build children’s academic vocabulary in English. This Bridging Programme would be designed not to compete with other education programmes for refugees, but rather to
deliver learners who can understand and benefit from further learning – so supporting formal and nonformal refugee education initiatives, and enhancing their success.

The proposed Bridging Programme intervention would focus on the following:

- building English skills, to allow learners to communicate fluently with their teachers and begin learning subject content in the English-medium classroom;
- building learners’ literacy skills, in a language that the learners understand adequately;
- building and strengthening mathematics skills, and facilitating the acquisition of academic language in English.

As children gain English skills, literacy skills in a language they speak, and mathematics skills, several positive outcomes will accrue. Placement at grade levels or Accelerated Education Programme (AEP) levels will be more accurate; advancement through the grades or AEP levels will take place with more success; classroom teaching will become a more positive and effective process; and children will gain foundational life skills associated with literacy, numeracy and English fluency, that will stand them in good stead throughout their lives.

**Bridging Programme specifics**

The recommended target audience for this BP would be refugee children, aged 10-18 years old: new arrivals to settlements, who have been assessed as not having enough oral English to integrate appropriately into either the formal school system or the AEP; over-age learners who have been placed in early primary grades due to their lack of English fluency; and children who are failing in AEP level 1, due to lack of English fluency.

The three subjects to be taught in the proposed Bridging Programme are as follows:

- The main subject of the Bridging Programme would be dedicated to building oral English language competencies in the children, so that they will be able to communicate effectively with the classroom teacher and use their English competencies to learn further. The teaching and learning materials will be based on the national English-language subject for the primary grades, enhanced with learning
common ‘school’ vocabulary. Once oral language fluency is built (along with literacy in a language the learner speaks), English-language literacy can then be taught.

- The African-language reading and writing subject would be carried out in a carefully chosen set of languages, depending on children’s fluencies. The choice of languages of wider communication for instruction where appropriate will help to minimize ethnic divides. The reading instructional approach would build the basic literacy skills of letter, syllable and word recognition, as well as fluency and comprehension of written text. This subject would be taught along the lines of a nonformal literacy class, rather than being tied closely to the national curriculum.

- The mathematics subject would be taught in English. This will enhance children’s maths skills, and provide a safe and relatively easy context for beginning to learn English-language academic vocabulary. The teaching and learning materials will be based on the national mathematics subject for the primary grades.

The recommended length of this Bridging Programme is 6 months. This will allow the learners to gain at least a P2 level of oral English fluency, literacy skills in both a familiar African language and English, and a good grasp of mathematics concepts and vocabulary.

Materials and training will be developed to ensure that implementation is effective and programme goals are achieved. Emphasis will be given to low-cost materials and programme strategies that can be sustained over the long term. Collaborative effort with the NCDC will be central to these processes. Teachers and facilitators will be given specialized training in the use of the programme’s materials to build the targeted competencies.

The study further recommends that, if possible, the Bridging Programme be sited within the community rather than in the formal school setting, with the intentional support of community institutions and the MoES.

Operationalizing these recommendations will require further investigation and decision-making regarding significant programme features such as audience, class size, curriculum, teaching and learning materials, programme structure and administration, the role of the community, and more. In some ways, the proposed programme represents a new approach
to refugee learning, with few models to follow. Careful thought and innovative programming decisions will be needed.

**Conclusion: Harnessing the elephant in the room**

Refugee children in Uganda require a wide range of supportive responses, both pedagogical and social/emotional. However, where learning is concerned, language mismatch and language fluency issues are ‘the elephant in the room’ for these children. These issues underlie poor literacy levels, poor learner placement, learner dropout, teacher frustration, and poor learning outcomes.

If refugee children’s overall learning objectives are to be successfully met, priority must be given to dealing with these language-related issues that are afflicting refugee pupils and classrooms. Once these challenges are being met, the other necessary features of good education provision can be successfully provided. No single programme can solve all the problems that stakeholders are experiencing in the refugee education context; but removal of the hindrances posed by lack of English fluency and literacy skills will facilitate solutions to a wide range of other education challenges. Solving the language mismatch and reading challenges will also relieve much of the pressure on classroom teachers.

The language mismatch in these refugee classrooms is impossible to ignore. Language diversity in the classroom can seem unpleasantly messy, but failing to deal the dilemmas posed by language mismatch only diminishes learning outcomes. The dilemmas do not go away just because they are ignored. Treating language as a resource, on the other hand, opens new possibilities for learning, growth and peace.
A Bridging Programme for Refugee Children in Uganda: Perspectives and Recommendations

Barbara Trudell, Prossy Nannyombi and Lydia Teera, SIL Africa

29 August 2019

Introduction

Research and needs assessment related to education provision in the Uganda refugee response are consistently finding that one of the major challenges to effective education among these refugee children is the language barrier. In response to this challenge, the Education in Emergencies Working Group of Uganda set up a language Task Team to investigate appropriate language strategies for enhancing refugee children’s learning outcomes. One strategy of particular interest to the group is the development of a bridging programme that will allow children to span the language gap in education.

As used in education contexts in the global North, the term bridging programme refers generally to the provision of specific knowledge to secondary or post-secondary students, facilitating their access to further programmes or qualifications. In this refugee context, however, where learners are forced to move from one national education system to another, the bridging programme concept is used to describe how skills in the target education system may be gained by the refugee learners in a relatively short period of time.

The Accelerated Education Working Group (AEWG) defines a bridging programme as a short-term, targeted preparation course that supports students’ success taking various forms such as language acquisition and/or other existing differences between home and host education curricula and systems for entry into a different type of certified education.1

The present report is the result of a 10-week investigation into the language-related issues and challenges found in education provision for children in Uganda’s refugee settlements.

---

The investigation and report have been made possible thanks to funding from Education Cannot Wait.

The recommendations emerging from this investigation are based on collection and analysis of relevant documents, a wide range of stakeholder perspective, and approximately 90 hours of observation and interview activities in the Kyangwali and Imvepi refugee settlements of western and northern Uganda respectively. Details of the interviews and classroom observations that were carried out can be found in Appendices 1 - 3.\(^2\)

The central recommendation of this investigation (see page 14) is the development and implementation of a Bridging Programme that will raise children’s oral English fluency, teach reading and writing in a language that the children speak, and enhance their mathematics skills. This Bridging Programme would be designed not to compete with other education programmes for refugees, but rather to deliver learners who can understand and benefit from further learning – so supporting refugee education initiatives and enhancing their success.

It is important to note that the recommendations in this report are focused entirely on the language-related challenges to refugee learning as described in the Education Response Plan. No recommendations are made regarding psychosocial support or enhancing socio-emotional well-being of the learners.

An additional point to note is that the focus of these recommendations is on improving the learning outcomes of refugee children in the Uganda refugee response. Certainly the recommendations made here could have applicability to the host communities’ children as well; however, making recommendations on assistance to host community children is not the remit of this task. It is hoped that through the recommendations made in this investigation, benefit may accrue to all the children in the refugee response areas, whether Ugandan or refugees.

