Disabled Refugees Included and Visible in Education (DRIVE)

Case Reports

South Africa
Uganda
Zimbabwe

DISABLED REFUGEES STUDENTS INCLUDED AND VISIBLE IN EDUCATION: CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES IN THREE AFRICAN COUNTRIES: SOUTH AFRICA CASE REPORT

A project funded by The British Academy Learning in Crises Programme

Case report written by: Nicole De-Wet Billings (nicole.dewet-billings@wits.ac.za) and Khuthala Mabetha (kmabetha@gmail.com)

September 2022

Contents

Executive summary

Refugee populations include people living with disabilities who have been invisible in policy and service provision. Refugee children living with disabilities, like all children, have ambitions and dreams for the futures and they thus need quality education to develop their skills and realize their full potential. However, they are often overlooked in policymaking, limiting their access to education and their ability to participate in social, economic, and political life. In addition, they are among the most likely to be out of school and face persistent barriers to education stemming from discrimination, stigma, and the routine failure of decision makers to incorporate disability in school services. Given these circumstances, little is known about the challenges and opportunities that refugee students living with disabilities face with respect to inclusion in education, especially in the Global South, which hosts most of the world's refugees. Refugees living with disabilities in South Africa constitute an important part of society. South Africa developed the Refugees Act in the year 1998 which became fully operational in 2000 and afforded refugees the opportunity to enjoy access to basic services such as educational opportunities and healthcare services Despite the existence of the Refugees Act that guarantees refugee children the right to education, regardless of their nationality, the creation of inclusive learning environments, particularly for refugee children living with disabilities, is far from being realized. Thus, our project aimed to gather evidence that will impact policy and practice, such that these students become visible and included in education. Particularly in the South African context, the aim was to understand the educational experiences of refugee children living with disabilities and factors that affect their access to educational inclusion.

Key Findings
- Refugee children living with disabilities experience a range of educational challenges that hinder their access to inclusive educational programmes and affect their learning.
- There is a lack of knowledge on policies that focus on the educational inclusion of children living with disabilities in South Africa, specifically education policies that are applicable to the education of refugee children.
- The teaching curriculum serves as a barrier with regards to the children being exposed to an inclusive educational system as most learning environments do not have the necessary tools or guides that meet the learning needs of all children with disabilities.
- There are challenges with respect to what has been stipulated in writing and actual implementation of the policies that aim to promote inclusive education for children living with disabilities.
- Most refugee children do not have the necessary South African documentation (e.g. Birth certificate or study permits) which enables them to qualify to register for enrolment in school.
- Poor enrolment rates in South African primary and secondary schools for refugee children living with disabilities is the direct result of lack of funding and parental inability to cover educational costs.

- There is a shortage of specialised support personnel in special schools and thus the children do not receive adequate or the right level of support resulting in schools not having the right level of accessibility.

1. Introduction

Disability, in particular childhood disability, is largely deemed to be a major social and public health issue in South Africa, with more than one million children documented to suffer from a sensory, cognitive, psychological, or physical impairment in the country (Saloojee et al., 2006; ACPF, 2011; DSD et al., 2012). The mandate of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the South African Constitution is to ensure that children living with disabilities enjoy the right to access basic health care services and educational services (DSD et al., 2012). Although concerted efforts have been made to raise public awareness about childhood disability, issues pertaining to disability as well as the rights of people living with disabilities, children living with disabilities are still largely exposed to various unmet healthcare, welfare, and educational needs, particularly in settings that are resource constrained (Saloojee et al., 2006). Children living with disabilities have generally for a long time, being excluded from education and exposed to different learning systems in relation to the general mainstream education system (Walton et al., 2020). Of note, research has shown that refugee children living with disabilities also constitute the population of South African children living with disabilities who are socially and economically marginalized in terms of accessing education (Crock et al., 2017; Singal et al., 2019).

Great strides have been made by the Department of Basic Education to ensure that children living with disabilities are enrolled in basic educational institutions, based on the directive of inclusive education. This has included the development of a five-year strategic plan (developed during the period of 2015/16 to 2019/20) that aimed to strengthen inclusive education through the adoption of Goal 26 of the National Development Plan (NDP) (Alliance, 2017). Moreover, the Department of Basic Education and the Department of Social Development have formed a joint initiative that aims to utilise the social grant system as a strategy to identify children living with disabilities who are not enrolled in school (Khumalo & Hodgson, 2017). Despite the great strides that South Africa has made in trying to achieve universal access to education, a problem that persists in the country is the lack of equal access to education among children living with disabilities. A study that examined the challenges of realising inclusive education in South Africa showed that more than 70% of children living with disabilities were not in school, with those who do attend, being enrolled in special needs schools for children living with disabilities (Donohue & Bornman, 2014). National Statistics obtained from the government of South Africa in the year 2015 showed that an estimated 597,753 children living with disabilities were not enrolled in school (Department of Basic Education, 2016; Khumalo & Hodgson, 2017). This figure has been reported to have increased by more than 50% since 2001, when the rate of out-of-school children living with disabilities was documented to be around 280 000 children (Department of Basic Education, 2001). Additionally, a further report has shown that individuals with severe impairments fair worse in terms of educational attainment with only 5.3% having ever attained a tertiary qualification, 23.8% having no formal education and 24.6% having some primary education (Department of Social Development, 2016).

Given that the right to inclusive education has been found to not be fully or adequately implemented among South African children living with disabilities, this lack of implementation

also holds true for refugee children living with disabilities as the creation of inclusive learning environments is far from being realized. Generally, refugees women and girls often experience a number of inequities, in particular unequal access to health services and educational opportunities (Ramjathan-Keogh, 2017). Refugees living with disabilities in South Africa constitute an important part of society and thus should be integrated in all activities and community structures (Department of Social Development, 2016). South Africa developed the Refugees Act in the year 1998 which became fully operational in 2000 and afforded refugees the opportunity to enjoy access to basic services such as educational opportunities and healthcare services (Ramjathan-Keogh, 2017). In essence, this South African law stipulates that refugees should be afforded equal access to educational opportunities similarly to their South African counterparts or citizens (Mweni, 2018). Despite the existence of the Refugees Act that guarantees refugee children the right to education, regardless of their nationality, the creation of inclusive learning environments, particularly for refugee children living with disabilities, is far from being realized. Given this background, this report documents provides an overview of the situation of refugee children living with disabilities in South Africa.

2. Methodology

2.1 Data collection processes

Different methods of data collection and analysis were used to gain comprehensive insight on the dynamics of educational inclusion and exclusion of refugee children living with disabilities in South Africa. Quantitative and Qualitative data methods were triangulated to generate a demographic and socioeconomic profile of refugee children living with disabilities, explore the experiences of refugee children living with disabilities and their families with respect to educational access and success in South Africa and gain insight into how educational officials and NGO workers perceive the educational challenges and opportunities of children living with disabilities in South Africa. Before data collection and analysis commenced, a desktop review identifying policies, laws, legislations, and guidelines that focus on the educational inclusion of children living with disabilities in South Africa, was conducted. The implementation and impact of these policies in promoting inclusive education for learners living with disabilities was critically observed to discern whether each policy achieved its intended outcomes/ objectives (See annexure A). Secondly, available South African secondary quantitative datasets that provided a profile of refugee populations were sourced and analysed to develop a statistical report of migration dynamics of refugee children living with disabilities in South Africa. The indicators of interest that were analysed in the quantitative data included:

1. Age and Sex structure of the total refugee population in South Africa.
2. Overall Sex ratios of refugees in South Africa.
3. Disability status of all refugee children of school-going age (7 – 18 years old) in South Africa.
4. Types of disabilities among all refugee children of school-going age (7 – 18 years old) in South Africa.
5. Inter-provincial migration streams of all refugee children of school-going age (7 -18 years old) in South Africa.

6. Region of birth, duration of residence in South Africa and school attendance status.

Thirdly, a meeting was convened on the 26^{th of} March 2021 with various Stakeholders and advisory boards from the Department of Social Development, Human Rights Watch as well as non-governmental organisations that advocate for the human rights and respond to critical issues affecting people and children living with disabilities, particularly refugees living with disabilities. These organisations have a holistic approach that supports children living with disabilities including their families and their surrounding community, through empowering families to be able to support and develop their children with special needs as well fostering community engagement. Consultations with the Stakeholders were fruitful as they provided comprehensive feedback on the proposed study, methods and proposed analysis and they offered to provide us with additional guiding material to further the study and offered to assist us in referring us to the main study participants (See Table 1).

The interviews were conducted over a period of approximately 7 months (fieldwork commenced in the month of April 2021 and ended in December 2021. Overall, although the aim was to conduct 40 semi-structured interviews, only 33 interviews were conducted given that 7 participants were reluctant to participate in the study. Five (5) semi-structured interviews were conducted with NGO workers who worked in disability sectors that also catered for refugee children living with disabilities and 5 interviews were conducted with Education officials. Education Officials were individuals who worked for government departments in particular School Principals and other officials working in education. Of note, majority of these officials included teachers as a key challenge faced was the recruitment and retention of officials who work in the departments of education. Most Education officials were hesitant to participate in the interviews as they believed that the study was school-based and thus had concerns about certain conclusions being drawn even after several attempts were made to show them what the aim of the study was. Lastly, 23 interviews were conducted with refugee children living with disabilities and their families (13 caregivers and 10 children). Most of the interviews were conducted in English while the remaining 6 interviews conducted with refugee caregivers, were conducted in IsiZulu with the participants responding in Ndebele, which is an African language belonging to the Nguni group of Bantu languages, spoken by the Northern Ndebele people or Matebele, in Zimbabwe. IsiZulu and Ndebele grammar and language are similar although there are some differences. These differences did not however, cause any issues with regards to interactions between the participants and the interviewer.

A first visit was paid to all the participants and the visit served as a rapport-building process that assisted the participants to get to know us better which made them feel at ease during their scheduled interviews and enabled them to speak candidly about their experiences about their lived experiences and realities of accessing education and challenges and factors that contribute to successful, poor or no inclusion in education of refugee children living with disabilities. A non-probability purposive sampling technique was adopted in the study. The purposive sampling technique was suitable as it assisted in selecting participants who share similar characteristics and meet the selection criteria of the study. The sample of participants was obtained through the assistance of the various Stakeholders. Stakeholders from the

Department of Social Development and Human Rights Watch referred us to the Sophiatown Psychological Services, which further referred us to the Three2Six Project, Sunshine Centre Association and Disabled Refugees Project.

All participants were requested to sign an informed consent form which stipulated the aims of the study, guaranteed confidentiality and indicated that the study is voluntary. Potential participants were first provided with a participant information sheet that explained the nature and aim of the study (please see appendix E and F). Participants who were recruited in this study were provided with an informed consent form which stipulated the aims of the study, guaranteed confidentiality. The informed consent form also provided information on who would have access to the participants' information, indicated that the study was voluntary, and provided information on the storage of data, recording of data and the dissemination of the findings. In addition, the participants were provided with the contact details of the researcher and those of the research supervisors in the event they had any enquiries or concerns pertaining to the study. Formal ethical clearance and approval was sought from the Human Research Ethics Committee (Non-Medical) based at the University of the Witwatersrand and the Department of Education's Research Ethics Committee to gain access to the caregivers, refugee students and education officials.

Verbal consent was then sought from participants who were willing to participate voluntarily and fully acknowledged that they understood the purpose of the research. Before participants could sign the informed consent, they were given the opportunity to ask any questions they may have had or to receive clarity on certain issues pertaining to the study. The participants were then requested to sign the informed consent form. The identity of participants was protected by providing each participant with a participant number. Although the information provided by the participants was captured on an audio recorder, the recordings have been securely stored in a password-protected computer. The recordings and the transcriptions will be disposed of five years after the completion of the study.

Table 1. Methods used in the collection of data

Methods	Type of information collected
Policy review	Legislation, policies, laws, frameworks, focusing on inclusive education of children living with disabilities in South Africa; processes involved in implementing various policies, laws, rules, and legal frameworks.

Secondary data analysis	South African National Surveys namely Census, Community Survey, Victims of Crime Survey, Governance, Public Safety and Justice Survey, Living Conditions Survey and National Income Dynamics Survey. Collected data on individual demographic information of refugee children e.g. age, sex, place of residence, educational status (school attendance status, level of education, educational institution, type of institution whether private or public), employment status, marital status, religious affiliation, South African citizenship (yes or no), population group, disability status and type of disability, region of birth, duration of residence in South Africa, size and composition of population, age dependency (ratio of non-working refugees over working refugees), sex ratios, inter-provincial migration streams (previous province referring to migration origin and current province referring to migration destination).
Semi-structured interviews	
NGO Workers and Education Officials	Employment background (role, responsibilities and how long they have been in that role), knowledge of policies applicable to children living with disabilities and refugee children, challenges, or opportunities to accessing inclusive education e.g., curriculum, resources, teacher education.
Refugee students not in school	Demographic information (country of origin, duration of residence in South Africa, household composition), Schooling experiences, whether they have tried to find a school in South Africa and reasons thereof, type of activities involved in (learning activities, activities with friends or faith group), job prospects.
Refugee students in school	Demographic information (country of origin, duration of residence in South Africa, household composition), Schooling experiences, how easy it was to find a school in South Africa, enjoying being in school and why, description of teaching curriculum, teaching methods or style, how learning and progress is assessed at school, ability to join all school activities, job prospects.

Caregiver of student not in school	Factors that have affected ability to look for a school, how child is spending time at home (involvement in any learning activities).
Caregiver of student in school	How easy it was to find a school in South Africa and processes involved, how child gets to school, contentment with teaching curriculum, how school assesses learning and progress, ability of child to join in all activities offered by school.

2.2 Methodological Challenges

There were several challenges that were experienced during the data collection. The first challenge encountered was concerned with recruitment and retention of participants. Virtual meetings were held with some Education officials who were initially hesitant in participating in the interviews. During these meetings, adequate information on the aims of the study were shared with the officials ensuring that they understood their rights as participants in the study and acknowledging their expertise with regards to dynamics and factors that contribute to successful inclusion or lack of inclusion of refugee children in education. Given that this was during the peak of the COVID-19 pandemic; officials were granted the option to be interviewed virtually. Despite all the processes that were undertaken to retain the participants, some education officials did not commit to participation as previously agreed as some assumed that the study was school-based and certain conclusions would be drawn about the various schools and organizations they worked in. Other officials simply could no longer be reached despite numerous attempts to reschedule their interview slots. In addition, Some NGOS that provide after school learning opportunities to refugee children who are not enrolled formerly in school could not engage in further discussions with us given that they do not have any refugee children who are living with disabilities and thus could not provide any insight pertaining to disability.

Most importantly, some refugee children had intellectual disabilities thus this was challenging as we had to find different ways to engage the children in the research process. In most instances, parents had to be present during the interview and this was a major methodological challenge as some parents were in control of the research process (assisting the child by responding on their behalf to some questions) which could have greatly impacted the interview responses of the refugee children. Lastly, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, interview scheduling took longer than anticipated and some participants would ask to move the interview date due to other commitments. This greatly affected transcription time and completion which also had an impact on qualitative analysis.

3. A Demographic Profile of the population of refugee children living with disabilities in South Africa

The demographic and socio-economic characteristics of refugees play a significant role in determining overall child health and wellbeing. This section provided a demographic profile of the population of refugees living in South Africa, using descriptive statistics. Although various South African datasets that provided a profile of refugee children living with disabilities in South Africa have been presented in the statistical report, data from one dataset has been provided in this case report. Data from the 2011 South African Census has been presented given that the Census is a nationally representative survey that collects basic population and housing statistics that are required for social and economic development, policy interventions, their implementation and evaluation (Statistics South Africa, 2011). Data collected in the Census includes data demographic data, migration, education, general health and functioning and labour force participation.

Figure 1. Age-sex composition of the refugee population in South Africa, Census 2011
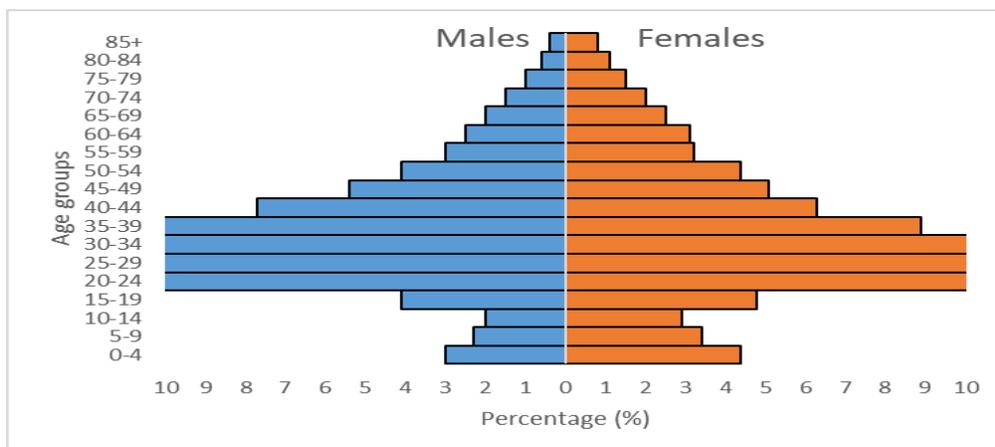
Figure 1 shows that there were fewer birth rates among refugees in South Africa in the year 2011 as this is indicated by a narrow base at the younger ages (ages 0-4 years to 10-14 years), with less male children than female children being born. However, the refugee population is constituted of a youthful economically active population particularly in the age groups 20-24 to 35-39 (with an equal number of male and female refugees being economically active) as the base is wider in those age groups. Life expectancy appears to be relatively high as it can be observed that the refugee population are living up to the age of 85+ (more females than males). Although life expectancy is high among the refugee population, it can be observed that the size of each birth cohort is decreasing with an increase in age, among males compared to females.

Table 2: Sex ratios of refugee populations by age groups in South Africa, Census 2011

Census 2011			
Age groups	Males	Females	Sex ratio
0-4	38,946	37,992	102:100
5-9	28,210	27,901	101:100
10-14	38,946	23,916	163:100
15-19	51,510	39,817	129:100
20-24	182,828	126,744	144:100
25-29	260,192	158,485	164:100
30-34	213,585	114,211	187:100
35-39	151,794	76,269	199:100
40-44	99,945	54,438	183:100
45-49	68,764	44,142	156:100
50-54	52,572	37,427	140:100
55-59	39,140	28,365	138:100
60-64	32,561	26,817	121:100
65-69	25,033	21,916	114:100
70-74	19,944	17,029	117:100
75-79	12,450	12,813	97:100
80-84	7,281	9,008	81:100
85+	5,312	6,828	78:100
Unspecified	0	0	
Total	1,315,056	864,119	

Table 2 shows the sex ratios of the total population of refugees in South Africa during the period 2011. Based on the results presented in the table, it can be observed that the highest sex ratio is in the age groups 35-39 (199 males per 100 females), 30-34 (187 males per 100 females) and 40-44 (183 males per 100 females). age groups 15-19 as a marked difference can be observed with the peak that has accelerated in these age groups. Contrary to these findings, it can also be observed that the number of males per 100 females starts to decrease with an increase in age from the age groups 45-59, with fewer male refugees found in the age groups 75-79 to 85+, in relation to the refugee population of females.

