

# Disabled Refugees Visible and Included in Education

This open educational resource has been developed as part of the  
British Academy Education and Learning in Crises Programme

<https://www.thebritishacademy.ac.uk/projects/education-learning-in-crisis-disabled-refugee-students-included-visible-education/>

# Contents

- Global and theoretical introduction
  - Migrants, refugees and asylum seekers
  - Xenophobia and oppression of asylum-seekers and refugees
  - Refugee education
  - Disability
  - Ableism and disablism
  - Disability-inclusive education
  - Intersectionality
  - Intersection of disability and refugee status in education
- Uganda

# Migrants, refugees and asylum seekers

## 89.3 million people worldwide were forcibly displaced

at the end of 2021 as a result of persecution, conflict, violence, human rights violations or events seriously disturbing public order.



16 June 2022

Source: [UNHCR Global Trends 2021](#)

Refugees (under UNHCR's mandate)

21.3M

Palestine refugees (under UNRWA's mandate)

5.8M

Internally displaced people\*

53.2M

Asylum seekers

4.6M

Venezuelans displaced abroad\*\*

4.4M

16 June 2022

\* Source: *Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre*

\*\* This number excludes Venezuelan asylum seekers and refugees.

Source: <https://www.unhcr.org/figures-at-a-glance.html>

# The 1951 Refugee Convention and 1967 Protocol

- These are key legal documents that define the term 'refugee', outlines the rights of refugees, as well as the legal obligations of States to protect them.
- The core principle is that a refugee should not be returned to a country where they face serious threats to their life or freedom. This is now considered a rule of customary international law.
- The United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) serves as the 'guardian' of the 1951 Convention and its 1967 Protocol. According to the legislation, States are expected to cooperate with us in ensuring that the rights of refugees are respected and protected.

(Source: <https://www.unhcr.org/uk/1951-refugee-convention.html>)

# Xenophobia and oppression of asylum-seekers and refugees

- Xenophobia is the fear and hatred of foreigners and is a type of racism and racial discrimination.
- The United Nations recognises that

“xenophobia against non-nationals, particularly migrants, refugees and asylum-seekers, constitutes one of the main sources of contemporary racism and that human rights violations against members of such groups occur widely in the context of discriminatory, xenophobic and racist practices” (Source: <https://www.un.org/WCAR/durban.pdf>)

# Refugee education

- Education is a basic human right, enshrined in the 1989 Convention on the Rights of the Child and the 1951 Refugee Convention.
- Education protects refugee children and youth from forced recruitment into armed groups, child labour, sexual exploitation and child marriage. Education also strengthens community resilience.
- Education empowers by giving refugees the knowledge and skills to live productive, fulfilling and independent lives.
- Education enlightens refugees, enabling them to learn about themselves and the world around them while striving to rebuild their lives and communities.
- Close to half of all refugee children – 48 per cent – remain out of school.

# Disability

- Around 15 per cent of the world's population, or estimated 1 billion people, live with disabilities. They are the world's largest minority.
- Persons with disabilities include those who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments which in interaction with various barriers may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others.
- The purpose of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) (2006) is to promote, protect and ensure the full and equal enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms by all persons with disabilities, and to promote respect for their inherent dignity.

Sources: <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/convention-rights-persons-disabilities> and <https://www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/resources/factsheet-on-persons-with-disabilities.html>

# Ableism and disablism

- “Ableism is discrimination in favour of non-disabled people”  
(<https://www.scope.org.uk/about-us/disablism/>)
- Ableism presumes the ability to do everything expected of those deemed ‘normal’ in a society. An ableist world confers privileges on those without disabilities.
- The difference between disablism and ableism:

Both terms describe disability discrimination, but the emphasis is different:

- Ableism emphasises discrimination in favour of non-disabled people.
- Disablism emphasises discrimination against disabled people.