\(^2\) Excerpts from stakeholder interviews in this report are italicized and their details are footnoted.
The context: Challenges to education provision in Ugandan refugee response sites

The education context in Uganda’s refugee response sites has been well documented in recent years, revealing a range of problems and leading to a range of proposed solutions. As of July 2019, Uganda was hosting 1.3 million refugees\(^3\) coming from 13 countries, and hosted across 12 refugee districts. Roughly a million have come from South Sudan, 240,000 from the DRC, and significant numbers from Burundi, Rwanda and Somalia as well (British Council 2018: 10; UNHCR 2018).

The expected term of stay for refugee children has an impact on curricular expectations. Where it is expected that children will return to their home countries in the short term, it is reasonable to incorporate the curriculum of the home country into education provision. However, short-term refugee status is not the norm. Indeed, it is popularly believed that worldwide, refugees spend an average of 17 years away from their home countries; this number may or may not be accurate, but in any case it is agreed that “authorities need to plan for at least the medium term” for refugee education provision in Uganda (British Council 2018: 11). This planning has implications for curriculum choices, including language of instruction policies and practices. UNHCR’s strategic vision for protracted refugee contexts such as those in Uganda is that the refugees be integrated into the national/host community education system, because the host country’s curriculum “provides access to accredited, supervised and accountable education services” and “is generally the most sustainable and protective option in the medium to long term”\(^4\).

Refugee children in Uganda who have access to education are for the most part attending formal primary schools. Some of these schools are registered with the Government of Uganda; others are established and run by the communities, and supported by the United Nations and non-governmental organisations (NGOs). In the Uganda context, the difference between government and community schools is largely related to funding sources. The District Education Office retains responsibility for quality assurance across both settings, and both follow the Ugandan curriculum for primary grades 1-7 and secondary grades 1-6.

---

\(^3\) [https://ugandarefugees.org/en/country/uga](https://ugandarefugees.org/en/country/uga)

\(^4\) [https://www.unhcr.org/publications/education/560be1209/education-brief-3-curriculum-choices-refugee-settings.html](https://www.unhcr.org/publications/education/560be1209/education-brief-3-curriculum-choices-refugee-settings.html)
In addition to these primary schools, a number of NGO-supported Accelerated Education Programming (AEP) centres have been established to serve the large number of out-of-school, over-age refugee children. AEP in Uganda consists of three levels, into which the 7 years of the primary curriculum are condensed. At the end of the third level, the learner has the opportunity to sit for the national certificate primary leaving examination.

However, assessments of the programming contexts in Uganda refugee education support have identified a number of serious challenges affecting the system. These include:

- curriculum mismatches between the children’s home countries and Uganda, most notably in language of instruction policies and practices;
- the difficulty in placement of new arrivals into the formal schools and AEP centres;
- lack of teacher capacity in overcrowded and under-resourced classrooms;
- lack of infrastructural capacity, including classrooms and teaching and learning materials;
- the presence of over-age learners in early-grade classrooms; and
- the need for psychosocial and emotional support among refugee children who have suffered trauma.

A range of learning support programmes, as well as alternative approaches to teaching and learning, have emerged to address these various challenges (e.g. Save the Children 2018b; Education Consortium 2018; Krupar et al 2018; Metzler et al 2013: 1).

**Language of instruction challenges and the Education Response Plan**

The Ugandan *Education Response Plan* (ERP) was formed in 2018, led by the Ugandan Ministry of Education and Sports. The ERP’s purpose is to coordinate the efforts of the Ugandan government, UN agencies, NGOs, education development partners (including the international education community) and the private sector, in order to attain effective learning outcomes among refugee children. As part of meeting this goal, one of the activities included in the ERP is the development of a Bridging Programme for refugee learners:
Develop bridging program for refugee learners (a programme to re-orient refugee learners into Ugandan education system, curricula, language of instruction, examination system etc.) (Government of Uganda 2018: 52).

The rationale for this activity is based on a recognition of the challenges facing the refugee learners, related to the lack of alignment between the national curricula of the home countries of refugee children (South Sudan, Burundi, Democratic Republic of the Congo [DRC], and others) and the national curriculum of Uganda. The ERP refers particularly to the national policy on language of instruction in Uganda, and the expectation that “early grade teaching in the Ugandan Education System should be in mother tongue” (ibid. p. 14).

This language of instruction expectation for the first three primary grades of the Ugandan primary curriculum is grounded in Uganda’s adoption of a thematic curriculum for the early primary grades (Cycle 1):

> A thematic approach has been used as the organising principle for the arrangement of the competences and knowledge content. The themes have been selected as those most likely to be relevant to children, reflecting their everyday interests and activities as well as the national aims and objectives (NCDC 2006: 7).

The thematic curriculum approach requires that

> All learning materials used in these three years will be provided in the child's own language or a language familiar to the child. Any written tests that are used for assessment purposes, apart from assessment of English language competence for non-English medium schools, will also be in the local language. Only when the mix of languages in a school is such that there is no predominant local or area language then the curriculum will be delivered and assessed in English (ibid.)

This thematic approach to curriculum development was adopted in 2007, as an attempt to break out of the cycle of curriculum formulation and non-implementation that has characterized education reform in sub-Saharan Africa in recent decades (Altinyelken 2010: 151). The thematic curriculum approach is unusual in the region, however, so the use of the thematic curriculum in Uganda means that refugee learners coming from surrounding countries encounter a P1-P3 curriculum that differs significantly from those in their home countries.
However, the mismatch in language of instruction practices emerges not only in the thematic curriculum’s requirement of local languages of instruction, but also as a broader feature of language fluency among the refugee children. Where Ugandan primary schools are teaching the thematic curriculum in P1-P3, using local Ugandan languages as medium of instruction, the refugee child coming out of early primary grades in his or her home country has neither the language competencies nor the curriculum background to fit in. Where the Ugandan primary schools are using English as the medium of instruction, either under the conditions stipulated for P1-P3 ("only when the mix of languages in a school is such that there is no predominant local or area language," see above), or as the medium of instruction in P4 and above, the refugee learner is equally disadvantaged:

- If the child is coming from a francophone country, then English is not a language of instruction which that child has encountered, nor is it a language of wider communication in the region.
- If the child is coming from South Sudan, where the national curriculum subjects include “national languages”\(^5\) and English from P1-P8, and where “national languages” are identified as the preferred languages of instruction for P1-P3 (Ministry of Education, Science and Technology, Republic of South Sudan 2012), the combination of classroom teaching practices, poor education provision and political turmoil in the country indicate that the child will not have adequate English either.

For children who have attended upper primary grades in their home countries, the curriculum mismatch is less severe; the subject-based curricula for upper primary grades are fairly similar across the three major countries of concern, Uganda, South Sudan and the DRC, with some variations (see Appendix 4). For these children, the primary obstacle is English fluency. Without it, they are unable to articulate what they have already learned to school assessment staff. They are also unable to effectively engage in classroom learning in upper primary grades, secondary grades, or AEP centres - all of which use English as the language of instruction.