Figure 2. Disability status of refugee children (7 – 18 years old) in South Africa
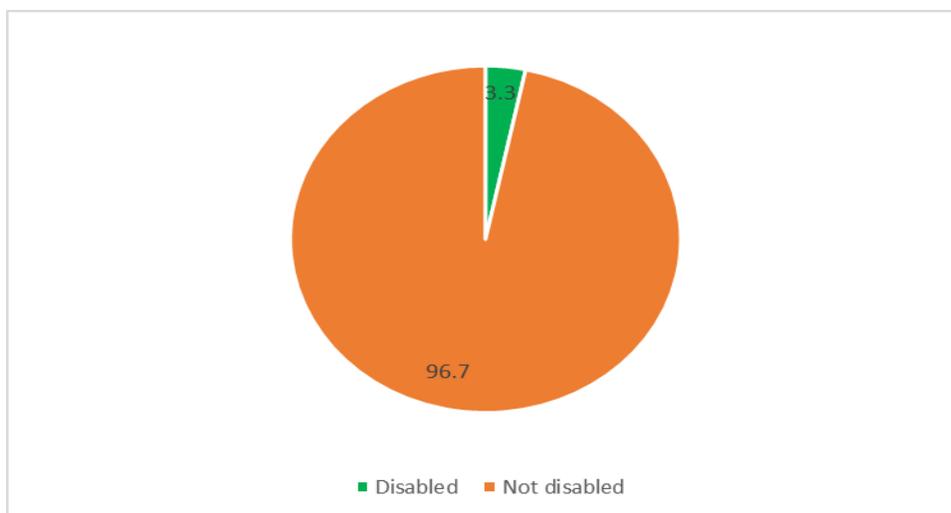
Overall, the results shown in figure 2 show that nearly 100% of refugee children living in South Africa, were not living with a disability. Only 3% of the sampled population of refugee children were reported to have a disability. This percentage is lower compared to the general population of South African children as Census 2011 statistics showed that 4.9% (5%) of South African children in the age groups 7-18 years have some form of disability.

Table 3. Types of disabilities among refugee children (7 – 18 years old) in South Africa, Census 2011

	Census 2001
Sight (Blind/ severe visual limitation)	
Yes	2.8 (2,176)
No	97.2 (76,911)
Total	**100.0 (79,087)**
Hearing (deaf/ profoundly hard of hearing)	
Yes	1.2 (908)
No	98.9 (78,179)
Total	**100.0 (79,087)**
Communication (speech impairment)	
Yes	1.1 (881)
No	98.9 (78,206)
Total	**100.0 (79,087)**
Physically handicapped (needs wheelchair / crutch)	
Yes	0.6 (493)
No	99.4 (78,594)
Total	**100.0 (79,087)**
Intellectual (serious difficulties in learning/concentration)	
Yes	1.4 (1,071)
No	98.6 (78,016)

Total	100.0 (79,087)
Self-Care	
Yes	3.3 (2,593)
No	96.7 (76,494)
Total	**100.0 (79,087)**

Table 3 shows the types of disabilities that have been reported among refugee children of school-going age in South Africa. Overall, the results showed that the same percentage distribution of refugee children who have difficulty in self-care e.g. engaging in physical activities such as bathing, dressing or feeding themselves and those who have a visual impairment, as they each constituted 3% of the sampled population. Additionally, no percentage differences were further observed among refugee children who were reported to be physically challenged and those who were reported to have speech impairments (1% each respectively).

Table 4. Inter-provincial migration streams of refugee children (7-18 years old) in South Africa, Census 2011

CENSUS 2011	Current Province (Migration Destination)											
Previous province (migration origin)	WC	KZN	GP	FS	NC	L	MP	NW	EC	Out-migrants	In-migrants	Net migration
WC	486	0	47	0	11	0	0	0	11	588	1,278	690
KZN	0	155	34	0	0	23	0	0	11	262	537	275
GP	114	11	1,653	23	0	237	27	61	45	2,251	3,625	1,374
FS	0	0	0	11	0	0	0	0	0	32	109	77
NC	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	11	24	13
L	11	35	33	0	0	34	0	33	0	157	432	275
MP	23	12	22	0	0	0	0	0	0	57	183	126
NW	0	0	12	0	0	0	11	11	0	45	165	120
EC	17	0	11	0	0	0	0	0	98	126	355	229
Outside RSA	627	324	1,813	75	13	138	145	60	190	3,385	203	-3,182

Table 4 shows the out-migration rates of refugee children for each province in South Africa in 2011. The net migration rates (which refers to the difference between those who are immigrating and those who are emigrating) show that Gauteng Province (1,374) and Western Cape (690) received the highest number of in-migrants in the year 2011, in relation to all the other provinces, which also received positive net migration rates.

Table 5. Socio-demographic profile of refugee children (7-18 years old) living with disabilities in South Africa, Census 2011

	Census 2011
Characteristic	**% (N)**
Sex	
Female	50.5 (1,310)
Male	29.5 (1,284)
Total	**100.0 (2,593)**
Current age	
7-10 years	69.4 (1,799)
11-14 years	22.2 (576)
15-18 years	8.4 (219)
Total	**100.0 (2,593)**
Place of residence	
Urban	74.4 (1,937)
Rural	25.3 (657)
Total	**100.0 (2,593)**
Province of residence	
Western Cape	11.4 (296)
Eastern Cape	2.1 (55)
Northern Cape	0.9 (24)
Free State	8.5 (220)
KwaZulu-Natal	6.1 (159)
North West	6.6 (170)
Gauteng	39.7 (1,030)
Mpumalanga	8.8 (229)
Limpopo	15.8 (409)
Total	**100.0 (2,593)**
Population group	
Black African	83.4 (2,162)
Coloured	2.3 (58)
Indian or Asian	2.9 (75)
White	3.2 (84)
Other	8.3 (214)
Total	**100.0 (2,593)**
Level of education	
Some primary	89.6 (2,323)
Completed primary	3.3 (85)
Some secondary	6.7 (174)

Grade 12	0.4 (11)
Higher	-
No education	-
Other	-
Total	**100.0 (2,593)**
Educational institution	
School	97.4 (2,527)
College	-
University	-
Adult education centre	-
Special school/other	2.6 (67)
Total	**100.0 (2,593)**
Private or Public institution	
Public (government)	89.7 (2,328)
Private	10.2 (265)
Total	**100.0 (2,593)**
Employment status	
Not applicable, aged less than 15	91.5 (2,374)
Unemployed	8.5 (219)
Employed	-
Total	**100.0 (2,593)**
Religious affiliation	
Christian churches	-
Islam	-
No religion	-
Dutch Reformed Churches	-
Other non-Christian churches	-
Undetermined	-
Hinduism	-
Total	**-**
Marital status	
Never married	99.2 (2,572)
Married traditional (cohabiting)	0.4 (10)
Separated	0.4 (11)
Widowed	-
Total	**100.0 (2,593)**

South African citizenship	
Yes	28.5 (738)
No	69.0 (1,789)
Unspecified	2.5 (66)
Total	**100.0 (2,593)**

Table 5 shows the percentage distribution of refugee children by their sociodemographic characteristics. Overall, the percentage distributions show that over 50% of the refugee children living with disabilities in South Africa were female who were in the age groups 7 – 10 years (69%). An analysis of the refugee children's place of residence showed that close to 75% of refugee children living with disabilities reside in urban areas in the Gauteng province (40%) and majority are Black African (83%). Furthermore, majority (90%) of the refugee children have some primary education which they obtained in a school (97%) in a public institution (90%). Nearly 100% of the refugee children living with disabilities have never been married and 69% do not have South African citizenship.

Figure 3. Region of birth of refugee children (7- 18 years old) living with disabilities in South Africa, Census 2011
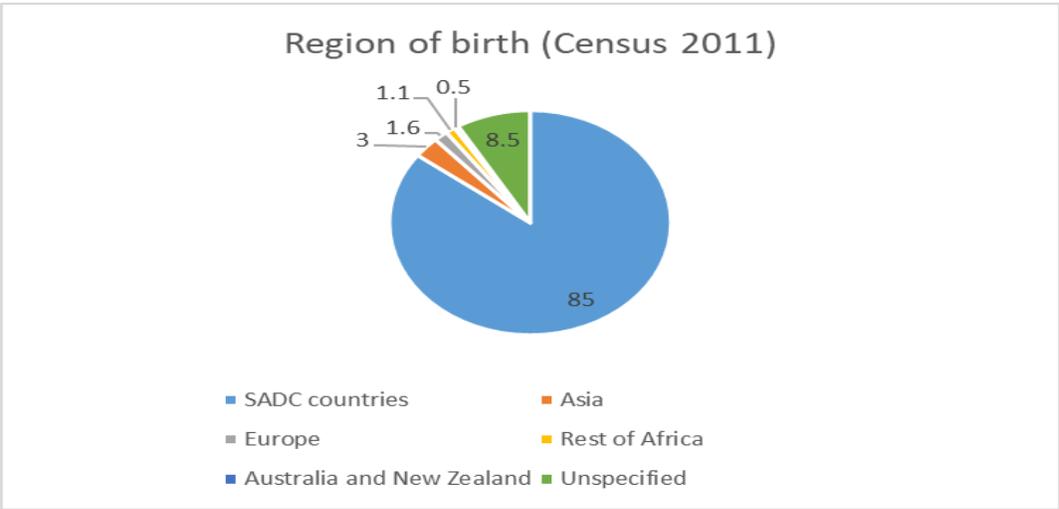
Overall, figure 3 shows that approximately 85% of refugee children living with disabilities in South Africa were born in the SADC countries of the sub-Saharan African region. 8% did not specify their region of birth and a small percentage of refugee children (0.5%) were reported to have been born in other countries in the African continent.

Figure 4. Duration of residence of refugee children (7 – 18 years old) living with disabilities in South Africa, Census 2011
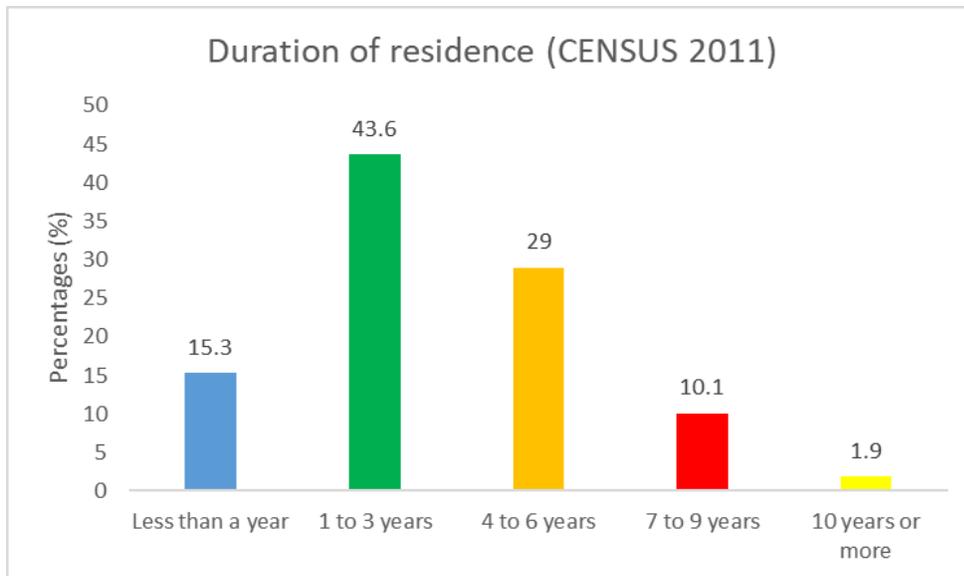
Figure 4 shows that close to 45% of refugee children living with disabilities have lived in South Africa for approximately 1 to 3 years, followed by 29% of refugee children who have lived in South Africa for 4 to 6 years. Contrary to these findings, only 2% of refugee children living with disabilities have lived in South Africa for 10 years or more.

4. Overview of Legislation and Policies focusing on Inclusive Education for children living with disabilities in South Africa

4.1 Brief overview of the Education sector in South Africa

Education is a factor that plays a fundamental role in fostering development in any society, through eradicating poverty, unemployment, diseases as well as promoting gender equality and women empowerment (Department of Education, 2015). The South African Schools' Act and the Bill of Rights Chapter of the South African Constitution are major Acts that were enacted in South Africa to foster equal education for all. Overall, the South African Schools' Act is a law that was enacted in 1996 with the fundamental aim and mission of ensuring equitable access to quality education for all children and making school attendance primary education compulsory for all children aged 7 to 15 years (South African Schools Act, 1996; RSA, 1996; OSDP, 2008). Furthermore, Act 84 of the South African Schools Act stipulates that all children (including children living with disabilities) should be accepted in schools without any unfair treatment and should be provided with appropriate and sufficient educational support services that foster positive educational outcomes (Moll & Drew, 2006; Khumalo & Hodgson, 2017). Additionally, Section 3(1) of the South African Schools Act stipulates that parents must cause every learner

for whom he or she is responsible to attend a school from the year that the learner turns seven until the year that the learner turns 15 or reaches grade 9.

In addition, Section 29 of Bill of Rights Chapter of the South African Constitution postulates that every South African citizen has the right to basic education, including adult education and to higher education which should be made accessible and available by the government (Statutes of the Republic of South Africa, 1996; Crush & Tawodzera, 2011; DSD et al., 2012).

The education sector is a priority area for education stakeholders and the government in South Africa (Van der Berg, 2011). In the year 2010, the Department of Basic Education released a report known as the "*Action Plan to 2014: Towards the Realisation of Schooling 2025*" (Department of Basic Education, 2011). The report provides an overview of the priority education areas that need to be addressed up to the period of 2025 (Department of Basic Education, 2011). The overall aim of the programme is to improve learner academic performance through the provision of increased access to education and promotion of a safe learning environment (Department of Basic Education, 2011). In relation to other developing nations, South Africa is one of the countries that has managed to achieve universal access to schooling at both primary and secondary levels (Stats SA, 2013; UNICEF, 2013). In addition, the education system in South Africa has witnessed progressive reforms with the sector receiving the highest investment compared to other sectors, of 6.1% of the GDP (ACPF, 2011). In terms of learner enrolment, the Gender Parity Index at primary school level was 0.99 and 1.07 at secondary school level during the financial year of 2016 (Department of Education, 2015). This result indicates that there were 1% less females in primary schools in relation to male learners and 7% more female learners in secondary schools, in relation to male learners. In terms of the overall school enrolment rates for both male and female students, school enrolment rates were higher in primary schools compared to secondary schools, both in the financial years of 2015 and 2016 (Primary schools: 2015 rate: 1 279 788 and 2016 rate: 1 325 969) (Secondary schools: 2015 rate: 718 852 and 2016 rate: 721 745) (Department of Education, 2015). This suggests that majority of learners did not transition progressively to secondary education.

4.2 Overview of the Inclusive Model of Education in South Africa

Since the beginning of the democratic era in South Africa, the government has made concerted efforts to redress inequities existing in the Apartheid policies that previously hindered majority of the South African population from accessing services (Dalton et al., 2012). The Inclusive Model of Education is a framework that was developed by the Department of Education where all students, regardless of any challenges they may face, are placed in general education classes to receive high-quality teaching and educational support in order to foster academic success in the core curriculum (Tesemma, 2012; Donohue & Bornman, 2014). In essence, the Inclusive model of education is generally associated with the removal of learners living with disabilities in special needs schools followed by their placement in general education environments or mainstream schools (Polat, 2011; ACPF, 2011; Geldenhuys & Wevers, 2013; Inclusive Education South Africa, 2020; Walton et al., 2020).

There are a number of strategies embedded in the Inclusive Model of Education framework that aim to promote equitable and successful learning outcomes among all learners (those with special needs and those without special needs) through accommodating individual learning differences while teaching and assessing students. These strategies include attending to the individual learning needs and supporting these needs by providing educational tools, guides or structures that support these learning needs, making the teaching environment conducive for learning through the development of various teaching techniques and curricula, introducing school-based assessments that foster equal participation (Department of Basic Education, 2010; Philpott & McLaren, 2011; DSD et al., 2012; Inclusive Education in South Africa, 2020).

Selected examples of policies focusing on inclusive education for children living with disabilities are provided here. An example of a policy focusing on the educational inclusion of children living with disabilities is the Education White Paper 1 on Education and Training AND White Paper on an Integrated National Disability Strategy. This White Paper was issued in 1995 by the Department of Basic Education to address the needs of learners living with disabilities unsatisfactory learning experiences that affected learning needs and ultimately learning outcomes, both in special and mainstream schools (Department of Education, 1995). The framework of the Integrated National Disability Strategy was centered around the creation of a human-rights strategy that granted people living with disabilities the opportunity to enjoy equal rights as other South African citizens (Office of the Deputy President, 1997). A second policy that was implemented was the National Commission on Special Needs in Education and Training (NCSNET). The Committee of this policy were appointed by the Department of Education in November 1997 to carry out a formal enquiry and propose the best course of action in the provision of training to educators and support services to learners with special needs in educational institutions in South Africa (Department of Education, 2001). The aim of this commission is to examine the educational needs of children living with disabilities and then recommend ways to change the learning environment so that it promotes positive learning outcomes and minimizes learning difficulties (Department of Education, 1997).

An additional policy is the National Commission on Education Support Services (NCESS) which was also appointed by the Department of Education, simultaneously with the National Commission on Special Needs in Education Committee in October 1996. The overall aim of this commission is to advocate for a quality education for all by overcoming challenges that hinder successful learning and academic development (Department of Education, 1997). "Special needs" education under this commission is understood as the specific educational needs that learners have which can be ameliorated to promote effective learning (Department of Education, 1997). Such measures include the provision of devices that enable learners living with disabilities to undertake daily tasks and activities, introducing various therapeutic or psychosocial services, social interventions, and programmes that include collaborative participation of parents, educators, and other education stakeholders. The Consultative Paper on Special Education No.1 Building an Inclusive Education and Training System was issued in 1995 also by the Department of Education and came into existence based on the recommendations of the NCSNET and NCESS following several deliberations, reviews, public

discourses, and investigation on achieving inclusive education (Department of Education, 1999). It was issued with the main objective of detailing specific issues and outlining a comprehensive strategy that would be adopted to implement an educational and training system that is inclusive of all learners, that focuses on fostering learners to acquire knowledge and skills in a general learning environment as well as acquiring specific and applied knowledge and skills that result in positive learning outcomes (Murungi, 2015; Materechera, 2020).