(Source: <https://www.scope.org.uk/about-us/disablism/>)



# Disability education

Compared to children without disabilities, children with disabilities are:

- 42 per cent less likely to have foundational reading and numeracy skills
- 49 per cent more likely to have never attended school

(Source: <https://www.unicef.org.uk/press-releases/the-worlds-nearly-240-million-children-living-with-disabilities-are-being-denied-basic-rights-unicef/>)

Article 24 of the UNCRPD confirms that “States parties must ensure the realization of the right of persons with disabilities to education through an inclusive education system at all levels”

# Intersectionality

- Intersectionality is a concept that can help understand the unequal social relations that produce educational marginalisation and exclusion.
- It recognises intersecting identities and the complex ways in which experiences are shaped by interlocking regimes of inequality.
- The term 'intersectionality' was coined by Kimberlé Crenshaw (Crenshaw, 1991). She sought to describe the compounding disadvantage experienced by people living with multiple oppressed identities.

# Intersections of disability and refugee status in education

Research internationally shows:

- Under-reporting of disability by immigrant or refugee families
- Lower rates of enrolment for disabled refugee students in Global South contexts, linked to teacher education, facilities and curriculum
- Disproportionate over-representation of migrant and refugee students in special education settings
- Language barriers and trauma mistaken for learning and behavioural difficulties
- Structural inequalities make these groups vulnerable to exclusion

# Implications for practice

- Disability and refugee policies need to acknowledge and make provision for intersectional identities
- Education officials and teaching personnel need to understand the compounding (rather than additive) disadvantageous impact of multiple oppressed identities
- Prejudice, stereotyping and discrimination needs to be identified and addressed in schools and other educational institutions
- Opportunities need to be created to hear the voices of disabled refugee students and their families



**GULU UNIVERSITY**  
For Community Transformation

# Focus on Uganda



Uganda DRIVE Research Website: <https://sites.google.com/view/driveresearch/drive-regional-forum/policy-brief>

# Migrants, refugees and asylum seekers in Uganda



## Refugees and Asylum-Seekers in Uganda

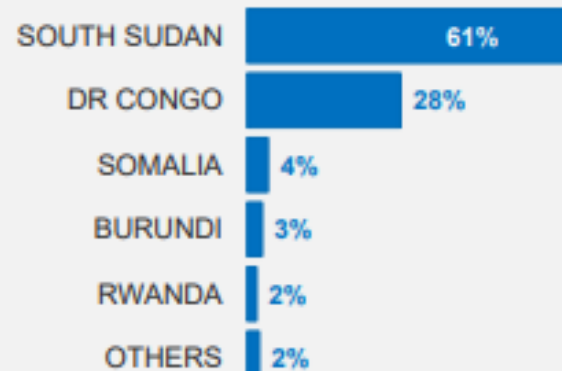
### Uganda Refugee Response

31 May 2022

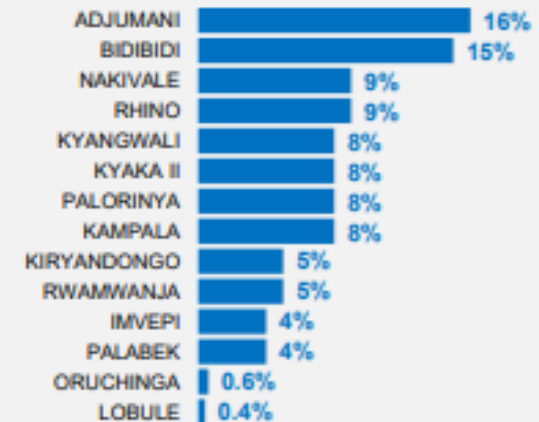
Total refugees and  
asylum-seekers

**1,531,593**

#### Countries of origin



#### Refugees per settlement



# Ugandan policy on refugees and asylum seekers

- Uganda's refugee management is guided by the 2006 Refugee Act and the 2010 refugee regulations.
- Considered the most progressive, the Uganda refugee policy grants some degree of mobility in and around the country. Other rights provided for include the right to education, work and refugee status determination within a given period of time. Source: <https://www.refworld.org/pdfid/4b7baba52.pdf> and <https://www.refworld.org/docid/544e4f154.html>
- Uganda is signatory to the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (CRF), a global solidarity adopted by 193 UN member states to commit to respond to the refugee crisis.