---

\(^5\) In South Sudan, the term “national language” refers to an indigenous language of the country.
This complex of language fluency expectations and realities has led the ERP to prioritize strategies for addressing the language mismatch that affects nearly every refugee learner arriving in Uganda:

language bridging courses, community involvement in schools and engagement of bi-lingual teacher assistants in classrooms are highly relevant strategies to mitigate these challenges and support inclusive education within the framework of the Ugandan education system (Government of Uganda 2018: 14).

The impact of language mismatch on the classroom

The language fluency challenges described above pose a problem that is both immediately evident in classrooms and fundamental to learning success: the lack of consistently effective communication between teachers and learners. Many African languages are represented among the refugees (Hicks and Maina 2018); but their linguistic repertoire is largely useless to refugee children in school, for the reasons noted above.

We know that performance levels are low because of language barriers. Children cannot comprehend what is being taught.

This language mismatch in the classroom blocks effective student learning, and puts classroom teachers in the position of having to manage what is essentially an unmanageable teaching scenario in the classroom. Faced with a multiplicity of pupils’ home languages, and with no training in how to manage multi-language classrooms, they may look for some African language that they, and some of the children, may speak; more often, they resort to entirely English-medium instruction (Hicks and Maina 2018: 7). In an attempt to navigate this obstacle to teacher-learner communication, classroom language assistants are recruited from amongst the refugees; they provide translation or other learning assistance to the

---

6 Classroom observations of three P3 classes, two P4 classes and two AEP 1 classes all found English-medium teaching in which pupil interaction with the teacher was limited to the few pupils who could speak English; the rest were typically “ignored” by the teacher.

7 In some cases, refugees do speak a border language also spoken in Uganda; however, they do not necessarily settle in an area of Uganda where the language is spoken (Hicks and Maina 2018: 11).

8 Interview with Magidu Moses and Mugisha Moses, Windle International Uganda, 16 July 19.

9 Classroom observation found English being used as the sole medium of instruction in P3 classrooms observed (Kasonga, AWA and Longamere), as well as P4 and AEP classes observed.
learners as needed (Hicks and Maina 2018: 36).\textsuperscript{10} However, the lack of classroom teachers in refugee schools, the prevalence of substantially overcrowded classrooms, and inadequate orientation of language assistants as to their specific role, often result in language assistants teaching the entire class rather than attending to specific learners’ language needs.

\textit{We have previously employed assistant teachers but they have not played their role. They instead worked as co-teachers and only spoke a dominant language amidst the many languages refugees speak at the AEP centres.}\textsuperscript{11}

Large class sizes\textsuperscript{12} and a lack of teaching and learning materials exacerbate what is already a serious obstacle to learning: the lack of consistent, clear communication between teacher and learners.

As a result, effective education is exceedingly difficult to achieve. Accurate placement of new children is hindered for lack of a common language between the teacher/assessor and the student. Teaching and learning become nearly impossible when communication between teacher and learners is blocked. A 2018 assessment of learning in refugee settlements across Uganda indicates that 55% of the assessed refugee pupils in P3-7 were unable to complete P2 level numeracy tasks, and 72% were unable to read and comprehend a Primary 2 English-language story (Uwezo 2018: 26); yet there is no language in common by which the teacher can address these fundamental knowledge deficits. The frequency of student dropout is also related to the children’s lack of fluency in the language of instruction in the classroom (Education Consortium 2019: 10).

The perceptions of refugee learners and parents on school failure are quite explicit about the very visible problems attending language use. These stakeholders have very immediate, practical concerns, and they believe that the inability to engage and be successful in classroom interaction is holding refugee learners back.

\textit{The English lessons are difficult. When we fail to read English, they cane us.}\textsuperscript{13}

\textsuperscript{10} Classroom observation noted that language assistance was generally limited to word-for-word translation of what the teacher said, with no explanation or other learning help offered.
\textsuperscript{11} Interview with Joyce Talamoi, Norwegian Refugee Council, 11 July 19.
\textsuperscript{12} As an example, classroom observation found 127 pupils in the Nyamiganda P4 class, Kikuube.
\textsuperscript{13} Focus group interview, refugee learners, Nyamiganda Primary School P3, Kyangwali, 19 July 2019.
The books are all in English. That makes it difficult for children to quickly engage.\textsuperscript{14}

We are happy that the children get to speak English, however some still struggle with understanding teachers well.\textsuperscript{15}

One of the most damaging effects of the classroom language mismatch is the obstacle it poses particularly to the acquisition of reading skills. Reading is widely accepted as the foundation of success in formal education; research shows that children’s reading achievement at the end of their first year in school is a strong predictor of their later school success or failure (Ng 2006). Yet, reading and understanding written text requires competency in the language of the text. The research evidence is clear that reading is largely a linguistic task, and that reading comprehension depends on fluency in the language of the text (Grabe 2009; Trudell and Adger 2014: 12). The Ugandan early-grades curriculum reflects this understanding as well, with a daily focus in P1-P3 on reading and writing instruction in the local language, as well as instruction in how to speak the English language (NCDC 2006).

However, where neither textbooks nor teachers are available in a language the refugee learner understands, the acquisition and improvement of reading and writing skills is out of reach. This harsh reality is what yields refugee assessment data such as that gathered by the INCLUDE programme in West Nile, indicating that 84% of the AEP learners assessed could not demonstrate comprehension of a text, while 94.5% could not read an entire story (Education Consortium 2018: 18-19). The education received by refugee children outside Uganda is partly responsible for these high rates of illiteracy, for precisely the same reason that these children are not learning to read in the Uganda school context: the prevalence of classroom instruction in a language they do not understand.\textsuperscript{16}

This serious problem of mismatch between the linguistic repertoire of the learners and the medium of instruction in the classroom must be explicitly addressed. Noteworthy attempts at solutions have been made, including the deployment of language assistants, the use of

\textsuperscript{14} Focus group interview refugee parents, Longomere Primary School, Imvepi, 1 August 2019.
\textsuperscript{15} Focus group interview, refugee parents, Longomere Primary School Annex, Imvepi, 1 August 2019.
\textsuperscript{16} A 2015 assessment of literacy competencies in primary schools in 5 states of South Sudan noted that the “majority of the Grade Three pupils had not mastered the basic skills of literacy specified in the syllabus. The inability to read seriously affects learning achievement in all the other subjects” (Africa Educational Trust 2015: 192).
languages of wider communication, and encouraging learners to help each other as much as possible. However, none of these alternatives is adequate to address the enormity and complexity of the challenge, as described in Diagram 1 below.