Furthermore, the Department of Basic Education introduced an educational policy document called the "*White Paper 6: Special Needs Education, Building an Inclusive Education and Training System" on* the 26th July 2001 with the aim of updating the 1997 White Paper on an Integrated National Disability Strategy (Education, n.d; Department of Education, 2001; Department of Social Development, 2016). White Paper 6 was issued with the overall objective of introducing an inclusive education and training system as well as creating a just society that affords people living with disabilities equal rights through the removal of any discriminatory practices that present barriers in accessing services and participating in mainstream activities in society (Department of Basic Education, 2016). An additional policy was the National Strategy on Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support which played a significant role in responding to the policy and legislative directives outlined in White Paper 6 of promoting an inclusive education model. It guided the process of creating an inclusive education and training model through the provision of tools, strategies and techniques that assist educators to screen all learners living with disabilities, identifying and assessing learners with more specialised needs in order to develop appropriate teaching programmes that will assist educators in supporting the necessary adaptation of learners living with disabilities in the teaching curriculum of full-service schools (Department of Education, 2008; Department of Basic Education, 2014).

The promotion of the Equality and Prevention of Unfair Discrimination Act is a very important piece of legislation that was established by the government of South Africa (RSA, 2000). This legislation was enacted in order to identify the various ways in which discrimination occurs in the South African society and to establish ways to hinder, ameliorate and prohibit the occurrence of any unfair discrimination, prejudice and harassment (ACPF, 2011). Furthermore, this legislation focuses on ensuring that people living with disabilities are able to freely access facilities and also ensuring that any obstacles that restrict people living with disabilities from enjoying equal rights and opportunities and to function equally in the South African society, are ameliorated (ACPF, 2011).

4.3 Policies and legislation relevant to refugee education

The South African government has committed itself to addressing the inequalities and prejudices faced by children living with disabilities in South through the implementation of policies and legislative laws. A number of International legal frameworks have made provisions for refugee populations to have a right to basic primary education, health and housing as well as provision of social welfare support from governments of the host countries (Zimmerman et

al., 2011). South Africa is no exception. Given its status as a member of the Southern African Development Community (SADC), the South African government has signed the United Nations 1951 Convention on the Status of Refugees, 1967 Protocol, and the 1969 Africa Refugee Convention Act, 1969 Convention of the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) and the Refugees Act (1998) which all aim to provide the right to accessing healthcare and education services (Meda et al., 2012). Consequently, the South African government has the obligation and responsibility to foster sustainable development and economic growth, combat impoverishment, improve the standard and quality of life of the people of Southern Africa and most importantly, support the socially disadvantaged (including non-nationals) through regional integration (Twala, 2013).

5. Barriers in accessing inclusive education by refugees with disabilities

Despite the responsibility and obligation that South Africa has in promoting the integration of refugee populations as per the requirements of the international legal framework, the right to access various South African services such as the healthcare system, employment opportunities, housing and social security services remains a complex issue for refugees. Subsequently, refugee children thus remain in the periphery of the society mainly due to lack of appropriate documentation which hinders successful integration into the country and access to the most important services such as education, social security, and healthcare (Adams-Ojugbele & Mashiya, 2020). The aim of this study was to understand the educational experiences of refugee children living with disabilities and factors that affect their access to educational inclusion. The narratives of the participants indicated that refugee children living with disabilities experience a range of educational challenges that hinder their access to inclusive educational programmes and affect their learning. Nine superordinate themes emerged from the semi-structured interviews that adequately explain challenges that affect refugee children living with disabilities accessing inclusive education. These superordinate themes were developed by mapping interrelationships, connections, and patterns across the narratives through listening to the recordings and re-reading the transcripts several times. Several phrases were coded, and important phrases were identified resulting in the generation of the superordinate themes and sub-themes. In addition, for each superordinate theme, specific extracts for that theme were selected from different participants and placed under each relevant theme. This assisted us in achieving internal consistency and relative broadness of each superordinate theme. The 10 themes that emerged from the narratives of the participants are shown below:

1. Policy knowledge pertaining to refugee education.
2. Inappropriate teaching curriculum.
3. Disconnect between policy and practice.
4. Lack of relevant documentation.
5. Financial limitations.
6. Shortage of resource-based teams.

7. Placement issues.
8. Institutional xenophobia
9. Lack of parental engagement
10. Lack of quality education

5.1 Policy knowledge pertaining to refugee education

The narratives of the participants in this section showed that there is a lack of knowledge on policies that focus on the educational inclusion of children living with disabilities in South Africa, specifically education policies that are applicable to the education of refugee children. The participants held the common view that there is a lack of national laws for refugee children that foster the right to inclusive education. A distinctive feature emerging from the narratives of the participants showed that the participants only have knowledge of the School's Act which affords every child the right to a basic education. Participants indicated that it is not only refugee children living with disabilities who experience challenges in accessing school but this is a common phenomenon even amongst South African children living with disabilities. However, being a refugee who is living under difficult circumstances and living in an unfamiliar environment, intensifies the challenges. To indicate this outcome, Participant 1 argued that most resource-based teams including herself, know what the general rights that pertain to the education of children are, but do not have much knowledge of policies or rights that are tailored to specific schools. This view has been reflected in the excerpt below:

There is no specific mention of policies about migrant or refugee children uhm so we could assume that it falls under the right to education (NGO Worker).

Additionally, although the narratives of other participants showed that they had some knowledge of some South African educational policies, their narratives also showed that they had a lack of knowledge of educational policies tailored to refugee children living with disabilities:

We are guided by the Children's Act mostly, and then the Mental Health Care Act also guides us. Regarding refugees, we don't have any policies or anything like that (Principal).

There isn't much that is done to educate us as schools and stuff like that to this is how you deal with refugees, and this is how you deal with asylum seekers and stuff, so we never know what the difference is (Principal).

> *I am not too sure besides the basics uhm just rights of children and everything like that. But I don't know of any policies that are specific to refugee children (Education Official).*

These findings were anticipated given that an analysis of South African policies shows that policies that exist on the education of refugee children living with disabilities are only international policies that have been ratified by other countries together with South Africa as well as the general South African Schools Act that stipulates that every child, regardless of gender, creed, disability status or race, has the right to a basic education.

5.2 Inappropriate teaching curriculum

Participants further highlighted that the teaching curriculum has also served as a barrier with regards to the children being exposed to an inclusive educational system. The narratives of the participants showed that most learning environments do not have the necessary tools or guides that meet the learning needs of all children with disabilities. In addition, educators do not possess knowledge on strategies or techniques that will help in promoting an inclusive educational learning environment which will assist them in developing appropriate teaching programmes that will assist educators in supporting the necessary adaptation of learners living with disabilities similarly to the teaching curriculum of full-service schools. This was evident in the excerpts shown below:

> *Our curriculum is more foundation phase so the learning is limited as it is only experience   and development so I suppose that is learning in a way (Teacher).*

> *Their teaching also doesn't accommodate each child's learning needs that this child has a problem and that we should specify like the child's problem and address it because children are not the same. They are not the same. Even their levels are not the same. And their learning needs are not the same (Refugee Caregiver).*

However, contrary to these findings, the narratives of some participants showed that some schools and organisations are playing an active role in trying to follow a disability-inclusive curriculum as they are applying various interventions and educational support materials that enable children living with disabilities to succeed in their respective curriculum. The narratives further showed that teachers are equipped with the necessary training which has enabled them to develop flexible learning environments and learning spaces. This was evident through how they have created a curriculum that provides the children with an opportunity to acquire information through various ways that accommodate their individual learning differences.

We have our own training system and everything that we do. We know our children like on a very personal level and a basic level. We know what our kids can and can't do. And then we will strive to achieve goals which we set up for our children to achieve. So, you have to sort of look at it, and modify it and tweak here and take away this and make it a little bit easier. (Education Official).

When the child comes, we checklist and see what the child needs. So with the checklist it says my child has this particular disability and on which level the child falls and the place them according to that level. So we do things like that and then so that we accommodate the child. We try by all means"(Principal).

We've got one Occupational Therapist that they hired not so long ago. She understands children with disabilities so she provides like workshops for our teachers. And Department of Education also the best thing that they are doing is to give our teachers the workshops. Ja. They even brought AAC equipment the Alternative Augmentative Communication tools you know so that if the child can't speak, they can use those technical activities to do, like equipment to communicate with the child (NGO Worker).

We have a very good and this is not language-based but we have a very good therapy team that comes and assesses the child and then they look at a programme together which the child can follow home but then you can also follow in class to best benefit the child (Educational Official).

We follow a start checklist programme where we assess each child and then based on the result of that, we set goals for each child. We do that so that we can achieve that particular goal. And then it also helps us with reports in the report writing. So if we see a child struggling, let's say with fine motor activities, we can give them extra stuff to do (Education official)

We've got Department of Education that comes twice a month that helps them with Occupational Therapy, Physio, Special-needs learning. So, the people who come to the classes, work with the teachers, set up goals with the teachers to say ok there is a child, this is what the child needs. So, this month let's work with this. By the end of the month we will come and review to see if the goals have been attained or not (Education official).

Additionally, some parents concurred that teachers have received necessary training to teach their children using various methods that will help them to meet their individual learning needs.

They've got little tests that they give him and they see if the Speech Therapist say that most of the time when you are talking to him, maybe he won't be able to listen. But when you speak to him in pictures, he is gonna

know what's that and he is gonna say what it is and what you are talking about. They give us that information like the tips, what we must do, how we must do it. We've been applying that at home and we see that it is has been at working at home. Even at school, they use the same method so I think it does help (Refugee Caregiver).

In addition, other refugee students indicated being happy with their schools as they were exposed to the full teaching curriculum.

We learn Mathematics, Natural Science, Technology, English, Afrikaans, Economics, Business Sciences and Social Sciences. We have different subjects for all the days. Maths, we always do integers and decimals. In Life Orientation we learn about the rights and freedoms of everyone. Then Natural Sciences, we learn how to observe all these things like mixtures. We mix chemicals. Social Sciences we learn about History. How we used to live in History and then Geography. They also give us reports which show an assessment of our work and also have meetings with our parents (Refugee student).

The teachers are kind; they understand if you can't understand some work then they give you extra time to finish. They are good actually. They make sure that you understand every subject that they teach you (Refugee student).

We write tests, assessments and exams. In woodwork, we do projects, make chairs and boards etc. and when it is time for the test, we write what we did (Refugee student).

5.3 Disconnect between policy and practice

The narratives of other participants showed that are challenges with respect to what has been stipulated in writing and actual implementation of the policies that aim to promote inclusive education for children living with disabilities. It was noted in the narratives of the participants that educational departments that are involved in the development and implantation of policies do not stipulate their objectives and responsibilities in their working relations with non-governmental organisations and schools. It has also been indicated that there are discrepancies in what policies stipulate and actual implementation of the policies with some participants indicating that the educational departments involved in policy development and implementation, are still in the planning phase and have not implemented nor put anything into practice, apart from the introduction of an educational tool that has been introduced to adjust the teaching curriculum to suit the children's educational needs. Moreover, the participants argued that although there is an existence of inclusion policy, resource-based

teams have not been allocated to schools in a meaningful way. It can thus be argued that such instances result in a lack of clarity on the roles and responsibilities of educators, NGO Workers and other stakeholders who are involved in inclusive education, thus hindering children from realising their right to a full, inclusive education system. Excerpts showing this disconnect are presented below:

> *All I know is that there are a number of policies but they are not being implemented as they should be (NGO Worker).*

> *They are still working on the policies I think, while they are here because they will come with this and say no we are supposed to work with these children but not this type of a child with such a disability. So they are still in a very initial stage like still planning to implement and not implemented and putting it into practice (NGO Worker).*

> *I might not like but a policy that they shared with us or called us into a workshop and said this is our policy lets discuss it lets implement it, nothing. We haven't had that (NGO Worker).*

Contrary to these findings, a distinctive feature that emerged from one participant's narrative showed that children living with disabilities are often excluded from participating in educational activities based on the severity of their disability. Given such circumstances, this often erroneously justifies educational departments from excluding children with disabilities in inclusive educational systems.

> *Educational departments need to take part with children with disabilities because they don't do much especially for children who have severe disabilities like they will say no, they want to educate a child who is educable. I mean stimulation is still education because you are teaching the brain. And for the child to get there, you need to start somewhere if that child has the potential and we can't conclude and say no. This child won't improve. Yes, we can't exclude children. (NGO Worker).*

5.4 Lack of relevant documentation

Participants further indicated that the main barrier barring refugee children including refugee children living with disabilities, from meeting enrolment requirements and accessing education is the lack of documentation. This finding is in highly incongruent with recent regulations stipulated in the Centre for Child Law as quoted in section 29(1) of the Constitution, which holds that the right to education should be extended to undocumented non-national children as well and that it in unlawful for a non-national child to be refused admission to school on the basis that they do not possess a birth certificate, passport, or permit. The narratives of the

participants indicated that most refugee children do not have the necessary South African documentation (e.g., Birth certificate or study permits) which enables them to qualify to register for enrolment in school. This has presented major challenges in terms of the refugee children having the right to access the full range of educational opportunities. Thus, in essence, it can be argued that the right to an education for refugee children fundamentally depends on the availability of the relevant documentation and on migrant/asylum status, rather than on their educational needs.

> *Documentation is a major challenge because you know some migrants are illegal migrants so they wouldn't have documents from Home Affairs and also just some schools sometimes don't accept children who are asylum seekers who have an asylum seeker permit for some reason or even the ones who have a refugee status sometimes wouldn't be accepted because they have those kinds of papers, and they are not South African (NGO Worker).*

> *They then do not have birth certificates or IDs so it could almost be that that child stays at home again. (NGO Worker).*

> *They don't have birth certificates. It is a big challenge. So, then it is very difficult for them to get registered. Then the others are that the parents are not working. So, it is double problem because they don't have papers and the parents don't work (Educational official).*

> *I once went to… to another school. They told us that they want the child's documentation for the child to be enrolled in the school. I have an asylum, but I don't have a South African ID. They said she won't be accepted at the school because they need all her full details. So that was the problem (Refugee Caregiver).*

Contrary to these findings, a distinctive feature emerging from one narrative showed that some refugee children who have managed to enroll in school are faced with the challenge of not writing their final exams when the validity of their permits become null and expire.

> *Then another school refused to let disabled refugee children write matric unless they pay R350 to the Principal who says he is going to give it to Home Affairs to extend their permit (NGO Worker).*

5.5 Financial limitations

Poor enrolment rates in South African primary and secondary schools for refugee children living with disabilities is the direct result of lack of funding and parental inability to cover educational

costs. Many special schools in South Africa are private schools and are thus not state-aided or subsidized by the government. This has thus largely affected access to inclusive education as caregivers of refugee children do not have the financial means to invest in their children's education. The narratives of the participants showed that most refugee caregivers come from a poor socioeconomic background and are unemployed which is further compounded by their lack of documentation for asylum status. This makes it difficult for them to apply for fee exemptions in some special schools that do offer that option. In addition, given to these financial constraints, participants reported that not only do they not afford to pay school fees, but they also struggle to pay for transportation costs for children to be taken to school.

> *A lot of the refugees I think are sort of low income and poverty-stricken, so it is socioeconomic status that makes it difficult for them to get into schools (NGO Worker).*

> *The other school called and told me that they had reserved a place for Mvuso* and I must pay a certain fee. Eish I remembered that we (my husband and I) were not working so we don't have money (Refugee Caregiver).*

> *My mother found another school for children with special needs. The problem now is that I can't go because my mom cannot afford the school fees there. And that is the reason why I am staying at home (Refugee student).*

> *After the lockdown, as a single mother, to pay for two transport cabs and his school fees, I told his principal that my boy is not going to come back to school. I am going to keep him at home for a while (Refugee Caregiver).*

> *I had found him a school. Here is the school. I think since it is a government school because they say it is a government school, in my mind I told myself that a government school would be free. But they asked me to take out R1500. So I had to tell myself that I will keep him at home because I won't afford R1500 (Refugee Caregiver).*

5.6 Shortage of Resource-Based teams

The narratives of some participants showed that there is a shortage of specialised support personnel in special schools and thus children do not receive adequate or the right level of support resulting in schools not having the right level of accessibility. Thus, there exists an exceptional gap in terms of service availability for children living with disabilities, which may hinder effective teaching and learning and ultimately compound the learning outcomes of children living with disabilities. Furthermore, a shortage of resource-based teams also has an impact on the health of children living with disabilities as their health needs are not met which may thus affect children's ability to go to school.

So, you find that the Occupational Therapists, the Speech, the Physio, they are not much participating enough. Also, I think they get overwhelmed because of the little time that they have with so many children. They come here twice a month. It is not enough (NGO Worker).

The resource-based teams that have been hired to do assessments and various therapies with the kids only come once a month. Like sometimes they come back after three or four months. They are not even experienced but are just doing practicals. So, it is not a school where there are therapists everyday (Refugee Caregiver).

Those kids are seen like in large groups in therapy sessions. Each child has a different problem. It is important for the children to be seen individually in therapy sessions but there, you raise it and they will tell you that there is a shortage of therapists (Refugee Caregiver).

In addition, one refugee learner indicated that he had to stay at home for two years given that there were no schools that were suitable for him given his condition.

My mom had to go to some schools where there were no disabled children and she was told that it wouldn't be conducive for me to learn there. There are no ramps only steps and for a wheelchair, I wouldn't be able to push myself on those steps (Refugee student).

A refugee caregiver held a similar sentiment:

One of the reasons is that the school doesn't even have exercises. They don't have any physio. So that means he is just going to go to that school for breakfast then knock off later in the afternoon. Then I told him that he is going to stay at home (Refugee Caregiver).

Contrary to this finding, a distinctive feature emerging from the narrative of one participant showed that although there are resource-based teams that have been assigned to do various duties in their school, the teams are not adequately qualified, nor do they have adequate experience to carry out assessments that will cater to the educational needs of the children.

But then when we look at other therapists, they are new. They don't have experience. Now working with children you need to have experience. Like be on your toes and think and be creative and all that. So if somebody doesn't have enough experience, then it is a challenge. That's why they maybe also do admin. They come here and do admin because maybe they think that we are covered we are fine (NGO Worker).