Source: <https://www.unhcr.org/comprehensive-refugee-response-framework-crrf.html>

# Refugee education in Uganda

- The Ministry of Education (MoES) & Office of the Prime Minister (OPM) of Uganda launched an Education for [Refugee Response \(ERP\) plan 2019-22](#). The plan has since been extended to 2022-25.
- The ERP fits within the CRRF funding frames and commitments and drives the education for refugees in Uganda. Refugee education is largely driven by development partners, the NGOs and education partners.
- The ERP plan aims to expand access to quality education for refugee children through provision of scholastic materials, teacher supply and training and infrastructure development.



# Disability in Uganda

- Persons with Disabilities Act (2020): Should cover all aspects of life for persons with disabilities, but leaves gaps in relation to inclusive education
- Uganda ratified the UNCRPD in 2008, committing to uphold international standards that ensure the rights of persons with disabilities

## Numbers:

- 12.4% of Uganda's population lives with a disability (UBOS, 2016)

## Action:

- Many Organizations of Persons with Disabilities (OPDs) and other development partners advocating for disability inclusion

## Gaps:

- Gaps found in access to basic needs, education, healthcare, employment/entrepreneurship opportunities, civic engagement

# Ableism and disablism in Uganda

The government of Uganda has developed policy to ensure particular attention is given to people with disabilities, particularly in education (as seen in the previous slides).

Policy mandates that at least one teacher for special education is in each school, and that schools are physically accessible

In practice, not enough teachers are trained, class sizes are too large, many schools are not fully accessible (especially bathrooms, access roads and compounds), and there is not enough supporting equipment.

# Disability education in Uganda

International accords:

- UNCRPD General Comment 4 describes inclusive education

Policy:

- National Inclusive Education Policy is currently moving through approval process

What is happening:

- Approximately 1.6% of learners in pre-primary education have one or more disabilities, about 2% at primary level and 0.6% at secondary level (MoES, 2017)
- Fully inclusive schools hardly exist, strong focus on segregated special schools and schools with units/annexes for learners with specific disabilities

implementation (needs):

- Lack of trained teachers and quality inclusive teaching (gaps in pre-service and in-service training)
- Lack of resources (overcrowded classrooms, appropriate teaching & learning materials)
- Lack of assistive devices
- Gaps in accessibility
- Lack of access to diagnostics and expert assistance
- Lack of identification skills among parents/caregivers and teachers
- Need for adaptation of curriculum and approach to assessment

=> Progress being made by development partners in collaboration with MoES Special Needs & Inclusive Education Department

# Intersections of disability and refugee status in education in Uganda

Families have fled extremely violence and traumatic experiences

Access to school is a challenge. Refugee settlements are in rural areas, the roads are poor and students have to travel long distances.

Often families cannot afford to purchase physical equipment needed for mobility (wheelchairs) and even when they can the roads are often too bad. Motorised transport is too expensive.

Tribal differences carried across from the home country result in bullying

Many refugees are facing poverty and food insecurity, finding money for school fees and medical care (including medicine) is not available

Girls face sexual harrassment and gender based violence and less access to education and health care services

# What this means for teachers in Uganda

- Teachers should understand the ways students with disabilities and refugee students are disadvantaged
- Teachers should understand how disadvantage is compounded for students who are both disabled and refugees
- Teachers should be alert to, address, and prevent bullying and discrimination
- Teachers should be inclusive of all students as they teach and assess
- Teachers should take advantage of training opportunities to learn more about inclusive teaching
- Teachers should be aware of refugee and people with disabilities rights and needs, and advocate for schools to meet these rights