Diagram 1. Language-based challenges to learning for refugee learners

Language and literacy skills

Stakeholders – support organizations, government oversight bodies, teachers, parents and learners themselves – all agree that refugee children would benefit tremendously from enhanced English fluency and literacy skills. The Education Consortium’s baseline assessment in southwestern Uganda (2019: 9) notes that

Having a brighter future and supporting their family were some of the reasons some children want to go to back to school. This can only come true by learning how to read and write and getting a job in future. . . Less than 2% [of the learners assessed]
had ever attended lessons in English, and when asked whether they would like to take English classes, 82% of the interviewed children indicated that they would like to have English lessons.

However, it is crucially important to understand that English fluency and literacy skills, while both language-related skills, are not acquired in the same way. Language acquisition is a matter of mastering new vocabulary, grammar and spoken sounds. Reading and writing skills involve decoding print, mastering letter/sound correspondences, and taking meaning from text on a page – all of which must be learned in a language that the learner understands, if reading is to be an effective tool for further learning.

Although Uganda’s national curriculum clearly mandates early-grade reading in the child’s home language (NCDC 2006: 7), the distinction between the development of language skills and reading skills is not often so clearly made in primary-grade curricula. It is true that the four language skills – speaking, listening, reading and writing – form the core of language arts curricula worldwide. However, the specifics of reading pedagogy are generally missed in many African classrooms, as is the fact that learning to read with meaning requires language fluency as well as decoding skills. The problem is equally evident in Ugandan refugee classrooms:

*Teachers do not have any knowledge on language acquisition, they do not have even the basics of phonics, pre-reading, pre-writing. How do we expect them to support learners who do not understand the language of instruction being used in the class?*

Given that the upper primary classes, the AEP classes and many P1-P3 classrooms in the refugee response area are using English as the medium of instruction (Hicks and Maina 2018: 7), it is understandable that the stakeholders might see reading solely as English-language reading. One report by Save the Children describes refugee children’s perception that if “they learn English, they will be able to get a job, and they want to be literate to avoid ’suffering’” (Save the Children 2018a: 22). English is the language of literacy.

---

17 Interview with Mauro Giacomazzi, Maria Gaudenzi and Calvin Opio, AVSI Foundation and Luigi Giussani Institute of Higher Education (LGHIE), 6 July 2019.
assessments (Uwezo 2018), and of general curriculum knowledge assessments as well (Education Consortium 2019: 24; Hicks and Maina 2018: 6).

However, the fact is that the use of an unfamiliar language of instruction has been shown to be the slowest and least effective way to teach a child reading - or any other subject. Research in African classrooms indicates clearly that the use of a non-home language as the medium of instruction does not result in acceptable learning outcomes (McCarty 2012; Glewwe, Kremer and Moulin 2009: 112). Uganda stakeholders concur. As a group of P3 refugee learners, aged 12-17 years old, said:

\[\text{We do not know English; it is very hard . . . We did not understand much of what the teacher was talking about in today’s lesson.}^{18}\]

Teachers and education assistants also describe the impact of lack of English fluency on student learning:

\[\text{Out of the 28 children in [AEP] Level 3, only 4 learners qualified to register for the P7 PLE [Primary Leaving Exam] this year. The other 24 could not qualify because they did not have the required English language competencies to take P7 PLE, which will be examined in English.}^{19}\]

Refugee parents are also clear on the poor learning outcomes resulting from teaching in a language their children do not understand.

\[\text{I saw bad school results from my son. I asked my son why the bad results, and the child angrily said, “The teacher uses a language that I don’t understand in class” . . . . Parents are wondering what the use of education here is.}^{20}\]

On the other hand, use of a language of instruction that the child speaks produces dramatic improvements in learning outcomes (Kim, Lee and Zuilkowski 2019: 17; Wagner 2017: 129; Fafunwa et al 1989: 141). Refugee parents know this:

\[\text{Our children’s local language is a channel to learn new concepts and languages.}^{21}\]

\[\text{18 Focus group interview, refugee learners, Kasonga Primary School P3, Kyangwali settlement, 17 July 2019.}\]
\[\text{19 Focus group interview, head/deputy teachers/education assistants, Kagoma AEP 16 July 19.}\]
\[\text{20 Focus group interview, refugee parents, Kinyeitaka Primary School, Kyangwali settlement, 18 July 2019.}\]
\[\text{21 Focus group interview, refugee parents, Kinyeitaka Primary School, Kyangwali settlement, 18 July 2019.}\]
These outcomes are especially evident in reading and writing skills acquisition, as Kioko et al (2008: 20) note:

When the skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing are first developed in the learner’s first language, developing the same skills in subsequent languages will be much faster and less laborious. In addition, the use of mother tongue in school promotes a smooth transition between home and school and this creates an emotional stability which translates to cognitive stability.

Language as a resource: Creating and leveraging language fluencies for learning

How could the linguistic repertoire of refugee learners be both utilized and expanded to lead to successful learning outcomes, and facilitate their integration into the Ugandan education system? The answer lies in a combination of language of instruction strategies and language learning strategies.

Current discourse on multilingualism and learning refers to a framework of policy and planning in which language may be seen as a problem, a resource and/or a right. First proposed some years ago by language planning scholar Richard Ruiz (Ruiz 1984), this framework is a useful way to re-focus concerns about language diversity in the classroom towards a consideration of the ways in which languages may be used as a resource for learning.

In the current refugee context in Uganda, language is consistently being seen as a problem, an obstacle to effective learning and communication. The degree of language diversity in the settlements, and the ethnic tensions that arise between language communities, exacerbate this perspective of ‘language as problem’. As noted in Kikuube,

Many of the refugees prefer not to talk about their ethnicity language background because of the already-existing tribal conflicts.\(^{22}\)

However, in fact language fluency can be recognized and valued as a skill and a resource – within the language communities, and for formal learning as well. The possibility of home

\(^{22}\) Interview, DEO and District Inspector of Schools, Kikuube, 15 July 19.
languages as a learning resource has already been mooted by parents in the refugee communities:

*We know that the children’s home languages can help them succeed in education.* . . .

Their local languages can be used to help with learning the Ugandan local languages and English.²³

*There should be training classes for local-language literacy.*²⁴

In line with this approach to language as a resource, the central recommendation emerging from this investigation is the development and implementation of a Bridging Programme that will raise children’s language and literacy skills, preparing them to successfully integrate into formal schools or AEP centre classes. The three components of the proposed programme are intended to raise children’s oral English fluency, teach reading and writing skills in a language that the children speak, and enhance their mathematics skills. This Bridging Programme would be designed not to compete with existing education programmes for refugees, but rather to deliver learners who can understand and benefit from further learning – so supporting refugee education initiatives and enhancing their success.

The theory of change underlying this recommendation (see Diagram 2) is built on the argument that three fundamental learning challenges affect the success of current education programming for refugees: the children lack fundamental skills for learning, most notably English fluency and literacy; communication between the children and the teachers in the classroom is severely limited, to the point of being virtually nonexistent; and learners are experiencing poor learning outcomes, the most extreme of which are resulting in the learners dropping out of school altogether. The proposed Bridging Programme intervention would focus on the following:

- building English skills, to a level that would allow learners to communicate fluently with their teachers and begin learning subject content in the classroom;

---

²³ Focus group interview, refugee parents, Equatoria Primary School, Imvepi settlement, 30 July 2019.