5.7 Placement issues

An unanticipated finding that emerged from the participants' narratives is that although resource-based teams (psychologists, therapists etc) were reported to conduct assessments and screening of children with disabilities in order to get children into special needs schools, the narratives of the participants showed that there is a backlog of assessments that remain unprocessed by educational departments which has contributed to most children being placed on waiting lists and remaining excluded out of school. In addition, the narratives of the participants further showed that children struggle to get placed in appropriate learning environments due to lack of proper assessment facilities and bureaucratic processes that have to be followed in schools and education departments. It was further indicated that the education departments do not process the placements in a timely manner resulting in long and tedious processes of referrals and assessments which prevent children's entry into inclusive mainstream education and limits their access to a full cycle of basic education. One participant also indicated that the major factor that prevents entry into inclusive education is the fact that resource-based teams do not obtain sufficient information about the context of the learner's learning challenges from schools and this delays placement which affects their learning outcomes in the future. This is observed in the excerpt below:

> *What happens is that children who we could have been helped early maybe in Grade 1, Grade 2 at least, that couldn't be a late identification of problems. they only get referred when they are in Grade 7 and that will make the transition to high school not high school a problem. So it is tragic (NGO Worker).*

Contrary to this finding, other participants held different sentiments:

> *There is this huge amount of paperwork that must be filled in and we can do our part but then the school has to do their part. And that's where the first bottleneck happens. If the teachers can't prove or don't want to prove that they have tried everything to help that child in mainstream, our fancy assessment which is usually 20 pages, sits on the Principal's desk. The child can't read, can't write, she is maybe in Grade 7, needs to go to high school, can't communicate properly but the teachers are now embarrassed. The school might be embarrassed that they haven't done their bit. And so those forms don't get filled in. Next step, even if they do, they go to the Department of Education and that's the next bottleneck. That is where they sit on somebody's desk and unless somebody is passionate about this work, it just doesn't get processed. And then there is an additional bottleneck of just not enough spaces. So all children basically are stuck in this process. So and then they are not even identified (NGO Worker).*

I don't know about the name but I was assured that I would get a place here a school for my child and then they called me back but it passed I don't know it was two years back, but they have never come back to me. I thought maybe they didn't want the child here at this school (Refugee Caregiver).

I was assessed. They already had a diagnosis of my disability. I also had a referral letter and a birth certificate. So, I met all the necessary requirements to be accepted at school the only thing was that there were a lot of applications only and had to be placed on a waiting list (Refugee student).

My mom is now waiting for the appointment from the lady to come and assess me. My mom has been waiting. It hasn't been easy. It has been a struggle. Like two weeks back, that is when my mom was called in to tell her that they must find where I will be assessed so that my mom can choose a nearby school then she is waiting to hear from them when (Refugee student).

However, contrary to these findings, one refugee student indicated that he did not experience any placement issues and this thus did not affect his inclusion in the school.

I was placed on a waiting list. Within 6 months, I was accepted at the school. So that's why it wasn't difficult. My mom received a referral from the hospital to the school. So it wasn't that difficult nor easy because now some parents say their children even stay for like two years on the waiting list. So, it wasn't that difficult (Refugee student).

5.8 Institutional xenophobia

The narratives of some participants showed that refugee children face challenges with regards to acquiring an inclusive education as there is a preference for South African students with refugee children often remaining marginalised in the education system and denied the opportunity to study in many South African schools. Participants indicated that this is mainly due to some schools indicating that there is a lack of resources and thus priority is often given to South African students. They further indicated that refugee children's educational needs remain unmet as some face exclusion from schools simply because they are refugees, and some do not receive any institutional academic support.

Priority is given to South Africans which can be turning other students away given the limited resources and there is also just general xenophobia against these children (NGO Worker).

When they ask for government help, they have to prove that they are South African. I mean even us, as a South African branch, we also have another Centre but we barely qualify for funding because we don't have that 75% of disabled children who are South African (NGO Worker).

In most institutions, they are very selective and when they don't choose certain children, some of their requirements are too much to the point that you see that they think that at this age, the child should not proceed to the next level. Life ends there, yah (Refugee Caregiver).

A distinctive feature from the narratives of one refugee caregiver indicated that the caregiver's child was not accepted in a school given his physical health condition even though the child had all the relevant documentation required for acceptance in the school. Her excerpt is shown below:

When I told them that he is epileptic, they said "no we don't want the children there when they are sick to the school because they are going to make the other children not to be fine". They talk everything. I was even crying that day because it was like two schools I went to they didn't want him (Refugee Caregiver).

Another caregiver indicated that her child stayed at home for more than two months and did not go to school given the abuse he was to in his school:

"One day he came back from school. He was bleeding. I say "what happened"? "oh one child they put me a needle here". I said "aah now what is happening"? And every time when he is going to school he just says "no mommy they beat me. The teacher beats me. Mommy that boy took my food. The teacher beat me every day" (Refugee Caregiver).

5.9 Lack of caregiver engagement

An interesting finding emerging from the narratives of some participants showed that participants held the notion that refugee children are marginalised in inclusive education systems because their caregivers lack the agency to advocate for their children's right to access education and often rely on other professionals to do this for them. The participants held that although refugee caregivers often lack basic resources and social capital which is often beyond their control, they do not follow up on matters nor collaborate or communicate with schools and NGOs but simply wait for something to happen. This lack of engagement serves as a barrier in the successful learning and development of their children.

> *The parent's ability to advocate and I think that is often very impaired because the foreigner, it is not the child who is a foreigner. It is the parent who is a foreigner, it is the parent who must speak (NGO Worker).*

> *The mother came to get help for him but has never followed up on anything. So she sits in a room somewhere and waits for something to happen. You know? But it won't happen if she doesn't go back to the hospital and fight or if she doesn't at least go to resources who can fight for her. So I think for all children with disabilities it is all about advocating (NGO Worker).*

5. 10 Lack of quality education

The participants further held that a major factor that has played a key role in refugee children living with disabilities not accessing education is the fact that they lack access to quality education as they are enrolled in poor learning environments that have poor quality education. In addition, these schools lack teacher training practical training about the learning needs of children with various disabilities and awareness of inclusive education methodologies and an understanding of diverse disabilities. This results in children not being taught adequate skills that support their development. Excerpts from the participants' narratives are shown below:

> *"I mean another thing is this proliferation of so called "low-cost" private schools. I mean that is a huge problem. I think a lot of children, well refugee children end up there until their parents can't pay anymore and education is so poor that a lot of children with cognitive delay would not even be identified because nobody knows how to read anyway" (NGO Worker).*

> *"There are no subjects. We only do one curriculum. So, there is no sport to engage us through sports. We were marginalized because we have a disability and thus the school believed that we don't need a curriculum and they have grouped us in one bracket of disability and yet we are not the same. Even our capability is not the same" (Refugee student).*

> *"The teachers are not trained. They are trained but not qualified because others are just normal mothers like my own mother. They volunteer and do what the other teachers do" (Refugee student).*

> *"They don't teach him anything. Absolutely nothing. I haven't seen anything really. The only thing I have ever received was from a therapist based on the assessments and nothing from the teachers. Since 2019, I have never been called about progress or any parents meeting. There has been none whatsoever" (Refugee Caregiver).*

> *"According to me it is not a school. I can even say it is more of a crèche. Somewhere where you go and eat and sleep (laughs) because even the teachers have no knowledge or training. They are just learning and the*

principal (who is called a principal by the way *laughs*) is just a normal mother like me. They are mothers just like us. I can say they are just looking after our children" (Refugee Caregiver).

Interestingly, the narrative of one participant showed that there is a link between lack of documentation and enrolment in poor quality schools, which also contributes to lack of participation in inclusive education among refugee children.

They then go to private schools that are not part of the South African Schools and often these schools are unlicensed and there are a lot of problems that come with it". (NGO Worker).

Contrary to these findings, one refugee caregiver indicated that her child's school has proper educational measure in place that provide a conducive learning environment for the child.

"They called me about maybe two times yes to discuss his progress. I went to the school and yes we've got such meetings and ja they have explained to me they did tell me how he is performing and where he is not doing so good ja so we just take it from there and again we had a meeting because he is attending speech therapy so again we had a meeting with the Speech Therapist, a student from …. University. Yes, and the Speech Therapists also mentioned that first time he started attending speech therapy, he wasn't so good, But as time went on, he has learnt quite a lot" (Refugee Caregiver).

7. Conclusion

The main objective of our study was to understand the educational experiences of refugee children living with disabilities and factors that affect their access to educational inclusion. The overall inference drawn from our study is that refugee children living with disabilities face a myriad of challenges or barriers to education which are interrelated. Thus, lack of access to inclusive education is largely influenced by the broader social environment and the reciprocal relationships that occur at the different socio-ecological levels. Thus, individual and interpersonal factors that operate at the micro level and community, organizational and societal factors that operate at the macro level play a pivotal role in influencing whether a refugee child living with a disability will have access to educational opportunities or not. These barriers act as a multitude of parts that are dependent upon one another, function as one whole unit, and provide insight on the complex nature of each domain. Such circumstances have consequently led into refugee children living with disabilities being hindered from gaining access to inclusive educational programmes which subsequently affects their learning.

To facilitate refugee students' living with disabilities inclusion into inclusive education, a holistic approach that includes collaboration and positive interactions between the different systems i.e. family, peer groups, teachers, education officials, community workers and other service providers, has to be promoted in order to facilitate inclusion of refugee students living with disabilities into education. Forming these networks and a holistic approach will help in addressing the learning, social and emotional needs of refugee children living with disabilities.

Annexure A.

Policy/legislation/law	Aim/objective	Intended audience	Analysis of implementation and impact of policy	Results
Education White Paper 6 on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities: Special Needs Education, Building an Inclusive Education and Training System.	Introducing an inclusive education and training system as well as creating a just society that affords people living with disabilities equal rights through the removal of any discriminatory practices that present barriers in accessing services and participating in mainstream activities in society.	Learners living with disabilities, educators and department of education officials focusing on inclusive education.	- Review of strategic plans at the national and provincial level reveals inadequate provisions to support children living with disabilities. - Progress on implementation remains slow and problem of out-of-school learners living with disabilities remains a major problem.	- In May of 2015, 597,953 children with disabilities were out of school (Progress Report on Inclusive Education and Special School, 2015). This is a shocking increase from the 280,000 disabled children that were estimated to be out of school in 2001 (Department of Basic Education, 2001). - Plan set to convert 500 primary schools to full-service schools over a 20-year period. However, the department of Education only managed to convert 108 schools to full – service schools since the inception of White

				Paper 6 in 2001 (Progress Report on Inclusive Education and Special Schools, 2015).
National Strategy on Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support (SIAS).	Guides the process of creating an inclusive education and training model through the provision of tools, strategies and techniques that assist educators to screen all learners living with disabilities, identifying and assessing learners with more specialised needs in order to develop appropriate teaching programmes that will assist educators in supporting the necessary adaptation of learners living with disabilities in the teaching curriculum of full-service schools.	Children of school-going age who experience barriers to learning, including those living with disabilities.	Inadequate screening and referrals that are problematic. Also, many educators lack adequate skills to assess and screen the learners and to discern which type of teaching support each learner requires.	- Only 10 of 70 children who attended mainstream or full-service schools, were waiting for a referral to a special school because their current schools could or would no longer accommodate them (Human Rights Watch, 2015). - 5.8% of children have been screened and assessed to have learning barriers but only 1.0% are enrolled in schools (Department of Education, 2015). - Only 28,000 have received training to date since the implementation of the SIAS guidelines in 2007 (DSD et al., 2012).

Guidelines for Responding to Learner Diversity in the Classroom through Curriculum and Assessment Policy Standards.	Strategy that provides school principals and educators with training on how to develop and plan differentiated teaching curricula that is suited to the diverse needs of learners.	Educators, principals, subject advisers, administrators, school governors and Special needs Personnel.	Diverse needs of learners with special needs are not fully accommodated in the classroom environment due to lack of appropriate teaching material, exclusion of children living with disabilities from mainstream classes, and poor curriculum delivery.	Children who are blind have been reported to wait up to three years to obtain Braille textbooks which affects their ability to participate in educational activities (Human Rights Watch, 2015). - A case study conducted in one primary school in 2014 found that children with special needs and disabilities are taught in separate classes despite the school being recently converted into full-service school (Mashiya, 2014). - Narrative of a child living with a disability emerging from an interview conducted with Human Rights Watch is quoted: "I often sit in class with no engagement in daily classwork. I only draw throughout the day

				with no connection to the day's lessons while the teacher focuses on getting with the general curriculum" (Phele, 9-year-old child living with a disability".
Guidelines for the Implementation of Inclusive Education: Special Schools as Resource Centres.	The education system of special schools should be transformed into a new system that fosters inclusive education, as consistent with the regulations of White Paper 6. This education system should be transformed together with the collaborative efforts of support teams or committees that are based at the district level of each special school, in order to achieve an integrated full-service educational environment.	Teachers and district-based support teams such as special and aid class teachers and personnel who provide specialised professional support e.g. speech therapists, occupational therapists, psychologists.	There is poor training for educators to be able to use assistive devices in their teaching activities. There are fewer subject choices and the teaching curriculum is of a poor standard.	- An informal outreach programme conducted at five schools for the deaf in the Eastern Cape, the Free State and KZN in 2009 found that deaf children are not always able to understand teachers, as often information is not given in South African Sign Language (SASL) and/or no deaf people are involved as trainers (DSD et al., 2012).
Guidelines to Ensure Quality Education and	A directive issued by the Department of	Teachers and district-based support teams	There is limited provision of services	National Assessment Report on Facilities for

Support in Special Schools and Special-School Resource Centres.	Education that provided guidance on how special schools should be operated in order to provide learners with disabilities quality education that will foster positive learning outcomes. It also provided guidance on how to develop facilities in the school environment that provide information, tools and equipment that supports and advances the learning experiences and teaching methods of educators in general education environments (Department of Education, 2008).	such as special and aid class teachers and personnel who provide specialised professional support e.g. speech therapists, occupational therapists, psychologists.	and specialised tools and equipment in the full-service education sectors.	Disabled Persons shows that 98% of schools have no paved access from the main school gate to the main premises and classrooms and no appropriate ramps into the buildings, and 97% of schools have poor toilet facilities for learners living with disabilities (Department of Education, 2007).
Conceptual and Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of Inclusive Education: District-Based Support Teams.	These guidelines provide information on the various personnel that are employed by the Department of Education at local, provincial and regional	Personnel who provide specialised professional support e.g. speech therapists, occupational therapists, psychologists.	There is a shortage of professionals who offer services to children with specialised needs in schools and this affects identification of learning barrier and	- Although there are close to 6 000 physiotherapists registered with the Health Professionals Council of South Africa (HPCSA), only 1 057

	level to support children with specialised needs. These personnel include psychologists, psychotherapists, special needs healthcare workers and educators who aim to foster effective teaching and positive learning outcomes in schools by identifying barriers and challenges that hinder effective learning.		appropriate interventions.	(18%) are currently working in the public sector (DSD et al., 2012). - A case study on the implementation of inclusive education in primary schools in the Lejweleputswa Education District in the Limpopo province found that school-based support teams in the Lejweleputswa District lack knowledge of policies and guidelines for inclusion." (Lebona, 2013).
Guidelines for Full-Service Inclusive Schools	Govern how full-service schools should function in order to achieve an inclusive model of education. Overall, the guidelines stipulate that full-service schools should embrace diversity and engage in concerted efforts that foster increased access to equal and quality	Principals and school management teams.	There are discrepancies between enacted law and what is actually happening in schools. Only a small percentage of children living with disabilities are included in the general learning environment.	- Less than 5% of Grade 12 learners living with disabilities wrote the matric examinations.

	education at all levels for all learners, whilst assisting learners, teachers and families at large of the learners to adapt to the new learning environment and to feel a sense of belonging and that they have social support.			
South African School's Act	Guarantees "everyone" equal education and holds that every individual should be treated equally and should not be unfairly discriminated against on the basis of various factors, including disability.		Fewer children living with disabilities are enrolled in schools and among those who are enrolled, school drop-out rates are also observed to be higher among children with designated needs compared to children who do not live with any disability.	In 2015, 5,552 learners with learning barriers were placed on a waiting list (Department of Basic Education, 2015) In other instances, admission is delayed for years (Human Rights Watch, 2015).

References

ACPF. (2011). Educating children with disabilities in Africa: Towards a policy of inclusion. Addis Ababa: The African child policy Forum.

Adams-Ojugbele, R., & Mashiya, N. (2020). Interventions supporting the integration of refugee children in the primary school life: roles of the child's contexts of development. The Journal for Transdisciplinary Research in Southern Africa, 16(1).

Alliance, D. (2017). The right to education for children with disabilities Alliance Alternative report to the UN committee on the rights of persons with disabilities in response to South Africa's baseline country report of March 2013 on the UN Convention on the rights of persons with disabilities, with specific reference to provisions of Article24.

Crock, M., Smith-Khan, L., McCallum, R., & Saul, B. (2017). *The Legal Protection of Refugees With Disabilities: Forgotten and Invisible?* Cheltenham: Edward Elgar Publishing, doi 10.4337/9781786435446.

Crush, J., & Tawodzera, G. (2011). Right to the classroom: Educational barriers for Zimbabweans in South Africa.

Dalton, E.M., McKenzie, J.A., & Kahonde, C. (2012). The implementation of inclusive education in South Africa: Reflections arising from a workshop for teachers and therapists to introduce Universal Design for Learning.

Daniels, B. (2010). Developing inclusive policy and practice in diverse contexts: A South African experience. *School psychology international*, *31*(6), 631-643.

Department of Education. (1995). White paper on education and training. *Government Gazette*, *357*(16312), 4-80.

Department of Education. (1997). Quality Education for All. Report of the National Commission on Special Needs in Education and Training (NCSNET) and National Committee on Education Support Services (NCESS).

Department of Education. (1999). Consultative Paper No.1 on Special Education: Building an Inclusive Education and Training System, First Steps.

Department of Education. (2007). *Implementing White Paper 6: Inclusive Learning Programmes-Participant's Manual*, version two.

Department of Education. (2008). *National Strategy on Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support: School Pack*, Government Printer, Pretoria.

Department Basic Education. (2011). National Curriculum Statement, Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement, Further Education and Training Phase, grades 10-12, History.

Department of Basic Education. (2011). Action plan to 2014: Towards the realisation of schooling 2025.

Department of Education. (2011). *Guidelines for Responding to learner diversity in the Classroom through Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statements*, Government Printer, Pretoria.

Department of Women, Children & People with Disabilities. (2013). *Draft First Country Report to the United Nations on the Implementation of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in South Africa*.

Department of Basic Education. (2014). Policy on screening, identification, assessment and support.

Department of Education. (2015). Gauteng Department of Education Annual Report 2015/16 Including Financial Statements. Retrieved from https://provincialgovernment.co.za/department_annual/407/2016-gauteng-education-annual-report.pdf

Department of Social Development. (2015). White paper on the rights of persons with disabilities. Retrieved from https://www.gov.za/sites/default/files/gcis_document/201603/39792gon230.pdf

Department of Basic Education. (2016). Report on the implementation of Education White Paper 6 on inclusive education: An overview for the period 2013-2015.

Department of Basic Education. (2018). Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS): Information Technology. Retrieved from https://www.education.gov.za/Portals/0/Documents/Publications/CAPS%20Commnets/FET/INFORMATION%20TECHNOLOGY%20GRADES%2010%20-%2012%20EDITED.PDF?ver=2018-08-29-154512-793

Donohue, D., & Bornman, J. (2014). The challenges of realising inclusive education in South Africa. *South African Journal of Education*, 34(2), 1-14.

DSD, DWCPD., & UNICEF. (2012). *Children with Disabilities in South Africa: A Situation Analysis: 2001-2011*. Pretoria: Department of Social Development/ Department of Women, Children and People with Disabilities/UNICEF.

Education, N. Building an inclusive education and training system. *Pretoria: Government Printer*.

Geldenhuys, J.L., & Wevers, N.E.J. (2013). Ecological aspects influencing the implementation of inclusive education in mainstream primary schools in the Eastern Cape, South Africa. *South African Journal of Education*, 33(3).

Human Rights Watch. (2015). "Complicit in Exclusion": South Africa's Failure to Guarantee an Inclusive Education for Children with Disabilities.

Inclusive Education South Africa. (2020). Inclusion in Education: Perspectives on Inclusive Education in South Africa. 3(1), 1-44. Retrieved from http://www.included.org.za/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/Inclusion-in-Education-Vol-2.pdf

Khumalo, S., & Hodgson, T. F. (2017). The right to basic education for children with disabilities. *Basic education rights handbook*, 104-127.

Materechera, E. K. (2020). Inclusive education: why it poses a dilemma to some teachers. *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, *24*(7), 771-786.

Meda, L., Sookrajh, R., & Maharaj, B. (2012). Refugee children in South Africa: Access and challenges to achieving universal primary education. *Africa Education Review*, 9(sup10, S152-S168.

Moll, I., & Drew, S. (2006). Implementing White Paper 6 screening, identification, assessment and support: Participant's manual. *Wits: Sisonke Consortium on behalf of Department of Education*.

Murungi, L. N. (2015). Inclusive basic education in South Africa: Issues in its conceptualisation and implementation. *Potchefstroom Electronic Law Journal/Potchefstroomse Elektroniese Regsblad*, *18*(1), 3159-3195.

Mweni, S. K. (2018). *The right to education of asylum seeker and refugee children* (Master's thesis, University of Cape Town).

Naicker, S. M. (2018). Practical Recommendations for Developing an Inclusive Education System. In *Inclusive Education in South Africa and the Developing World*. Emerald Publishing Limited.

Nel, W., Lazarus, S., & Daniels, B. (2010). Education support services policy and practice in South Africa: An example of community psychology in action? *Education as Change*, *14*(S1), S17-S31.

Office of the deputy President 1997. integrated national disability strategy white Paper. Pretoria: Government Printer.

Philpott, S., & McLaren, P. (2011). Hearing the voices of children and caregivers: Children with disabilities in South Africa; a situation analysis, 2001-2011. *Pretoria: Department of Social Development, Republic of South Africa/UNICEF*.

Polat, F. (2011). Inclusion in education: A step towards social justice. *International Journal of Educational Development*, 31(1)- 50-58.

Ramjathan-Keogh, K. (2017). The rights of refugees and migrant workers. *Basic Education Rights Handbook. Education Rights in South Africa, Section*, *27*.

Republic of South Africa^ Department of Basic Education. (2011). Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement. *Natural Sciences. Grades*.

Saloojee, G., Phohole, M., Saloojee, H., & IJsselmuiden, C. (2006). Unmet health, welfare and educational needs of disabled children in an impoverished South African peri-urban township. *Child care, health and development*, 33(3), 230-235.

Seedat, N. (2018). *A thematic review of inclusive education research in South Africa* (Doctoral dissertation).

Singal, N., Johansson, S.T., & Lynch, P. (2019). "Education of children with disabilities: changing landscape of new opportunities and challenges", in *Education and Disability in the Global South: New Perspectives from Africa and Asia*, eds N. Singal, P. Lynch, and S.T. Johansson (London: Bloomsbury Academic), 1-18.

South African Schools Act. (1996). Department of Basic Education, Act No 84 of 1996.

South Africa. Department of Education. (2001). *Education white paper 6: Special needs education: building an inclusive education and training system*. Pretoria: Department of Education.

South Africa. Department of Education. (2010). *Education white paper 6: Special needs education: building an inclusive education and training system*. Pretoria: Department of Education.

Statistics South Africa. (2013). Millennium Development Goals Country Report 2013. Pretoria, Republic of South Africa. World Bank. Retrieved from http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SH.DYN.MORT

Tesemma, S. T. (2012). *A critical analysis of law and policy on the education of disabled children in South Africa* (Doctoral dissertation).

Twala, C. (2013). An analysis of attempts by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in solving immigrants and refugees' problems in the SADC region: A case of South Africa. *Journal of Human Ecology*, 44(1), 65-73.

Van der Berg, S., Taylor, S., Gustafsson, M., Spaull, N., & Armstrong, P. (2011). *Improving education quality in South Africa*. Pretoria: Report for the National Planning Commission.

Walton, E., McIntyre, J., Awidi, S.J., De Wet-Billings, N., Dixon, K., Madziva, R., Monk, D., Nyoni, C., Thondlana, J., & Wedekind, V. (2020). Compounded Exclusion: Education for Disabled Refugees in Sub-Saharan Africa. In *Frontiers in Education* (Vol.5).

Zimmerman, A., Dörschner, J., & Machts, F. (2011). The 1951 Convention relating to the status of refugees and its 1967 protocol: A commentary. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

DISABLED REFUGEES STUDENTS INCLUDED AND VISIBLE IN EDUCATION: CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES IN THREE AFRICAN COUNTRIES: UGANDA CASE REPORT

A project funded by The British Academy Learning in Crises Programme

Case report written by: David Monk; Salome, J. Awidi & Roda Madziva
D.monk@gu.ac.ug, salome.awidi@gmail.com, Roda.Madziva@nottingham.ac.uk

September 2022

Contents

Executive summary

This report is a representation of the Uganda Case Study. It is written in 5 sections. In the first section we detail the social context of Uganda, including relevant policies. In the second section, we provide an account of the research approach and methods that were used, including a timeline. In the third section, we present the data according to the perspectives of the various stakeholders and around particular themes that have emerged from the broader research questions. In the fourth section, we analyse the data according to a social ecosystem model, and in the fifth section we provide a conclusion with future directions, including dissemination and research impact.

This report is based on empirical evidence from a qualitative study in three refugee hosting districts in northern Uganda. A total of 103 participants including disabled refugee children and their families, NGOs, and education officials (including teachers and ministry officials) participated in the study. The study findings indicate significant relevant legislation on educational access for children with disability, and for refugee children, however, there are limitations in the policy implementation because of intersectional challenges. The study also highlights a lack of learning opportunities provided for parents and caregivers of children with disability. Most of these are women who are taking care of large households on their own. Narratives of stigma about families and students with disabilities requires problematization in relation to normative and essential assumptions. Education NGOs' contribution to educational access for refugee children with disability has given opportunity for education opportunities and is appreciated by the parents and caregivers. However, there remains a need for strong public education systems with qualified teachers and small class sizes with the necessary equipment to work with the various needs of students with disabilities. There is also a need to develop pathways and transitions for secondary schools and further opportunities for students with disabilities to pursue meaningful lives. The study recommends developing stronger informal and integrated spaces and forums for children with disabilities and their families to direct policy and learning opportunities.

Section 1: Ugandan context

At the end of 2021, over 82.4 million persons were forcibly displaced worldwide, of these, 42% are children below 18 years of age (UNHCR, 2022). As of November 2021, Uganda hosts the third largest population of refugees in the world and is a key site of South-South migration with 66.8% of refugees coming from South Sudan (UNHCR, 2022). Uganda has the unique approach of integrating refugees in settlements alongside host communities and allowing them mobility within and outside the gazetted settlements in the country as they choose, rather than segregating them to camps. The South Sudanese refugees are settled in the northern part of Uganda (the location for this research), bordering South Sudan to the south. West Nile districts including Adjumani, Obongi and Lamwo in the Acholi sub-region are in the northern parts of Uganda, on the southern border with South Sudan. The communities on both sides of the border are similar in cultural practices and language, a social construction that enhances settlement and adaptation. Ethnic similarity enhances settlement and adaptation of the migrant population. (Fielden, 2008). In the context of educational policy on access, ethnic similarity has enhanced educational access and promoted mobility for a section of South Sudanese Luo speakers in Ugandan schools, in northern Uganda. The educational policy for primary schools in Uganda promotes the use of mother tongue as a language of instruction in lower primary education, with positive results (Kaahwa, 2011). A 2016 UNICEF study on Language and learning found positive links between using the child's home language and learning outcomes, and contributing to education quality for refugee children in northern Uganda. However, there are several students (undocumented) who speak languages that are different from the Luo or Madii languages of northern Uganda.

Additionally, 80% of the refugee population are women and children (UNHCR, 2022). The available data shows that over 18,000 refugees have disability-specific needs, with girls more affected (UNHCR 2022; Disability Rights Fund, 2018). In the case of Acholi and Madi of Uganda and South Sudan, the cultural practices that see children as a labour force and girls as wives persist. These practices have a direct impact on educational access and transition (Justice & Reconciliation Project, 2015). Refugee girls with disabilities in Uganda face multiple barriers with their educational transition (Walton et al., 2020; Beibet et al., 2020).

Uganda is signatory to the Global Compact on refugees; a demonstration of political will and responsibility to share the management of the social-economics of displacement (UNHCR, 2018). The 2006 Refugee Policy of Uganda and the refugee regulatory framework fit within this agenda as far as commitment to the protection of refugees is concerned (Government of Uganda, 2006). Within this policy, Uganda upholds key rights including freedom of movement and access to social services such as education. Educational access for all children, including refugee children, are enshrined in the Constitution of Uganda and in the Education Act (Government of Uganda, 1995; Uganda Government Gazette, 2008). The Education Response Plan for Refugees (ERPR) (Ministry of Education and Sports, 2018) is the main implementation guideline for refugee children's education in Uganda, and it is aligned with the other policy frameworks. The ERPR mandates local governments and education partners to set up and operate schools in refugee settlements in Uganda.

Uganda has also ratified the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) (UN, 2022), binding itself to its international commitments in relation to inclusive

education for all. A Uganda education and disability policy review (Walton et al., 2020) observed good legislation around general educational access for all children. However, limitations with policy implementation were also observed, especially at the school and community levels, due to system constraints, resources limitations, and negative attitudes. This is consistent with the observation of Mac-Seing et al. (2021) that implementation and enforcement of pro-disability policy and legislation in Uganda is problematic. Central to this problem is a lack of enforcement mechanisms and widespread lack of awareness and training on disability issues among policy executors. Policy gaps with the Uganda Primary Education implementation leads to school dropout (Nakanyike et al., 2002). In the case of disabled children in northern Uganda, barriers to educational access are compounded by policy implementation gaps observed in inadequate provision of skilled teachers and learning materials in most schools, access to health care, gender-based violence and sexual harassment, tuition costs, and lack of inclusive schools.

Section 2: Research Methods

The research reported here is part of a wider project that seeks to understand the dynamics of educational inclusion and exclusion of disabled refugee students in three African host countries: Uganda, South Africa, and Zimbabwe. This report draws on empirical data from Uganda.

At the heart of the research is an attempt to centre the perspective of the core stakeholders: the students and their families. We, therefore, focused our data generation on eliciting the lived experiences and life-wide stories of refugee students living with disabilities and their families, though we also conducted interviews with teachers, NGO officers working directly with disabled refugee students, Ugandan education officials at the district, and national levels, policymakers, and indigenous leaders from the host community.

The research team obtained ethical approval from the University of Nottingham and local approval from Gulu University Research Ethics Committee (GUREC). The ethical boards mandated consent forms in local languages and with appropriate level of language. It also mandated engagement with families with provision to minimise risk of harm. The approved provisions, which were followed, included informing settlement administrators about the research and requesting permission to do research, ensuring that translators (including for sign language and braille) were present where needed, that participants fully understand the research and use of the research, consent forms signed, and interviews and focus groups take place in locations that are comfortable with the participants. Interviews with refugee students all took place with permission and within visibility of caregivers. Interviews took place at a location (usually sitting outside in the homestead) suggested by interviewees in prior meetings. Where requested (and often), caregivers and siblings sat with the student and participated in the interview. Prior to the interviews, site visits with local officials, parental education committees, families and NGOs were conducted. Interviews were recorded using security protected recording devices. An advisory committee of contextually experienced stakeholders guided all the interview procedures.

Privacy and anonymity were always adhered to. All members of the research team who participated in interviewing, translating or transcribing data signed non-disclosure agreements. Interviews were recorded and uploaded at the earliest possible instance into individualised private folders on Microsoft teams. Only the co-investigator had access to all the folders.

Interviews were transcribed by hand and all identifying data retracted prior to placing them in a secure shared research folder accessible to the broader research team for coding and analysis. A code was given to each interview to identify the type of participant (i.e., teacher, refugee student, education official, NGO worker). A file was created identifying the code with the participant, in case the participant requested to be removed from the research (which has not yet occurred). The file is secure in Microsoft teams and available to the Co-Investigator and research assistant alone.

In addition to the formally mandated privacy and engagement procedures, the team engaged in ethics processes recommended by community engagement and participatory research theory and guidelines.

We used White's (2019) guidelines which emphasise developing long term relationships, accountability to the communities that are being researched, and conducting research that matters to the community, and has impact in the community/ with the stakeholders and participants.
The lead established a core team of research advisors who have existing relationships with participants and their context. The advisory team of 7 is composed of people from government, academia, parent associations, and NGOs working with refugees. The team was selected based on their expertise, experience, and influence in working with refugees and students with disabilities in Uganda. Following a participatory approach, the advisory board was actively involved in all stages of the research process. Monk et. al. (2020) demonstrated how participatory approaches enhance the quality (including asking the right questions) and impact of research. In a study of community learning networks in South Africa, Lotz-Sisitka (2004) demonstrated that participatory approaches are valuable to generate effective partnerships for sustainable development. We worked through the advisory networks to identify key issues and access stakeholders. We held regular sessions with our advisory team, reflecting on the literature, reviewing the research questions, deciding on the points of entry for participants and deciding and revising the scope of the research.

Three changes were made based on regular reflection sessions. First, we realised that we did not have anyone with a disability on our team, and this was having an impact on our research conceptualisation. We therefore recruited a relevant advisor to our team. Similarly, we recruited a teacher and parent to our team, who was instrumental in guiding our research direction, and connecting us to families who were not receiving aid from NGOs. Finally, we had to adjust our interview teams to better reflect gender. The NGO field officers we were working with were all men, and there was a noticeable difference in the responses of the children and their families between interviews conducted by women and those conducted by men. In some cases, we went back and re-interviewed participants, and as we progressed, we made certain that our female team members were present in as many interviews with women as possible. These adjustments were made possible because of the nature of participative qualitative research processes that require regular reflection and adaptation to the research. Additionally, as it became obvious that there was not much thought or opportunity beyond primary school, we returned to the field and conducted some interviews related to vocational education.

The participants were spread over three settlements in Northern Uganda and their environs, with the majority from one larger settlement. Participants were identified and selected together with

our advisory group and in consultation with their related connections to NGOs working in refugee settlements. We conducted 65 interviews with 103 participants including: 43 disabled refugee students and their families, (14 of the participants were families from host communities), 3 district education officers, 11 head teachers and teachers of selected primary schools, 1 National representative for special needs education from the Ministry of Education and Sports, and 7 NGO field officers. Additionally, 2 focus group discussions were conducted with 4 teachers, 6 NGO field officers and one disabled students' Parents Association representative.

Coding and Analysis were performed collaboratively and were ongoing through iterative and reflexive sessions with the advisory committee and with the international research team. When we decided to close the data collection, we asked our advisors to all go through anonymised transcripts and identify themes that emerged for them, these were placed in a shared excel file. We then had a series of reflective discussions based on the themes generated. We used a jam board to place the themes on a grid according to a social ecosystem model borrowed from Wedekind et. al (2021). The themes were colour coded according to the stakeholder to capture, compare, and contrast the diverse perspectives and power of the various stakeholders. These themes were then analysed according to the various participants' perspectives, and cross referenced to the ecosystem jam board where themes were compiled according to horizontalities and verticalites. Drawing on complexity theory and power, we focused on relations and structures. The themes were then shared in a larger google Jam board in initial cross case analysis with the two other case sites. Finally, the research assistant and the co-investigator used the generative themes compiled to analyse the data according to the research questions. A representative group of participants were invited to a policy brief and research dissemination forum to verify, reflect on (and add to) the research findings.

The social ecosystem model emphasises adaptation and longer-term research and learning processes. This is synergistic with our participatory research approach that attempts to build relationships and communities of learning, and to sustain and maximise practical research impact. As a component of this research, we have engaged several stakeholders to think more deeply about education for disabled refugees, particularly girls. The process has therefore begun to develop a community of learning and practice that we hope to sustain through Gulu University initiatives. As a component of the research dissemination, we brought core stakeholders together-including research participants, government officials and policy makers, National and local disability unions representatives, NGO directors and academics- In an expanded policy brief forum. In the forum, we presented the research findings, analysis, and policy recommendations. We facilitated a reflexive discourse on the research, policy brief, and practical steps forward. The result has been the initiation of a formative and transdisciplinary community of practice, facilitated by the co-I and located at Gulu University, with an action agenda of reviewing the full research report along with the official report from the policy brief forum, which was documented by a rapporteur team. At Gulu university, we have already started to act on some of the recommendations. One key finding was the lack of trained special needs teachers- with only one university in Uganda offering formal diploma programs in inclusive education. Gulu University has engaged in two dissemination workshops with more than 500 students and staff in the Faculty of Education. This has in turn led to the development of a curriculum for special needs education at Gulu University, which contains courses related to the case of refugees. The process has been approved by the Faculty Board, although with some concern about the costs of purchasing equipment. Having the Vice Chancellor as an active

advisor who helped with data collection, analysis and site visits has been instrumental in moving this program forward, but also in orienting future directions for research: Gulu university has recognized the refugee population as a core area requiring attention, and is positioning itself to meet the needs of this community, not just with education but in the fully entangled social ecosystem. The impact of this research is therefore already substantial and will continue to be so.

Section 3: Findings

The goal of this study was to investigate the dynamics of educational inclusion and exclusion of disabled refugee students in three settlements and host communities in northern Uganda. To do this, the researchers interviewed disabled refugee and host community children, in and outside the settlements; their families and caregivers; Education officers in the 3 research districts and NGO workers. Specifically, the study set out to: 1). identify relevant policies available and needed in the Ugandan context, and identify what local and international policies are relevant; 2). explore the experiences of disabled refugee learners and their families in educational access; and 3). explore how Education Officials (at institutional, district and department level) and NGO workers perceive the educational challenges and opportunities of disabled refugee students, with a particular focus on girls. We present the findings according to the research questions below.