²⁴ Focus group interview, refugee parents, Awa/African Child Primary School, Imvepi settlement, 2 August 2019.
- building learners’ literacy skills, in a language that the learners understand adequately;
- providing a context in which numeracy skills can be built and strengthened, and academic vocabulary in English be built as well.

These three foundational skills - language skills, reading skills and numeracy skills - have been shown to be a strong predictor of academic success (Duncan 2007: 1443).

Diagram 2. Theory of Change for a proposed Bridging Programme

The rationale for focusing on oral English in the Bridging Programme is that not only will it open the possibility of dialogue between teacher and learner; it will also allow the learner to learn to read in English, given the critical importance of understanding a language before being able to read it (Grabe 2009)
The rationale for teaching literacy first in a language the student speaks, rather than English, is that this is the only way the student will learn to read with understanding. That skill, once properly acquired, is transferrable to any other language the learner speaks. So as the student learns oral English, the transfer of literacy skills to English can begin to take place (Freeman and Freeman 2009: xvii).

The rationale for adding a focus on mathematics is threefold: it will solidify learners’ numeracy and maths skills, it will provide a non-threatening English-medium learning context, and it will begin the development of academic vocabulary in English.

As children gain English skills, literacy skills in a language they speak, and mathematics skills, several positive outcomes will accrue:

- Placement at grade levels or AEP levels will be more accurate, due to the learner’s ability to indicate what he or she has already been taught;
- Advancement through the grades or AEP levels will take place with more success, with academically useful skills such as English language fluency, literacy skills and maths skills;
- Classroom teaching will become a more positive and effective process, lessening the frustration and futility felt by both learners and teachers, and effectively reducing dropout rates.
- Children will gain foundational life skills associated with literacy, numeracy and English fluency, that will stand them in good stead throughout their lives.

Such a programme is already seen as a need by key stakeholders in the refugee education context. As one expert in the National Curriculum Development Centre noted:

> We need an approach where either the teachers or the children can learn a language that they can ably speak to one another and are able to communicate to one another.... There needs to be a vigorous instructional package especially at the start of education for refugees, Level 1, before children join the formal schools. It will help them acquire the functional vocabulary needed to communicate well with peers and teachers when they join the formal school.25

---

25 Interview with Maureen Nampeera, NCDC, 11 July 19.
A similar recommendation is offered by British Council researchers (Hicks and Maina 2018: 7):

Provide support and short, but intense, language classes for those coming from different language backgrounds. This will help learners catch up with the language they need to match their grade, or at least be able to keep up with others in the class, rather than being held back by their lack of English.

Teachers and education assistants also noted the centrality of the two skills, English fluency and the ability to read:

*What competencies are important for children to have to be successful in P3/P4? Reading, speaking and writing. Our major emphasis should be on reading.*

*What should be done to help refugee children that have just arrived to gain those competencies? Give them enough time to learn English, which is a new language to them. . . . Give them enough time to learn English before they are enrolled in AEP.*

The intentional presence of local languages in this curriculum will not only facilitate learning to read with understanding, but will also signal the accessibility of the entire Bridging Programme to refugee learners. As researcher Celia Reddick has noted, “there is agreement among [stakeholders] about the importance of maintaining the mother tongue, even as children are supported to learn English”.  

**Bridging Programme proposal specifics**

The recommended target audience for this programme would be refugee children, aged 10-18 years old, who fall into one of the categories below:

- New arrivals to settlements, who have been assessed as not having enough oral English to integrate appropriately into either the formal school system or the AEP;
• Over-age learners who have been placed in early primary grades due to their lack of 
  English fluency;
• Children who are failing in AEP level 1, due to lack of English fluency.

Evidence from classroom observations and interviews in the Kyangwali settlement  
(consisting primarily of refugees recently arriving from the DRC) and the Imvepi settlement  
(consisting primarily of refugees from South Sudan, some of whom have been there for up  
to 3 years and others of whom are recent arrivals) indicates that the target audiences for  
this Bridging Programme in the two types of settlements may not be the same grade levels.  
Interviews carried out in Kyangwali settlement indicated that fluency in English is rare 
among the refugee learners there; interviews in Imvepi indicated that the over-age lower 
primary learners and AEP level 1 learners are the most disadvantaged by lack of English  
fluency, while those in higher grades appear to be more fluent. The difference between the  
Kyangwali and Imvepi learners could have to do with the previous exposure of some South  
Sudanese children to English in the home country, or to the longer period of exposure to  
English that the longer-term Imvepi residents could have experienced in Uganda. In any  
case, both the age range and individuals’ level of English fluency will be relevant indicators  
of eligibility for the Bridging Programme.

The three subjects to be taught in the proposed Bridging Programme are as follows:

• The main subject in the Bridging Programme’s daily schedule would be English  
  language learning, based on the curriculum developed by the NCDC. This curriculum  
  begins with a thematic approach to English language learning, which would be  
  supplemented with the ‘everyday’ school-related vocabulary that children need to  
  be successful in a school setting. However, the language diversity of the refugee  
  learners will require one significant difference from the Ugandan curriculum: the  
  programme will use a carefully controlled immersion approach, with English being  
  the medium of instruction as well as the subject. This approach is commonly used in  
  nonformal English language learning contexts around the world.  
  The curriculum will be built around building oral language competencies in the  
  children, and will enable refugee learners to communicate effectively with the  
  classroom teacher and use their English competencies to learn further. A  
  collaborative group approach to English learning will be encouraged, whereby those
with more mastery would help those with less mastery. The initial oral-language focus will eventually be augmented by the introduction of written English, transitioning the reading skills gained in the parallel literacy subject (see below). This English language learning subject would be taught by Ugandan-certified teachers who are fluent in English and who have been trained to teach the modified English subject described above.

- The African-language reading and writing subject would be taught in a number of languages, depending on children’s language fluencies (see below for details on the recommended approach to identifying languages for this subject). In order to be able to serve a range of DRC and South Sudanese languages simultaneously, this subject will not follow the Ugandan literacy curriculum as the English learning subject will; rather, it will take a more nonformal learning approach. The reading instructional approach will be similar across all the languages; based on the specific linguistic and cultural features of the language, this approach will build the basic literacy skills of letter, syllable and word recognition, as well as fluency and comprehension of written text. Story-reading and creative writing will also be part of the children’s learning experience.

These classes will be conducted as ‘break-out sessions’ of the Bridging Programme, so as to minimize division along ethnic community lines. The choice of languages of wider communication for instruction where appropriate will also help to minimize ethnic divides along language lines.

These literacy classes would be taught by facilitators who are speakers of the language of instruction, and who have taken a short course on how to teach the literacy materials.