Question1

What data about the education of disabled refugee students is available and needed in the three contexts and what local and international policies are relevant? Collecting data is important for policy formulation and eventual monitoring the impact of interventions. But collecting these data is difficult because of different understandings of disability. Also, refugee populations may not wish to disclose disability and disabled people may be reluctant to disclose refugee status. We also need to know about where and how the education of disabled refugee students is in national policy and legislation, to give an understanding of needed policy change and educational response.

The Uganda refugee statistics 2021 (UNHCR, 2021, 2022) data on children with disability is very scanty. The 2021 statistics lists disability as one of the top 6 special needs of refugees, with 23,025 persons. The data is not disaggregated, either by gender or age. UNHCR is the largest generator of refugee statistics. The data on education for refugees with disabilities is even more scanty (Jamall and Sera, Okot -Oyal, 2017 in Walton et al., 2020) even for organisations that work with refugee children. During the literature reviews for this study, there was little accurate data on education for refugees with disability in Uganda. What is needed is a comprehensive national study on children with disability and their access and transition in education and further research and documentation on refugee children with disabilities. Indeed, in the policy brief and dissemination forum, stakeholders requested for stronger quantitative data related to refugee students with disability in and out of school and the nature of the disability. Our study found some data on inclusive education but not refugee children with disabilities. As a part of the research process, we came across several families in settlements who had students out of school, and who had not been identified by NGOs or education officials, and who needed support because of impairments.

Local and international policies

The national policies that framed refugee education in Uganda are the Comprehensive Refugee Response framework (CRRP), the Education Response Plan for refugees in Uganda (ERPR). The common thread in all these policies is the 2006 Refugee Act and the 2010 Refugee Regulations, driven by development partners, NGOs, and the education partners. The CRRFP framework is the commitment to harness the whole of society's approach to responding and funding solutions to the refugee crisis, including educational access and quality. These policies build on the existing initiatives to ensure access to the same social services for refugees as the host communities. The refugee policies jointly emphasise provision of equitable, inclusive, quality education and to strengthen educational systems for refugees and host communities; boys and girls.

Uganda's Special Needs and Inclusive Education policy is rooted in the Salamanca statement and Framework for Action on special Needs education (UNESCO, 1994). The Salamanca statement, an international policy framework is in consonance with the 1995 Uganda Constitution, and the subsequent Persons with Disability Act of 2006. The related policies on Inclusive Education emphasise the right of education for all children; for inclusive schools and classrooms; quality meaningful education; and the right to attend school, including those with temporary and permanent needs for educational adjustments. None of the policies is explicit on educational access for refugee children with disabilities. None the less, the policy frameworks contributed to further development of minimum standards and guidelines in school infrastructure development, school management and, the overall achievement of the education for all agenda. However, the study found gaps in the education policy on access. Some schools did not have facilities and resources to accommodate children with special needs. A ministry official explained in relation to policy,

> People with disabilities have a right to be included, and special action must be taken to include them- even in political positions……when you talk of refugees it is like a child with a disability. If there is a meeting in the ministry without a representative for refugees or children with disabilities, then there is no mention of their needs but the meeting is always cautious, once a representative is in that meeting, their issue is catered for.

The official was also aware of the challenges with schools,

> …schools claim to be accessible, but are not fully. Example of bathrooms. Many bathrooms are not accessible. (Ministry Official)

> Parents cannot afford the needed tools- like wheelchairs (District Education Official)

Data about transitions

There is no data available for tracking education progression and careers for students with disabilities. District Education Officials and a few NGOs were only beginning to have conversations about secondary schools, and vocational training, however, data and policy do not address this. As one senior education official explained, there is

"no data on the number of refugees graduating."

Tracking and identification

Parents associations that we worked with were able to identify and bring us to students who were not being supported by NGOs. Our NGO partners were not aware of some of the families that we found, and these families were in situations of significant hardship. They spoke of attempting to seek out medical attention and support for accessing schools and livelihoods without success. This suggests that some families are falling through the cracks because of a lack of medical attention which prevents them from accessing school:

> Because of the gadget's that are not there many special needs students are not accessing schools, (District Education Official)

> ...Requesting for special help so that my daughter can study… (Caregiver)

Question 2

What are the experiences of disabled refugee students (disaggregated by gender), and their families with educational access and success in the host country? The perspectives and experiences of these students and their families offer 'insider knowledge' of the realities of accessing education and succeeding in learning in different contexts. In an era of big data, numbers can occlude the nuances of the workings of power and resistance in education access. Insights gained from these experiences will be available and needed in the three contexts and what local and international policies are relevant.

Differences between host communities and refugee settlements

There was a significant difference in the experiences of families who were sponsored by NGOs and those who were not. The students who were not sponsored were not in school, for a variety of reasons, including stigma, poor access and quality of learning and school fees. Students with disabilities who were supported were mostly in NGO supported inclusive schools- which were mostly boarding schools. Thus, avoiding the difficulties and dangers of getting to and from school- particularly for girls. Parents and caregivers who were supported saw benefit from their children's education in these schools. Children also had greater aspirations. Perhaps because of the quality of the education, supporting structures available and support in accessing services such as medical aid and counselling.

There was a significant difference brought to our attention between students with disabilities on settlements and off settlements. District education officers had a responsibility to care for and develop policy in schools both on and off settlements for refugees and non-refugee communities, however, most of the NGO programs were operating on settlements. We found families off settlements facing significantly greater challenges accessing and paying for quality education. The students with disabilities were less likely to attend schools and faced compounded challenges related to poverty, food security, and health care. Below are some anecdotes related to the perceived differences:

> ...Maybe she can be taken by well-wishers to a specialized school… (off settlement caregiver)

> ...Nothing, only waiting for help... (to go to special school)...(off settlement caregiver)

Refugee children get more help than those who are in the community...refugees receive aid and support and even teachers are trained, host do not. They are missing materials and resources in host community schools. (District Education official)

Tribal divisions

Students and their families reported cases of bullying and access to services along tribal lines in some instances. Students explained that they moved in the community together and with siblings to avoid being bullied and beaten. Children with disabilities were seen to be targets for violence from competing tribes. One caregiver explains:

They are always abusing him and sometimes they steal his things...They can abuse him because they are not his tribe (caregiver).

Families also spoke of access to services and goods as being a problem if the distributor or the person identifying families was from a different tribe. This included access to sponsorship and livelihood projects, medical services, farm land, and food rations. We found some families in vulnerable positions who were not getting the medical attention for their children that they required and as a result the students were not in school.

Caregivers

Caregivers were all women. There were very few men in the settlements, and women were mostly alone taking care of the families. Some examples:

(Translator): She says that since the father is very old (and in Sudan), and she used to manage them with the little she has, but she is together with 12 children. (Caregiver of child out of school)

We are here with my uncle's wife and if I do not have something nobody can buy for me because she is alone and unable. (Child with disability)

(Translator): What she wanted to tell you right now is as a single mother it is not easy to send a child to school alone, now she is requesting with the mercy from God if it may be possible with little support so that the boy can be sent to school. Because right now after seeing the results of the boy that day she was very happy but at night she started reflecting on how she will handle the boy's study ahead. I am giving time for your coming to save us. (caregiver)

Parents and caregivers really demonstrated the compounded challenges they face in trying to get an education for their children, while facing trauma and challenges of their own. For example:

A lot of difficulties with water sources, a lot of sicknesses as the place was new. While coming here there was a shortage of water, scared because of the war especially at night and thinking about those left behind in Sudan. (Caregiver)

Those that were not supported by NGOs spoke of travelling long distances and waiting in lines often without having a chance to meet people to register for programs both for school and for the interconnected medical attention required by their children:

> There are other challenges apart from the bad roads, payment in school and other requirements. Here in the settlement, there is limited farmland. We depend on the food ratio given. (Caregiver).

> (translator) They came but were told to wait for the other Dr…. the doctor did not come…When she goes to the hospital, they tell her to bring that person who is sick but She does not have money to hire the car to take her to the health centre. (Caregiver with bedridden child)

Parents demonstrated remarkable skill sets in terms of understanding and knowing their children and navigating systems to get the best for them that they could. Families not supported found it challenging to raise money for tuition to send their children to school. They had large families and we saw them prioritising education for boys without disabilities. There was a lot of fatigue, especially with families who did not have sponsorship. The following quotes from caretakers show their perseverance in attempting to educate their children:

> Is not easy, but there is no other alternative, there is nowhere I can even take them.

> When they are doing the examination, they could call me to go, that I go, I sit with (the child) …

> I could teach her even at home, I struggle with her, I want her to learn

> I struggled to do little farming where I sold the produce and used the money to enrol her (daughter) to school but currently there is not good yield and like you see when you arrived, I was harvesting groundnuts and I am worried whether she will get the amount of groundnut to be sold to get my daughter to school.

Families recognized in general that the conditions of education in Uganda were better than the ones they had in their home countries. Caregivers of sponsored children valued education and were seeking out the best opportunities for them. One caregiver explained that,

> The school here is better (than South Sudan), they were in school but with a lot of interference.

Students differentiated between the quality of the inclusive schools supported by NGO programs and those that were not:

> If it is me, I will change my school, teachers do not treat well even if one is sick.

> 2015 I was in [name of school A], but the next year 2016 I joined [name of school B (NGO supported school)] up to date. Is better in [school B] than [school a] Because when they are teaching, I can understand them.

Some families travelled to nearby cities to get better education for their children. This was particularly the case for students with more severe conditions because there were no local schools to meet their needs. For those that were out of school, there was a mixed perception in terms of the value of schools. The public schools were described as inaccessible and overly crowded. Paying tuition costs were another challenge, and often families did not see the financial value of sending their children to a school that could not accommodate them.

Parents also were often uncomfortable with the capacity of regular schools to understand and work with their children. They worried about the personal safety of their children both travelling to school and within the schools themselves. This was particularly the case for girls, who faced higher risk of violence and sexual harassment. The distance and conditions of the footpaths and roads to get to schools were also challenges and boarding schools were preferred

>She loves the school and reads books when she is at home, I wish she could be put at boarding school so that the problem of bad road could be avoided.

>[name] has enrolled in a school with a very high population and I think that if the pupil were small in class, the teachers could manage and [name] will become a lawyer through that school.

In some cases, parents worried that their children would not have the medical care required should something occur- particularly regarding epilepsy which was a common condition.

>On top of this physical handicap, she is also epileptic and made her drop out of school. by that time even the teachers said she would not continue with her study because the malaria was so much disturbing. By that time, if you ask her, she could not answer your question. By then when she was stopped from study. We did not take a step to look for another school because the mid was so disturbed by then if we were to look for school for her, there was no one to care for her. The mind is so disturbed. (Caregiver)

>The problem is, she cannot be handled by someone else apart from us especially if the malaria starts (Caregiver)

Schools were seen as important places of socialisation and students that were in schools stated that they liked going to school in order to meet and play with friends. Doing homework together and playing games together was an important part of their lives especially for students with disabilities who had fewer opportunities for integration outside of school or more trouble making friends.

>my best friend is called [name]. After finishing homework, my friend will call me so we go have our personal studies, sometimes [name] calls on me so we go and play netball with other friends (student).

For children who were not in schools we saw a significant amount of social isolation. They were confined to their households. This was especially the case for girls who were forced to

undertake household chores around the house and not given an opportunity to go out and interact with other children of their age either because the parents were afraid for their security or they had too much work to do at home.

> when the children go to school and she remain at home, she just staying the way she stays, if there is a parent at home, they just talk with her. (caregiver)

> They (friends) now only come to greet and go (out of school child)

> (Translator) he feels bad and offended when he might be seeing some of his friends, progressing with their studies but for him he is not at school. (out of school child)

> (translator) Now the mother was the one who was pushing the wheelchair, because she can even fear when she is in the wheelchair that she may fall also, the mother was the one pushing. (caregiver)

Capabilities to dream

The students with disabilities that we spoke with had dreams and often their families around them supported them and recognized what they were good at. Many students wanted to enter some type of caregiving role such as doctors or nurses or teachers to help other people like them and have an impact on their community. Again, those that were supported by NGOs and who were in school had greater capacity to dream but all the students that we spoke with aspired and hope to achieve them through education.

> If I can be helped even, I can go up to the University

> If I study, I may also change the situation in my country and may even stop the war in Southern Sudan

> I want to be a laboratory doctor and check people's health

A teacher explained that,

> We need to tell students with disabilities that they matter.

Care

We observed that children with disabilities played a crucial role in caring for and bringing hope to the people around them. Families around them cared for the children as well, although where there was no support, it was with very few exceptions coming from fathers who were not interested in supporting a child with disabilities to go to school. Children with disabilities were performing the regular familial chores in the household, and were proud to be contributing:

> (translator) Every day she wakes up in the morning and helps her mother, then prepares water for the chicken. She can dig sometimes and she can go with her mother. She likes growing groundnuts and maize. The problem is the garden is far from home. (Out of school child)

Transitions and pathways

Some NGOs sponsor secondary school education in cities close by. However, in most cases there is not really an opportunity to attend secondary school. There is an assumption that students with disabilities will not make it through primary school. There were not a lot of career trajectories in place for students with disabilities. So, while we heard students talk a lot about their dreams, when asked about next steps, their answers were less clear. There were not a lot of graduates from primary school, with many students leaving because they felt too old, or simply giving up because they felt that they were not being successful. There was some development of vocational Education and Training programs, which at least offers some reduction of dependency for the children. However simply having the VET programs is not helping students to develop their interests and life aspirations and goals. The VET schools that we spoke with were not aware of education policy for students with disabilities or refugees, did not have professional teachers to identify or teach people with disabilities and there are no provisions for exams and assessment. It was the same with the few secondary schools. A lot more can be done in relation to developing and supporting viable career options. Refugees explained:

> She is saying she is so much interested in joining tailoring school (out of school child)

> He said that if they want to sponsor him, he will continue beyond secondary (student)

Question3

How do education officials (at institutional, district and department level) and NGO workers perceive the educational challenges and opportunities of disabled refugee students, with a particular focus on girls? This question is important because education officials create and mediate policy and have insight into the systemic pressures at play in the education of disabled refugees. NGO workers will yield insights about the context, challenges and extent of support faced by disabled refugee students.

Policy awareness

District education officials were aware of specific policy and legislation- both international and national that guided their efforts in developing inclusive schools. NGOs working in the area were guided by international policy and standards. The teachers we spoke with did not know of any specific policies and do not have guidelines that frame their teaching practice in terms of working with students with disabilities beyond education for all frameworks.
 Some of the NGO programs included policy awareness for teachers and government officials, and there was an activist agenda for engagement about the rights of refugees with disabilities in the community.

> .. we conduct orientation programs for DEO's and inspectors about access to education for children with disabilities (Ministry official)

Coordination of efforts and communication

We found that there was a lot of coordination at the national level, with NGO working groups having regular discussions among themselves and with government policy makers. The long-awaited policy for disability education has been pushed and developed by these formal working

groups, and the emergency response plans which connect to refugees have regular meetings and working groups.

> My responsibility: coordinate with partners supporting disability education, the education task force weekly meeting for district with all partners (District Education officer)

Likewise at the district level, NGOs and district education officials have weekly meetings to discuss the needs and progress of broad education needs. Most of the implementation work is carried out by NGOs. The government does not have adequate funding, but they have the decision-making power. There is a big push to include special needs education, with funding coming from NGO programs.

> the number of students with disabilities are overwhelming the resources of the district… as a district we may be able to identify, but cannot support. appeal for help from funders, but it is limited. (District Education Officer)

Teacher training and resources

Teachers felt that they did not have resources or skills to instruct students with disabilities. Some of the teachers had undergone short training sessions sponsored by NGOs to learn some basic tenets for teaching special education, however it was recognized across the board that the training was not enough, and not enough people were trained. NGOs working with District special needs education officers were working to try and develop more capacity- through these short trainings, but a whole lot more needs to be done in this area.

> …when it comes to their access and participation because teachers are not able to acquire the required skills, at the same time you go to schools and find most of the children do not have materials or they do not have a teacher who knows braille so they end up not participating in for example a child with visual impairment (Ministry Official).

Accessibility

Likewise, teachers spoke about the accessibility of schools both in terms of school infrastructure and roads. In the rainy season, the roads become very muddy and those with physical disabilities do not attend because they are not able to get there. Some teachers spoke of schools that are not accessible. The conditions of bathrooms were emphasised, because ramps are often forgotten, and even where available we heard some vivid descriptions of students and teachers with disabilities crawling through unsanitary spaces to ease themselves. This was seen as another condition that kept students away from school. To contextualise this, one must know that bathrooms in Ugandan schools are all outhouses, with squatting toilets.

Stigma

Many teachers and education officials suggested that parents and community members did not see value in sending students with disabilities to school, and saw a need for engagement. A ministry official explained their strategies of engagement:

> … strategies of engagement: radio talk shows, sub county visits

School capacity

Schools were perceived as being overcrowded and under-resourced. Many teachers felt that they simply did not have the time to give the needed attention to students with disabilities learning needs, and often they were left to themselves. Teachers spoke of students with disabilities as being unruly and difficult to control. NGOs are working to support and build schools that are less crowded and which are oriented towards inclusive learning.

> Ok the challenges we have, is the classrooms are not enough for the learners. There are too many children in the school but few classes. Others come in the morning from far of places, we also have few latrines, some of the latrines do not have rums for the disabled and then the other roads from the community to the school are not okay especially if it rains it become impassable. (teacher)

Transitions

There was almost no preparation or provision for transitions beyond secondary school for students with disabilities. NGOs appear to have been focusing on students with disabilities' access to primary school.

> not enough secondary schools. only 2 in entire [name] district (NGO education officer)

> we need a specialised centre to handle transitions and secondary entrance (District Education Official)

> secondary school teachers do not have training in teaching for disabilities (Ministry Official)

> few partners support secondary (District Education Official)

> limited government intervention in secondary schools. Currently working with 2, one of which is for refugee students (ministry official)

> There is no specific programme targeting refugees with disabilities but we used to have a department offering career guidance and career pathways even students with disabilities attend. That is something I have been thinking about but I do not know how we are going to manage it. (Ministry official)

> It is very rare; it depends on the type of disability. At the settlement from my experience, I have not seen much transitioning by a disabled child where he leaves primary level and goes to secondary level. In the refugee settlement, the transitioning is very minimal (Senior Inclusive Education Official)

Understanding of inclusivity

Uganda has a dual process of integration and segregation when it comes to education for people with disabilities. The integration process is mostly related to students with lesser disabilities, and there is a push for inclusive schools. For students with more severe disabilities there are a few schools in the northern region where students are sent. For example, there are schools for the blind, and schools for the deaf. This is the same in the settlements. Speaking

with teachers and education officials we also came across several people who felt that inclusion meant segregating students with disabilities into special classes or into special schools. Others felt integrating students with disabilities into existing schools (to varying degrees) was inclusive:

> (Translator) He is saying that the school only consists of those children with disability. He is saying that he does not like that school, because even if he needs help from a colleague, they cannot even give help, because for them also they also need help, they all need help. (Student with disability)

> refugees and non-refugees learn together They have been integrated to learn together with the normal children of Uganda. and the school is up to, from P1 up to P7. (teacher)

Efforts for change

There are several programs that different NGOs are supporting. These include curriculum development, teacher training, student sponsorship, and building inclusive schools. In their sponsorship programs, the NGOs that we observed work closely with families and provide counselling and support through regular interactions with the families. There is also support for infrastructure development especially in primary schools in refugee settlements and districts hosting refugees.

> Since 1996 there has been a big change, people with disabilities are respected when they speak (Ministry Official)

> There is a very big difference; even yesterday we had a meeting discussing transition of disabled children from primary to secondary. Even when you look at performance, Primary is doing better than secondary so there is a little bit of difference, the reason is secondary teachers have not gone through training, very have attained special needs training and therefore they have no skills in training children with disabilities. Secondly in secondary school they get one teacher e.g., for biology so they teach as per time table but in primary teachers are there full time. Also, when you come to partners, there are very few who support children with disabilities at secondary level (senior government education official)

Section 4: Analysis and discussion

In this section we provide an analysis of the findings according to a social ecosystem model. This ecosystem mapping approach pays attention to power relations by examining facilitating verticalities and collaborative horizontalities. Wedekind et al. (2021) explain that verticalities reflect decision making hierarchies and mechanisms such as government and policy. They can become facilitating where top-down messages and initiatives support what is coming up from the ground. Wedekind et al. describe 'collaborative horizontalities' as the networks and collaboration between various actors at the local level. Mediation refers to the points of connection between these two dimensions.

On the vertical axis which represents the structures of power and decision making, we find binding international conventions driving policy in Uganda on paper. We see a distributed decision-making process when it comes to policy development, with a lot of NGO influence and regular working groups being consulted to develop implementation strategies. There are some discrepancies however in the policy arena. First there is no specific working group or policy that

covers refugees with disabilities education. There is an inclusive education policy- education for all, that has only minor discussion of education for people with disabilities, a disability act that has little attention to education, and there is a policy for refugees that includes education but does not refer to refugees with disabilities.

There are special needs representatives from the ministry of education and sports at the district level who are working in districts with refugees, and one of the core areas of refugee action in the working groups is in fact oriented towards inclusive education.

Policy is lacking, and policy implementation is not supported financially. Families get caught in between policies related to health, poverty, gender and education. They do not have access to policy development or implementation.

On the horizontal axis, we see local coordination, still formal. District Education Officers work closely with NGO Field officers to coordinate the needs of refugees with disabilities. Teachers in schools however remain with limited knowledge of policy or guidelines about rights, thus seemingly absent from decisions. Parents and their families have a range of knowledge about their rights, with the families supported by NGOs more aware. There does not seem to be a lot of networking or working among families or with schools outside of NGO involvement. The one exception we found was a parent's association for children with disabilities who operate both in settlements and host communities. This was primarily an advocacy organisation; however it had permission and contacts and considerable knowledge of conditions of families with children with disabilities. It also had formal contacts with camp administrators, however it lacked funding to help the families. Still, they played an influential role mobilising and engaging with particularly vulnerable families, and thus formed a network of families missed by NGOs.

NGOs play a mediating role. Their programs work closely with families and schools. They mediate government decisions with family needs, and appear to have close relationships with the families that they work with. Parents and families and students with disabilities do not have a lot of input into decision making policy outside of their contact with NGOs. Special needs officers are meant to play a mediating role between schools and policy and families, and they do, but their scope of operation is large both in and out of settlements, and their budget is not enough. They rely on NGO programs for implementation and as a result we find the gap between public schools and sponsored schools. This is not because of a lack of care or effort; the task just does not match the budget.

Absences

The core challenges remain in breaking the divide between public and sponsored schools. NGO field officers are doing a lot of work mediating the needs and caring for the families that they work with. They are also developing curriculum and sponsoring schools and basic teacher training in inclusive education. They are working together with the local government to coordinate activities, and understand the compounded difficulties facing families and fill gaps in schools. They provide significant care and support to families including with getting access to medical services and livelihood opportunities as well.

This outreach and engagement need to be a function of public schools. This will require significant investment in more schools to lower class sizes and improve infrastructure, more

training for teachers, and developing spaces for including parents and children with disabilities in decision making processes. Following the holistic model that is being developed in the NGO supported schools. The current public model of education is not meeting the needs of students with disabilities. This is a significant challenge, but it is not insurmountable. The expertise of district education officers is there, it is simply a matter of scaling up.

Another big gap that we have commented on already is the lack of secondary schools and a lack of further opportunities for students with disabilities. There are still many students with disabilities who are not in school, this is exaggerated within the host community, but applicable even to the NGO sponsored world. Exact numbers are absent however, teachers tell us that most students are not making it through Primary school. This is telling of the quality of education that is being provided. However, there are not a lot of opportunities to attend secondary schools in any case. Most focus to date has been on primary school access for children with disabilities. There are emerging livelihood discussions, through VET for people who are out of school, however there is no concerted attempt to develop career trajectories or life-opportunities for students. The Vocational and livelihood programs are simply attempts at scooping up the students who are leaving primary school, rather than address the problems of why they are leaving. The risk is that the problems will be the same in VET. A broader vision of understanding and helping to develop students' life goals needs to be done to provide them with an opportunity to flourish, find value, and be valued in their communities. Without the structures- starting in primary schools- to help them navigate their life pathways, it is difficult for them to realise, aspire or even imagine becoming doctors, nurses, and teachers like they say they want to be. Not doing this reflects a more deeply rooted imaginary that in fact students with disabilities cannot achieve such things, and impairs their ability to contribute meaningfully to their society.

Caregivers' education

Another absence we would like to highlight is the lack of learning opportunities provided for parents and caregivers. Most of these are women who are taking care of large households on their own. They are coming from spaces of significant trauma, many of them have disabilities themselves. They are trying to navigate foreign systems in a foreign language- often relying on their children for translation and direction for decision making. They do not have a lot of time, and appear to have sacrificed their own lives for those of their children. Many of them are learning informally about navigating systems and accessing services for their children. Learning, counselling, and career opportunities for these women- many of whom fit into a youth category- are missing and needed.

Gender and disability

We noticed most of the caregivers are women, and we wonder if this has any impact on their ability to contribute to decision making and access to services. We ask this, because we noticed that most of the decision makers, and even NGO field officers, were men. This causes a patriarchal tendency of women being told what to do. It also causes unbalanced decisions and the wrong questions being asked. In our own research, we realised how the responses were different according to who was asking. We also noticed that part of this was because of what questions were being asked. Likewise, we did not notice very many NGO officers identifying as having a disability. This was another area that we shifted in our own research, and which shifted the nature of the research as well. We noticed that parents who had disabilities had

more insight into the needs of their children. Authentic inclusion and participation are needed in decision making processes.

Stigma

We perceived a general narrative of stigma about families and communities' perceptions of students with disabilities. Teachers, government officials, NGO workers all suggest that there is a need for advocacy and engagement with families and parents of students with disabilities. The narrative is suggestive that parents do not value their children as much, or do not think they are as capable of success as other students. However, when we spoke with parents and their families, we did not see this. We saw caring families, who are working tirelessly to find ways to support their children. In some instances, they did not see a lot of opportunities for their children's success through education. There were a sizeable number of caregivers that felt their children could not succeed in school because of their conditions. Many of whom withdrew them because of safety and incidents that had occurred. These relate to struggles with class work and limited support from the school systems.

Our observations in this research suggest that in fact the parents are not overly wrong to be disenchanted by available opportunities. Given the conditions in schools and the challenges and costs of accessing them, it seems an insightful perspective that education in schools is not particularly effective when it comes to the learning needs of children with disabilities. The conditions are difficult for learning, tuition is expensive, the teachers are not trained, the class sizes are too large, bathrooms are unsanitary and inaccessible, their children are bullied and violated, they must travel long distances to get to school which are physically challenging and often unsafe, they do not have the required medical attention or learning aids. There children really can't learn in this situation.

We saw parents going to great lengths to seek out medical attention and education opportunities for their children with disabilities. We therefore counter the general narrative of parents and potentially even caregivers in communities as being prejudiced against students with disabilities. This is an over simplistic narrative which blames parents for conditions that are not really in their control. We therefore challenge this conception as being unsubstantiated. The parents who are receiving support, clearly believe in their Childrens' potential. What is needed is not a liberation of parents' minds about the value of their children, but a shift in structures that are limiting the opportunities for children, who likely will receive a better education from home. Here we agree that engagement is important. We need to change the structural boundaries that are making it dangerous and difficult for students with disabilities to learn and access quality education. Given a reason to dream and aspire, they will.

Policy

Finally, we must point out the most glaring absence of all: Government policy. Since the 2006 Act of Parliament requiring a national disability policy (and associated implementation guidelines and budget), there remains no policy. There has been a long series of consultations and regular promises made about policy forthcoming, but nothing has manifested, and there is no clarity about what or how the specific rights and needs of students with disabilities will be included. At present, they fall under three disparate and universal categories: People with disabilities, refugees, and people with the right to education. This does not connect with health, poverty, food security. Nor does budget provide for implementation. The intersectional and interconnected needs must be specifically addressed and funded.

Section 5: Conclusions

This research report is not the beginning nor the end of the real life needs for research and action in the constantly fluctuating lives of refugees with disabilities. The research offers an opportunity to reflect and adjust and continue to work with (not for) refugees with disabilities as we all seek to improve our communities together.

In general, the interventions that we observed seem to be positive and seem to be working well for the families of students with disabilities and for the students themselves. The students appreciated the quality of education that they were getting in the supported schools and the parents and caregivers also recognized and appreciated the value of the schools. Power and decision making is in fact well distributed with greater cooperation and coordination among NGO and government actors than is the case outside of refugee settlements in Uganda, where NGOs work more individually and competitively. Families, particularly women, need to be more involved in decisions about them.

There remains a need for strong public education systems with qualified teachers and small class sizes with the necessary equipment to work with the various needs of students with disabilities.

Within the social ecosystem we see some strong pillars that support and mediate needs. These committees of praxis are formed by government and NGO work and are important. One area we see that could be strengthened in the social ecosystem comes along the horizontal axis. Developing stronger informal and integrated spaces and forums for children with disabilities and their families to direct policy and learning opportunities would help communities to flourish in a more holistic way. Another obvious actor is Gulu University, and other higher education institutions close by, which can provide resources and transdisciplinary expertise through students, graduates, and researchers. The university needs to adapt their teacher education programs to include the intersectionalities in inclusive education. However, as we have seen, we cannot isolate education from deeply entangled social conditions, and available needs and aspirations of the students. The situation of refugees with disabilities requires a transdisciplinary, participative, and constantly adapting approach that can empower them to add value to their communities. This research has initiated-through strategic engagement of partners- a process to facilitate mechanisms for ongoing participative research and action in this field.

References

Beißert, H. Gönültaş, S. & Mulvey, K. (2020). Social Inclusion of Refugee and Native Peers Among Adolescents: It is the Language that Matters! Journal of Research on Adolescence. 30(1), 219-233.

Disability Rights Fund. (2018). Fostering hope for refugees with disability in Uganda. https://disabilityrightsfund.org/our-impact/our-stories-of-change/fostering-hope-refugees-disabilities-uganda/

Fielden, A. (2008). New issues in refugee research. Policy development and evaluation Service. Geneva: UNHCR.

Government of Uganda. (1995). Constitution of the Republic of Uganda. https://statehouse.go.ug/sites/default/files/attachments/Constitution_1995.pdf

Government of Uganda. (2006). The Refugees Act 2006. ILO: https://www.ilo.org/dyn/natlex/natlex4.detail?p_isn=88109&p_lang=

Justice & Reconciliation project. (2015). Alone Like a Tree: Reintegration challenges facing children born of war and their mothers in Northern Uganda. http://justiceandreconciliation.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/Alone-Like-A-Tree-Reintegration-Challenges-Facing-Children-Born-of-War-and-Their-Mothers-in-Northern-Uganda1.pdf

Kaahwa, J. (2011). The Role of Culture in Rural Ugandan Mathematics Teaching and Learning. Diaspora, Indigenous, and Minority Education, 5(1), 48–62. doi:10.1080/15595692.2011.534402

Lotz-Sisitka, H. (2004). Environmental education research and social change: Southern African perspectives. Environmental education research, 10(3), 291-295.

Mac-Seing M, Ochola E, Ogwang M, Zinszer K, Zarowsky C. (2021). Policy implementation challenges and barriers to access sexual and reproductive health services faced by people with disabilities: an intersectional analysis of policy actors' perspectives in post-conflict Northern Uganda. International Journal of Health Policy Management, x(x), 1-10. doi:10.34172/ijhpm.

Ministry of Education and Sports (MoES). (2018). Education response plan for refugees and host communities in Uganda. https://planipolis.iiep.unesco.org/sites/default/files/ressources/uganda_education-response-plan-for-refugees-and-host-communities-in-uganda.pdf

Monk, D., Ongom, S. & Openjuru, G. (2020). When the guns fell silent: Poets 4 change and research for a sustainable future. Gateways International Journal of Community Research and Engagement, 12(2).

Nakanyike, B.M., Kasente, D.H. and Balihuta, A.M. (2002). Attendance patterns and causes of dropout in primary schools in Uganda. Kampala: Makerere University Institute of Social Research.

Uganda Government Gazette. (2008). Education ACT N0. 4. https://commons.laws.africa/%2Fakn/ug/act/2008/13

UNESCO. (1994). The Salamanca statement and framework for action on special needs education. World conference on Special needs education. https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000098427

United Nations (UN). (2008). Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. https://www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/convention-on-the-rights-of-persons-with-disabilities.html

United Nations (UN). (2015). Transforming our world: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. https://www.refworld.org/docid/57b6e3e44.html.

United Nations, (2022). Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disability. https://www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/convention-on-the-rights-of-persons-with-disabilities.html

United Nations High Commission for Refugees UNHCR. (2018). Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework. https://www.unhcr.org/comprehensive-refugee-response-framework-crrf.html

United Nations High Commission for Refugees UNHCR. (2021). UNHCR Global Trend 2020. https://www.unhcr.org/figures-at-a-glance.html

United Nations High Commission for Refugees UNHCR, (2021). Uganda comprehensive Refugee Response Portal. https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/86153

United Nations High Commission for Refugees UNHCR, (2022). Uganda comprehensive Refugee Response Portal. https://data2.unhcr.org/en/country/uga

United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR). (2022). Refugee Data Finder. https://www.unhcr.org/refugee-statistics/

UNICEF. (2016). The impact of language policy and practice on children's learning: Evidence from Eastern and Southern Africa. UNICEF. https://www.unicef.org/esa/sites/unicef.org.esa/files/2018-09/UNICEF-2016-Language-and-Learning-FullReport.pdf.

Walton E., McIntyre J., Awidi S. J., De Wet-Billings N., Dixon K., Madziva R., Monk D., Nyoni C., Thondhlana J., and Wedekind V.et al., (2020). Compounded Exclusion: Education for Disabled Refugees in Sub-Saharan Africa. Frontiers in Education, 5, np. http://dx.doi.org/10.3389/feduc.2020.00047.

Wedekind, V., et al., (2021). Conceptualising regional skills ecosystems: Reflections on four African cases. International Journal of Training and Development 25, 347–362. https://doi.org/10.1111/ijtd.12251

DISABLED REFUGEES STUDENTS INCLUDED AND VISIBLE IN EDUCATION: CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES IN THREE AFRICAN COUNTRIES: ZIMBABWE CASE REPORT

A project funded by The British Academy Learning in Crises Programme

Case report written by: Chamunogwa Nyoni, Evelyn Garwe and Juliet Thondlana
nyonic2008@gmail.com, garweec@gmail.com and Juliet.Thondhlana@nottingham.ac.uk

September 2022

Contents

Executive summary

Education is one of the highest priorities including refugee communities. Zimbabwe is one of the countries that is playing host to many refugees especially from the Horn of Africa. Zimbabwe unlike other refugee destinations employs the encampment policy to refugee management. The policy has merits and demerits in as far as access to education is concerned. Refugee education is at the heart of efforts to ensure equability access to education for all irrespective of status. The current global approach to refugee education is premised on the inclusion of refugee learners in national systems. Access to education is considered a basic human right and is linked to poverty reduction. It is also regarded an "enabling right," a right through which other rights are realised (UNHCR, 2011e, p. 18). It is well documented that the underpinnings of the provision of refugee education are articulated in Article 22 of the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, which states that signatory states "shall accord to refugees the same treatment as is accorded to nationals with respect to elementary education…. [and] treatment as favourable as possible… with respect to education other than elementary education" (UNHCR, 2010c). Despite the pronouncements, realisation of the right to education for refugees has depended on the laws, policies, and practices in place in each national context. In some cases, the lack of high quality and protective education for refugees stands in the way of meeting the Education for All goals. Access to education for refugees in Zimbabwe is guaranteed and this applies to both girls and boys and mostly at the three stages including pre-primary, primary and secondary levels. Refugee education is generally of a very high quality, with host and refugee children accessing the same type of education. Despite guaranteeing access to education, refugees in Zimbabwe have largely been 'invisible' in policy.

Introduction

The right to education is a fundamental and universal right established by the UN General Assembly more than 70 years ago. Since 1948, every single country in the world has ratified at least one human rights treaty guaranteeing the right to education or some aspect of the right to education and a great number of states have made efforts to enshrine the right to education in their highest legal order. Despite these concerted efforts, violations and breaches of the right to education persist, illustrated perhaps most starkly by the fact that 262 million primary and secondary-aged children and youth are still out of school globally (UNESCO, 2019). The situation is even worse for refugee children who are fleeing from a crisis and in the process experience new crises in their settlement contexts. It is even dire for disabled refugee children who comprise 10-15% of the refugee population but have largely been 'invisible' in policy and service provision. This is despite the fact that the right to education is guaranteed as a human right in numerous human rights treaties, that include the Convention against Discrimination in Education (1960, CADE), the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1966, ICESCR), the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (1979, CEDAW), and the Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989, CRC).

1.1 The DRIVE Project

The DRIVE project standing for Disabled Refugee Students Included and Visible in Education: Challenges and opportunities in three African countries is a twenty-two months multi-disciplinary, multi-country project funded by British Academy Learning in Crises award. The project was due to start in March 2020 and end in December 2021. However, due to the COVID-19 pandemic the project was pushed forward by a maximum of eight months.

The research project aimed to undertake an in-depth exploration of the dynamics of educational inclusion and exclusion of disabled refugee students in Uganda, South Africa and Zimbabwe. Because these countries' different histories, contexts and approaches to crises impacts learning, the findings will be used to advocate for change in policy, and practice.

The project draws from the social ecosystem model wherein activities and practices are positioned in a conceptual space impacted on by vertical facilitatory mechanisms such as international, national and local policies and regulations, resource allocation etc. and the horizontal connectivities, interactions and relationships between local actors. The practices of inclusion or exclusion and how various actors (schools, NGOs, local officials, refugees, local communities) are positioned in relation to this emerges in this ecosystem.