- The mathematics subject would be drawn from the Ugandan primary-grades maths curriculum; the language of instruction will be English, so that the learners may all learn together. This will help to solidify and enhance children’s maths skills, while at the same time providing a safe and relatively easy context for learning English-language academic vocabulary in the subject. This subject would be taught by certified teachers who are fluent in English, and who have taken a short course on how to teach these materials to this audience of learners.
Table 1 below provides a summary of the proposed Bridging Programme curriculum.

Table 1. Bridging Programme curriculum content

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class</th>
<th>Class time</th>
<th>How delivered</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>English language as a subject</td>
<td>2 hours/day 5 days/week</td>
<td>Certified teacher, fluent in English; children of all languages taught together</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literacy in African languages</td>
<td>1.5 hours/day 5 days/week</td>
<td>Trained facilitator, fluent in the language of literacy learning; break-out sessions by language of instruction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mathematics</td>
<td>30 minutes/day 5 days/week</td>
<td>Certified teacher, fluent in English; children of all languages taught together</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The question of the optimal length of this Bridging Programme has several facets. Recommendations from stakeholders who were interviewed varied from 3 months to 2 years. The YARID/Street Child’s *Bridge to Formal Schooling* programme is 6 months long; it includes components of parental support and economic empowerment as well as specific curricular learning objectives.29

Elsewhere in Africa, intensive language-learning/reading/numeracy programmes called “speed schools” (in French, *centres à passerelle*; Trudell 2012: 371) have been carried out over the past 20 years among low-resource communities in Burkina Faso, Mali, Niger, Liberia and Ethiopia.30 The speed school curricula typically focus on local language-medium learning as well as second language acquisition, and are designed to run for one school year (approximately 9-10 months). Graduates of the programme have routinely tested into grade 4 of the government formal schools. A speed school model is also operating in Gulu, Uganda under Chaford Uganda;31 it provides instruction in the P1-P3 curriculum in one year. None of these speed schools target refugee children, however.

---

29 Interview with Robert Hakiza and Elvis Wanume, YARID, 9 July 2019; interview with Ellen Fitton, Street Child Uganda, 2 July 2019.
Where local-language literacy programming is concerned, reading skills could be developed over a period of three months of Bridging Programme classes. Nonformal literacy programs for adolescent or adult learners, in a language that the learner speaks, can typically produce basic reading skills (i.e. the ability to decode text in the language and demonstrate comprehension of it) within a 3-month program of daily lessons of 1.5 hours each.

The teaching of maths skills in the programme would align with the NCDC primary maths curriculum, and would advance as far as possible within the timeframe set by the literacy and English subjects.

The time needed to bring a child to the English fluency needed for success in the Ugandan classroom is more challenging to estimate. Much depends on the motivation and prior learning of the child, including whether he or she has had any informal exposure to the language. However, one way to estimate the time required for gaining various levels of English fluency is to link the hours of instruction in the proposed programme to those in the Ugandan curriculum.

- The daily schedule for English learning in P1-P3 includes 30 minutes of English instruction; this amounts to a maximum of 128 instruction hours per primary grade, over the course of a 256-day school year.
- The daily schedule for English in the proposed Bridging Programme includes 2 hours of English instruction, or 40 instruction hours per month. At this rate of learning, the programme learners could gain one primary grade of English competency in approximately 3 months.

Aiming for at least P2-level English competence would thus require a 6-month programme. It is likely that a higher level of English competence may be achieved by the Bridging Program pupils in that time, given that they are a few years older than P1-P2 pupils; it is also possible that they will be learning some English from the settlement environment.

Another way to estimate the optimal length of the programme is to base it on the length of time required for the learner to begin reading and writing in English. In the Bridging Programme, English literacy learning will follow literacy acquisition in a language spoken by the learners. Many nonformal adult literacy programs carried out in Africa allow 3-4 months for basic literacy skills to be acquired in the mother tongue. Thus the Bridging Programme
could reasonably consist of 3 months of oral English and African-language literacy, followed by 3 months in which English reading and writing are added to the curriculum along with ongoing English vocabulary learning, African-language literacy skills and maths skills. These various means of calculating the ideal length of the proposed Bridging Programme seem to converge on 6 months as being an appropriate timeframe for acquiring the skills indicated.

However, an alternative perspective on the structure and length of the Bridging Programme has been offered by the Basic Education Department of the MoES:\footnote{Interview with Dr. Tony Lusambu, Basic Education Commissioner, 23 August 2019.} that it be designed as a programme that provides ongoing preparation to refugee learners as they arrive, moving them into the appropriate grade as they gain the English competencies needed. Given that the English and mathematics subjects will be based on the Ugandan curriculum, accurate assessment of the refugee learners will be easier than if alternative curricula were used. In this scenario, the Bridging Programme would be a standard feature of refugee education, preparing and placing children appropriately in the formal education alternatives available. These two alternatives could generate similar learning outcomes for refugee children, though very different structure and support would be involved in the implementation of each.

**Location and sponsoring of the Bridging Programme**

The physical siting of the Bridging Programme will be an important aspect of the programme. Opinion among the stakeholders interviewed in the refugee response sites was divided; some believed that the programme should be sited with the formal school, so as to benefit from structures and staffing. Others thought that the programme should be sited in the community, in order to avoid the crowded formal school space and also to engage parents more fully in the programme.

The recommendation of this study is that the potential of mobilizing community support for the Bridging Programme be further investigated, for the following reasons:
• Siting the programme in the community would allow it to develop as a nonformal learning option, even as it links children into formal schools and AEP centres. Independence from the formal education system has been recommended by some stakeholders.\textsuperscript{33}

• Parental engagement would be greatly enhanced. This could be very positive, given that interviewed parents expressed great interest in closer engagement with their children’s learning. As UNHCR interviewees noted, The parents should be very key in helping bridge the children, because they are the core partners that primarily speak the children’s home language. . . There should be use or strengthening of existing community structures like reading clubs. These clubs will be useful if we involve parents.\textsuperscript{34}

• Support for the use of local languages for learning is more evident in refugee community settings than in the formal education setting.

• Research in Africa indicates that local-language literacy programming can be a key component of a community-based development agenda (Hanemann and McKay 2019: 362; Trudell and Cheffy 2017; Trudell 2010).

However, it will be very important that a community institution of some kind be engaged along with the MoES, to provide legitimacy, support and sustainability for the Bridging Programme. Investigation into the presence of any existing nonformal adult literacy programming in the refugee response areas could help uncover potential institutional support mechanisms.

**Materials and training needed to implement the Bridging Programme curriculum**

Given that the proposed Bridging Programme is a nonformal programme targeting the specific learning needs of Uganda’s refugee children, materials and training will be developed to ensure that implementation is effective and programme goals are achieved.

\textsuperscript{33} Interview with the District Education Officer and District Inspector of Schools, Kikuube, 15 July 19.

\textsuperscript{34} Interview with Kajumba Joseph and Constance Alezuyo, UNHCR, 23 July 19.
Emphasis will be given to low-cost materials and programme strategies that can be sustained over the long term.

Materials should be developed in collaboration with the NCDC, to ensure the programme’s coherence with the formal school curriculum. It will be important to ensure that the programme’s learning outcomes facilitate learner success in transitioning to the formal education system, even as the programme maintains a sharp focus on the three subjects of English fluency, African-language literacy and mathematics skills. The English and mathematics materials will be aligned with the NCDC curriculum for those subjects, with modifications made as needed in line with the Bridging Programme goals and schedule.

The African-language literacy curriculum will be based on a two-step process, intended to identify the most appropriate languages for literacy instruction in the various communities. 1) A language mapping exercise will be carried out in the targeted communities, to ascertain which language or languages are widely enough spoken by children to serve as languages of reading instruction. These could be either local languages or languages of wider communication. 2) Languages will be chosen from those that have been identified as appropriate for use in literacy classes, based on careful consultation with stakeholders such as local MoES authorities, parents, learners, and other community members. This process will help to lessen the potential for conflict over language choice, and ethnic sensitivities will be carefully taken into account.

Once the appropriate languages are identified, nonformal and formal reading instructional materials that have been developed in the region will be sought and assessed. Where such materials are not available in the languages deemed best for literacy learning or are not assessed as pedagogically adequate, a process for developing nonformal literacy materials in those languages will be carried out; this process will focus on low-cost production of the basic materials needed for learning to read.

Teachers and facilitators for the proposed Bridging Programme will be given specialized training in building the specific competencies targeted in the programme’s curriculum and materials. The intensive nature of the curriculum, and the specifically designed teaching and learning materials, will require the staff to be able to deliver the instruction as designed. The

---

35 For example, SIL South Sudan curates a set of reading instructional materials in 24 languages of South Sudan.
English-learning component of the programme should be taught by certified classroom teachers with a good mastery of English. Facilitators of the local-language literacy component must be not only fluent in the language of instruction, but fluent readers as well; if these trainees are not literate in the local language, gaining that competency will be part of their training. Teachers of the mathematics subject should be qualified primary teachers in the subject.

**Recommended next steps**

Operationalizing these recommendations will require further investigation and decision-making regarding significant programme features such as audience, class size, curriculum, teaching and learning materials, programme structure and administration, the role of the community, and more. In many ways, the proposed programme represents a new approach to refugee learning, with few models to follow. Careful thought and innovative programming decisions will be needed.

At the same time, the narrow scope of the proposed curriculum will allow focus on building a few key competencies, and building them well. This intentional focus will limit the complications involved in designing an effective programme. However, it also means that the programme will not explicitly address other important areas such as social-emotional well-being, psychosocial health and economic empowerment; these needs must be met through other means. Equally the programme will not cover the entirety of the Ugandan primary-grades curriculum; its aim is rather to build the skills in refugee learners that will allow them to transition successfully into the formal education options available to them.

**Conclusion: Harnessing the elephant in the room**

Refugee children in Uganda require a wide range of supportive responses, both pedagogical and social/emotional. Such support programming is currently in operation or in the planning stages, led by a range of providers in the region.

However, the conclusion of this investigation is that language mismatch and language fluency issues are ‘the elephant in the room’ where refugee learning is concerned. They
underlie poor literacy levels and poor student placement; they also link to student dropout, teacher frustration and inadequacy, and poor learning outcomes generally. Learners are not able to tell the teacher what they know, and they cannot ask the teacher for help with what they do not know. The content knowledge that a student brings to the classroom is of no help if he or she cannot communicate in the classroom.

Thus, the recommendation of this investigation is that priority be given to dealing with the language and reading issues that are afflicting refugee learners and classrooms. Once these challenges are being met, the other necessary features of good education provision (including alignment between national curricula of the home and host countries, proper student orientation to the Ugandan education system, and the assignment of learners to appropriate grade levels) can be dealt with successfully. The proposed Bridging Programme will not solve all the problems that the stakeholders are experiencing; no single programme solution can. But removal of the hindrances posed by lack of English fluency and literacy skills will clear the way for more fine-grained solutions to the range of other education challenges\(^{36}\), as well as knowledge-based assessments and teaching. In this way, the Bridging Programme will be a significant aid to the success of other refugee support initiatives.

Solving the language mismatch and reading challenges will also relieve much of the pressure on classroom teachers. Teachers have enormous challenges to contend with already; expecting them to effectively support the acquisition of English language skills in overcrowded, over-aged, multi-language classrooms is unrealistic. The Bridging Programme will alleviate a great deal of classroom frustration and ineffectiveness.

Not only so, but by its very nature, the Bridging Programme could potentially provide some degree of psychosocial support to refugee learners. The loss of the home language is recognized as one of the most painful deprivations that the refugee child faces, particularly the unaccompanied child (Terre des Hommes 2017: 2). To the extent that the programme facilitates successful learning in valued subjects such as English and maths, and does so in an environment where a familiar language is in use and one’s family members may even be

---

\(^{36}\) One such challenge has to do with the potential differences between the curricula of the home countries and the Ugandan curriculum. These are certainly worth investigating for their impact on appropriate placement and assessment of learners, once it is possible for learners to communicate what they know to teachers and other assessment staff.
involved in the process, it is contributing to enhanced self-esteem and a sense of security.

As reading consultant Dr. Robinah Kyeyune noted,

_It is not only about cognitive and academic performance being better in a language they speak, or about them being able to read and write in the mother tongue. It is also about the psychosocial aspect of the child, the trauma they have faced in fleeing their homes, and what their own language means to them. Failing to see the place of the mother tongue in healing and supporting these children will mean that we miss a key goal of refugee education._\(^{37}\)

Specialists in the Ministry of Education and Sports agree:

_If possible this bridging programme should make sure that it communicates peace through advocating for language as a resource, not a problem, for the children’s effective and successful learning. As for now language and ethnicity are being projected as a problem. It should be a channel of peace making and focus for the refugees._\(^{38}\)

The language mismatch in these refugee classrooms is impossible to ignore. Language diversity in the classroom can seem unpleasantly messy, but failing to deal with the dilemmas posed by language mismatch only diminishes learning outcomes. The dilemmas do not go away just because they are ignored. Treating language as a resource, on the other hand, opens new possibilities for learning, growth and peace.

---

\(^{37}\) Interview with Dr. Robinah Kyeyune, 26 June 19.

\(^{38}\) Interview with Kajumba Joseph and Constance Alezuyo, MoES, 23 July 19.
References


Duncan, Greg; Chantelle J. Dowsett; Amy Claessens; Katherine Magnuson; Aletha C. Huston; Pamela Klebanov; Linda S. Pagani; Leon Feinstein; Mimi Engel; Jeanne Brooks-Gunn; Holly Sexton; Kathryn Duckworth; and Crista Japel. 2007. School readiness and later achievement. *Developmental Psychology* 43.6, 1428–1446.


Hicks, Rod and Lucy Maina. 2018. *The Impact of Refugees on Schools in Uganda: A study into the impact of refugees on schools in three districts in northern and western Uganda affected by their arrival, with special emphasis on language mapping and language...*


### Appendix 1. Interviews with non-government stakeholders

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organization/Person</th>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>NGOs</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Save the Children</td>
<td>25 June, 28 June, 12 July 2019</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Street Child</td>
<td>2 July 2019</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AVSI/Luigi Institute</td>
<td>5 July 2019</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>YARID</td>
<td>9 July 2019</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC Kampala, NRC Imvepi)</td>
<td>11 July, 30 July 2019</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Windle Trust (WIU Kyangwali, WIU Imvepi)</td>
<td>16 July, 31 July 2019</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Norwegian Refugee Council, Imvepi</td>
<td>30 July 2019</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNHCR (Kampala, Arua)</td>
<td>12 July, 27 July, 1 Aug 2019</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Other</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dr. Robinah Kyeyune</td>
<td>26 June 2019</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Appendix 2. Interviews with officers of the Uganda Ministry of Education and Sports

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Office</th>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dr. C.T. Mukasa Lusambu</td>
<td>Commissioner, Basic Education</td>
<td>27 June, 1 July, 8 July, 23 August 2019</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kajumba Joeseph</td>
<td>Focal Officer for Conflict and Disaster Rescue, MoES</td>
<td>23 July 2019</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constance Alezuyo</td>
<td>Coordinator, ERP Secretariat, MoES</td>
<td>23 July 2019</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grace Baguma</td>
<td>Director, NCDC</td>
<td>2 July 2019</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maureen Nampeera</td>
<td>Curriculum Specialist, NCDC</td>
<td>11 July 2019</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arinaitwe Perpetua</td>
<td>Curriculum Specialist, Kiswahili, NCDC</td>
<td>9 Aug 2019</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Simon Ababo</td>
<td>Assistant Chief Administrative Officer, Arua</td>
<td>30 July 2019</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Judith Kamanya</td>
<td>Officer in Charge, Gender Equality, SESIL</td>
<td>9 Aug 2019</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rosemary Oyeto</td>
<td>National Performance Lead, SESIL</td>
<td>9 Aug 2019</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agnes Nankirya</td>
<td>Deputy Team Leader, SESIL</td>
<td>9 Aug 2019</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deo Kagaba</td>
<td>District Education Officer, Kikuube</td>
<td>15 July 2019</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hamon Zondera</td>
<td>District Inspector of Schools, Kikuube</td>
<td>15 July 2019</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix 3. Interviews and classroom observations, Kyangwali and Imvepi refugee response sites

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Kyangwali refugee settlement</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Kagoma AEP centre</strong></td>
<td>16 July 19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classroom observation, AEP 1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher interview (post-classroom observation)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus group interview, parents</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Kasonga Primary</strong></td>
<td>17 July 19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classroom observation: P3 and P4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher interview (post-classroom observation)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Head teacher interview</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus group interview, refugee students</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus group interview, parents</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Kinyeitaka Primary</strong></td>
<td>18 July 19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classroom observation: P3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher interview (post-classroom observation)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Head teacher/deputy head teacher interview</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus group interview, refugee students</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus group interview, parents</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Nyamiganda Primary</strong></td>
<td>19 July 19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classroom observation: P3, P4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher interview (post-classroom observation)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Head teacher interview</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus group interview, refugee students (AEP and P5)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus group interview, parents</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Imvepi reception refugee settlement</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Equatoria Primary</strong></td>
<td>30 July 19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classroom observation: AEP Levels 1 and 2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher interview (post-classroom observation)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Head teacher/deputy head teacher interview</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus group interview, refugee students</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus group interview, parents</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Informal English fluency assessment</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Longamere Primary</strong></td>
<td>1 August 19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classroom observation: P3 and P4, AEP Levels 1 and 2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher interview (post-classroom observation)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus group interview, refugee students</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus group interview, parents</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Informal English fluency assessment</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Annex Longamere Primary</strong></td>
<td>1 August 19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classroom observation: AEP Levels 1 and 2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher interview (post-classroom observation)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview, head teacher-AEP lead teacher</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus group interview, refugee students</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus group interview, parents</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Informal English fluency assessment</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>African Child Care/ Awa Primary</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Classroom observation: P3, AEP Level 1 and 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher interview (post-classroom observation),</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview, head teacher-AEP Lead teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus group interview, refugee students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus group interview, parents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Informal English fluency assessment</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2 August 19
Appendix 4. Brief comments on comparative curriculum mapping for Uganda, the DRC and South Sudan

1. The national curricula of Uganda, the DRC and South Sudan are based on different models of primary and secondary education, as shown below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Primary education</th>
<th>Secondary education</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Uganda</td>
<td>P1-P7</td>
<td>6 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DRC</td>
<td>P1-P6</td>
<td>6 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Sudan</td>
<td>P1-P8</td>
<td>4 years</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2. The table below compares the subjects comprising the P4 curriculum for each of the three countries. Uganda’s use of a thematic curriculum rather than a subject-based curriculum for P1-P3 makes it difficult to map those grades across the three countries. P4 is the first subject-based primary year in Uganda, and so the first year of formal education in which this comparison across countries can be made.

**Comparison of P4 subjects: Uganda, DRC, S Sudan**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>Uganda</th>
<th>DRC</th>
<th>S Sudan</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Language</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>French and Congolese languages</td>
<td>National Languages and English: Language and Literature</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Local language</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mathematics</td>
<td>Mathematics</td>
<td>Mathematics, science and <strong>technology</strong></td>
<td>Mathematics and Additional Mathematics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Science</td>
<td>Integrated science</td>
<td></td>
<td>Physics, Chemistry, Biology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social studies</td>
<td>Social studies</td>
<td>Social studies and environment: geography, history, civic/moral education, health/environment education</td>
<td>History, Geography, Agriculture, Citizenship (including Civics), Peace Education (including Human Rights)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Arts</td>
<td>Creative Arts and physical education:</td>
<td>Arts</td>
<td>Music, Dance, Drama, Fine Art, Design</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical education</td>
<td>Music, dance, drama</td>
<td>Personal development: productive work, physical education, “religion”</td>
<td>Sports, Games, Physical Activity, Health Education, Sports Science</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious education</td>
<td>Christian religious education</td>
<td>No RE subject</td>
<td>Either Christian or Islamic Religious Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Islamic religious education</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cross cutting issues</td>
<td>None listed for P4</td>
<td>Civic/moral education</td>
<td>Environmental Awareness and Sustainability, Peace Education, Life Skills; TVET, ICT</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3. All three of the P4 curricula assume that reading and writing have been taught in the lower primary grades, and in local languages. However, the meager availability of teaching and learning materials in South Sudanese and Congolese languages indicates that such instruction does not generally take place in these two countries. In Uganda, the availability of local-language reading instructional materials is greater.

The Ugandan early-grade curriculum is also unique in giving explicit space to reading and writing instruction, in the “Literacy I and Literacy II” subjects. This is ideally to be carried out in the language of the community.