The project was interdisciplinary and aimed at understanding the educational inclusion and exclusion of disabled refugee students, particularly girls and women, in South Africa, Uganda, and Zimbabwe - countries with different approaches to settlement, this was done to extend the knowledge regarding the challenges and opportunities of refugee children in the quest for inclusive education and the right to education. This project was done to open up possibilities for more effective solutions to questions of refugee educational inclusion more broadly. Key stakeholders were engaged in the development of this project and impact activities were also embedded in its day-to-day working. The findings from this project may be used as the starting point for a new research agenda on refugee educational inclusion in Africa. This report focuses on the Zimbabwe site.

1.2   Encampment Model in Zimbabwe

Since the inception of the refugee protection regime in 1951, refugee camps have been its central organizing concept. In the camp-based model, refugee-producing crises are assumed to be temporary emergencies (Feldman, 2007). Tongogara Refugee Camp was thus established as an impermanent settlement where Mozambicans escaping civil strife were mostly housed to access basic needs their pending their return home. Camps are defined along two dimensions: spatially and temporally. Spatially, camps always have boundaries, while in practice refugees and locals cross these boundaries for trade, employment, etc. Temporally, refugee camps are meant to be temporary, while in practice this temporariness may become permanent. Tongagara Refugee Camp is located in the southeast of Harare in a region that receives the least rainfall in the country, the Tongogara Camp is home to over 17,000 refugees, mostly from the Democratic Republic of Congo and Mozambique. They have been hosted by local communities of Chipangayi area in Chipinge District for more than 20 years. While most refugees throughout the world reside in a wide variety of situations ranging from self-settlement among locals with no assistance to residence in enormous, city-like camps such as Kakuma Camp in Kenya, with some 86,000 inhabitants (Feldman, 2007), Tongogara Refugee Camp lies in the10 the refugee camp is the central feature of the current refugee protection and assistance regime. There have been moves to reform the encampment policy throughout the world. In 2014, UNHCR introduced a new policy on 'alternatives to camps', 'extending the principal objectives of the urban refugee policy to all operational contexts', whenever possible, while ensuring that refugees are protected and assisted effectively and are able to achieve solutions (Grant, 2016).

While moves have been made to reform refugee settlement, Zimbabwe is still sticking to the encampment policy. The encampment refugee policy implemented by Zimbabwe makes it difficult for refugees to leave the camp and prohibits them from taking up formal employment (Horn, 2010). The outright disincentive for refugees domiciled in Zimbabwe to live outside Tongogara Refugee camp is the absence of humanitarian assistance. Indeed Human Rights Watch, (2002) affirms that refugees are given ration cards which state that the refugee has no right to receive humanitarian assistance outside a refugee camp. In practice this curtails a lot of the refugees' freedoms and right to choose what to do with their lives. At Tongogara Refugee camp, refugees are confined to the camp unless they are able to retrieve a temporary permit to leave on a specific mission. It is critical to observe that restricted movement curtails the rights of refugees and resultantly deny them other rights dependent on movement. Verdirame and Harrell-Bond (2005) assert that freedom of movement is perhaps the most instrumental right to the enjoyment of any other rights, including the right to employment or to a secure livelihood. Without the ability to move freely within a country, the ability to lead a life of dignity is lost. Sytnik (2012) asserts that refugees confined by policies of long-term encampment are isolated from society at large. While encampment is meant to provide basic needs in a sustainable manner, it denies the refugee group the opportunity to earn a living and be self-reliant thus posing a challenge to the children and youth in their quest for quality education who will be forced to resort to unorthodox means to make ends meet. Jamal (2000) acknowledges that despite the fact that children and youth carry the hopes of their parents and countries, encampment denies them opportunities to pursue the kind of education that would help them to cultivate the skills, knowledge, attitudes and the critical thinking capacities to live up to these expectations.

1.4   Conceptual Framework

This research draws on the social ecosystem approach, which emphasises an interplay between dynamic complexity of education systems, where individuals, communities, policies, and practices are imbricated in enabling or constraining access and success. These conceptual resources have value in understanding educational access for disabled refugees whose experiences are shaped by the interplay of factors over time and at different levels of the system, but who also exercise relational agency between individuals, families and communities to resist exclusionary pressures and create opportunities for inclusion and success (Walton et al 2020).

1.5   Key objectives of the project

The project was guided by the following specific objectives:

1.   What data about the education of disabled refugee students is available and needed in the Zimbabwean context and what local and international policies are relevant? This was premised on the fact that collecting data is important for policy formulation and eventual monitoring the impact of interventions. But collecting these data are difficult, because of different understandings of disability. Also, refugee populations may not wish to disclose disability and disabled people may be reluctant to disclose refugee status. We also need to know about where and how the education of disabled refugee students is located in national policy and legislation, to give an understanding of needed policy change and educational response.

2.   What are the experiences of disabled refugee students (disaggregated by gender), and their families with educational access and success in the host country? The perspectives and experiences of these students and their families offer 'insider knowledge' of the realities of accessing education and succeeding in learning in the different contexts. In an era of big data, numbers can occlude the nuances of the workings of power and resistance in education access. Insights gained from these experiences will identify policy gaps and policy subversions, and also indicate contextually relevant practices that can be adopted and strengthened to secure educational access and success.

3.   How do education officials (at institutional, district and department level) and NGO workers perceive the educational challenges and opportunities of disabled refugee students, with a particular focus on girls? This question is important because education officials create and mediate policy and have insight into the systemic pressures at play in the education of disabled refugees. NGO workers will yield insights about the context, challenges and extent of support faced by disabled refugee students.

1.6   Research Questions

The project also sought to explore the following key research questions:

1.   What data about the education of disabled refugee students is available and needed in the three contexts and what local and international policies are relevant?

2.   What are the experiences of disabled refugee students (disaggregated by gender), and their families with educational access and success in the host country?

3.   How do education officials (at institutional, district and department level) and NGO workers perceive the educational challenges and opportunities of disabled refugee students, with a particular focus on girls?

2.   Policies on Education

There are various statutes that were reviewed that relate to access to education. The Convention against Discrimination in Education (1960, CADE) is the first instrument to be dedicated, in its entirety, to the right to education. Unlike most human rights treaties, CADE does not permit reservations. Articles 1 and 2 define discrimination, understood as: 'any distinction, exclusion, limitation or preference which, being based on race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, economic condition or birth, has the purpose or effect of nullifying or impairing equality of treatment in education.' Article 3 lists the measures a state must undertake in order to eliminate and prevent discrimination: (a) To abrogate any statutory provisions and any administrative instructions and to discontinue any administrative practices which involve discrimination in education.

The Convention on Technical and Vocational Education (1989) enshrines the 'right of equal access to technical and vocational education'. Article 1 defines technical and vocational education as: 'all forms and levels of the educational process involving, in addition to general knowledge, the study of technologies and related sciences and the acquisition of practical skills, know-how, attitudes and understanding relating to occupations in the various sectors of economic and social life'. Article 2 provides that states: 'shall guarantee that no individual who has attained the educational level for admission into technical and vocational education shall be discriminated against' and 'shall take appropriate measures' to enable people with disabilities and other marginalized groups to benefit from technical and vocational education. Article 3 provides the basic content requirements as well as a list of elements to be considered when providing and developing technical and vocational education programmes.

The Convention relating to the Status of Refugees (1951, Refugee Convention), which is only applicable if the state in question has ratified the Protocol relating to the Status of Refugees (1967), which removes the temporal and geographic restrictions of the Refugee Convention, guarantees the right to 'public education' of refugees in Article 22. It provides that states shall accord refugees the same treatment as is accorded to nationals with respect to 'elementary education'. Regarding education other than elementary education, the Refugee Convention stipulates that refugees shall be treated as favourably as possible. This means there is no ceiling to the preferential treatment refugees can receive. The lower threshold for the treatment of refugees regarding their education beyond the elementary stage, is that states should treat refugees the same as other non-nationals 'generally in the same circumstances'. This means that whatever requirements non-nationals must fulfil in order to qualify for access to the same rights and benefits (in this case, education), refugees are held to the same criteria, except where, by nature of being a refugee, he or she cannot fulfil those requirements

The New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants (2016) contains a wide range of commitments to protect people on the move, and to strengthen and enhance existing protection mechanisms. Under paragraphs 33 and 81, states commit to ensure that all refugee children receive quality primary and secondary education in safe learning environments within a few months of arrival in host countries. Under paragraph 82, states commit to support early childhood education and tertiary education skills, training and vocational education. Paragraph 39 reaffirms the importance of improving integration and inclusion in education for displaced people. Paragraph 79 enshrines states' commitments to consider the expansion of existing humanitarian programmes in education through, for example, scholarships and visa delivery. The New York Declaration also paved the way for the adoption of two new global compacts in 2018: a global compact on refugees and a global compact for safe, orderly, and regular migration.

The African human rights framework emanates mainly from the African Union (AU), formerly the Organisation of African Unity. The African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights (1981, Banjul Charter) contains a brief right to education provision (Article 17), together with an overarching prohibition on discrimination (Article 2). Article 25 provides for human rights education. The African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (1990) sets out a much broader and more comprehensive right to education than that provided for in the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights. Article 11 states that every child shall have the right to an education and prescribes measures that States must undertake as part of their efforts to achieve the full realization of this right, including regarding school discipline and pregnant girls. It defines the aims of education and recognizes the right of parents to choose the kind of education they want for their children in conformity with their religious and moral convictions

The Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa (2003) aims to eliminate discrimination against women and to ensure the protection of the rights of women as stipulated in international declarations and conventions. Article 12 provides for their right to education and training on the basis of the principles of non-discrimination and equal opportunity. It calls for the elimination of all stereotypes and the integration of gender sensitisation at all levels of education curricula. It refers to their protection against sexual harassment. It also provides for the promotion of literacy and education among women and recognizes the specific needs of certain groups of women including women with disabilities and women who have left school prematurely (Article 12 & 23).

The African Youth Charter (2006) is the first legal framework in Africa to support national policies, programmes and action in favour of youth development. It refers to the rights, freedoms and duties of young people in Africa, including the right to education. Article 13 recognizes the right of every young person to education of good quality. It refers to multiple forms of education including non-formal and informal. It defines the aims of education and establishes states' obligations. It also provides for gender equality and the use of African languages in teaching (Article 20).

The Convention for the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons in Africa (2009, Kampala Convention) guarantees, under Article 9 (2) (b), that internally displaced persons be provided with adequate humanitarian assistance including education.

2.1 Discrimination in Education

Discrimination in education is evident and occurs most obviously in terms of accessing education. For example, girls can face gender-based barriers such as child marriage, pregnancy, and gender-based violence which often prevent them from going to school or contribute to them dropping-out of school. People with disabilities often face literal accessibility issues, such as a lack of ramps or appropriate school transportation, making it incredibly difficult to get to school. Migrants often face administrative barriers that prevent them from enrolling, effectively barring them from education systems. However, discrimination also occurs within education systems. This may manifest as certain groups receiving an inferior quality of education compared with others, for instance, the quality of education in urban schools tends to be higher than that found in rural areas. Discrimination also occurs after education where different groups of people are not able to draw the same benefits from their schooling, for instance, educated boys tend to leave school with higher wage potential than equivalently educated girls.

2.2   The rights to non-discrimination and equality

The rights to non-discrimination and equality exist across various human rights treaties. First and foremost, the rights to non-discrimination and equality are guaranteed by the International Bill of Rights, the foundation of IHRL, which consists of: the UDHR, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1966, ICCPR), and the ICESCR. The UDHR proclaims in its first article that: 'All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights' and goes on to state that: 'Everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration, without distinction of any kind.' Article 7 provides for both equality before the law and equal protection of the law

In addition to the International Bill of Rights which applies to everyone, there are human rights treaties that apply to specific groups of people. These are known as 'thematic' treaties. These treaties are important because they deal with the specific forms of discrimination that marginalized groups often face. The normative content is therefore highly specific. Two of these thematic treaties focus exclusively on eliminating discrimination against specific groups:

Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)

International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (1965, ICERD)

Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989, CRC)

Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2006, CRPD)

International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families (1990, ICRMW)

Convention relating to the Status of Refugees (1951, Refugee Convention)

3. Research Methodology

This section explains the specific steps that were taken in gathering data as well as the processes followed as we interacted with the disabled refugee children and their families. To understand the educational experiences of disabled refugee students, a mosaic of approaches was used in the Zimbabwean context, drawing on the strengths of the researchers in this context and responding to the exigencies of the place. Refugee families and stakeholders were interviewed with observations carried out on the institutional infrastructure. Refugee students and their families may be traumatised, and interactive and collaborative methods are preferred when researching them. These include life grids and narratives.

3.1   Approach to ethics and safeguarding

The research team adhered to research ethics that enshrine human rights, voluntary participation, doing no harm and observation of privacy and confidentiality. All actions in response to respondent protection were based on the principle of "the best interest of the researched".

The following principles were key in guiding the project:

> **Informed Consent:** Informed written consent was obtained from participants using an information sheet and consent form. The information and consent sheets were written in the English, language. In a situation where a potential participant was illiterate, the consent form was read out loud in the appropriate language with a translator putting it in his/her language of choice and a finger print taken for consent. The information sheet was be signed by a member of the research team at the time the participant gives consent.

Assent: Parental/guardian consent was followed by seeking assent from participants who were minors to be interviewed. In situations where the parents/guardians gave consent and the minor did not want to participate, they were not be forced to do so.
Confidentiality: confidentiality, privacy and anonymity were maintained at all times. This applied to everyone involved in this exercise and to all data obtained from participants. Data collected were not shared with anyone who is not part of the study and was secured with passwords known by the data analysts.
Voluntary Participation: Participation in the study was entirely voluntary. Participants were given the option and freedom to discontinue the interview should they wish to at any point.
Risk Reduction: There was a small risk that the study could evoke feelings of apprehension and anxiety especially among the victims of modern slavery. The researchers endeavoured to adhere to the principle of "doing no harm" The study team's conduct in the field was based on the International's Code of Conduct which researchers were oriented on prior to commencement of the study.

In presenting the project findings, we first highlight the concept of a camp. It is critical to perhaps more appropriately, define the 'camps and settlements' as obtaining and understood in the Zimbabwean context in order to situate the debate. While a camp generally covers three forms of assistance policies: (1) planned and (2) unplanned rural settlements which are based on various forms of officially recognized self-reliance, and (3) camps generally based on full assistance, in Zimbabwe a camp the later applies.

It is crucial to explain the site from which primary data was collected in this project. Data was collected from Tongogara Refugee Camp and from education officials from the ten provincial education directors as well as officials from Ministry of Education Head Office. Data was collected from the Ministry of Social Services and from non-governmental organizations operating in the camp that partner the government of Zimbabwe through various service provision. Furthermore, data was also collected from officials at the camp who included the camp administrator.

3.2   Data analysis

All the qualitative data and notes were transcribed and analysed using the thematic approach following the objectives of the project. It entailed reiterative reading and searching across a data set to identify, analyze, and report repeated patterns. As recommended by Dey (1993) data interpretation involved two activities, namely, fragmenting and connecting. The thematic analysis followed the five stages prescribed by Dey (1993) namely: description, contexts, intentions, classification and making connections.

4   Findings

Ten themes emerged from the data as shown in Figure 1. These themes will be explored in-depth to explain the findings.
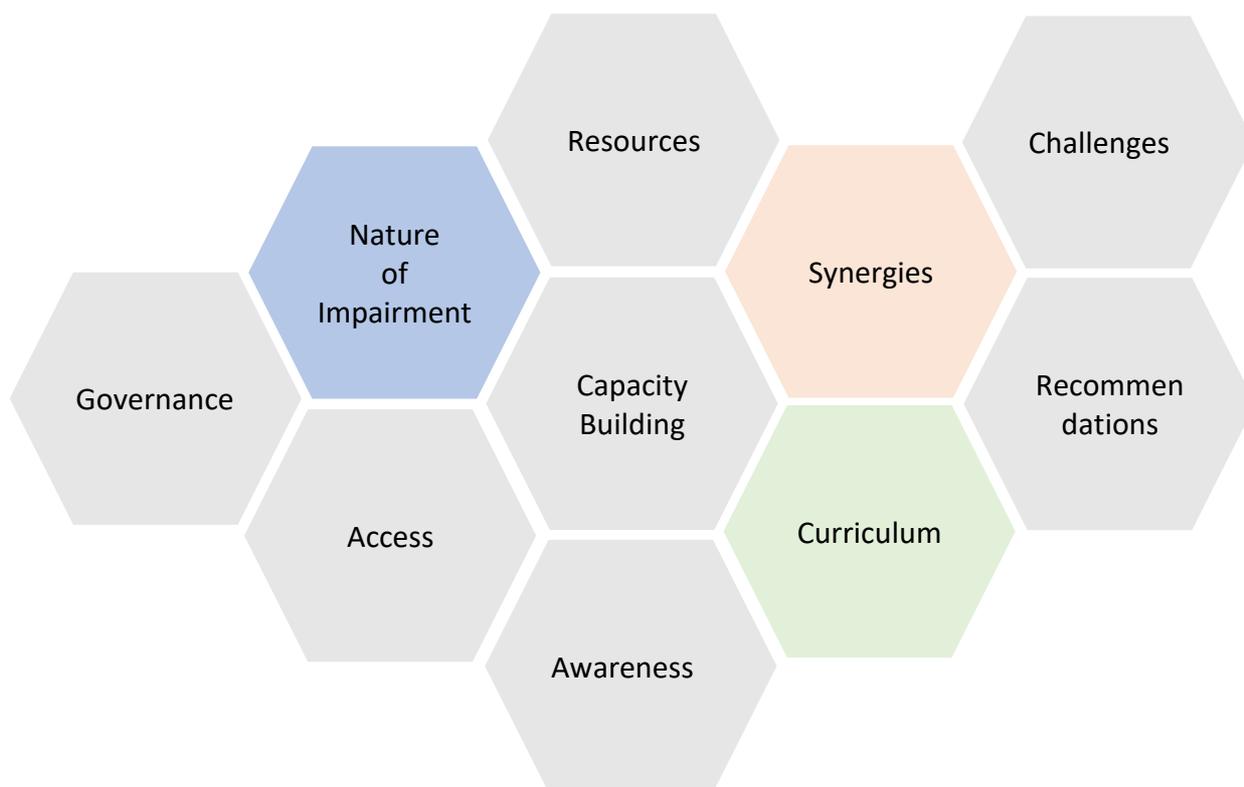
Figure 1: Themes emerging from the study

4.1 Governance

The governance theme emerged from the interviews with education officials, camp officials and NGOs. The theme covered policies, circulars and statistics in line with objective number 1 which sought to ascertain the available data on the education of disabled refugee students in the Zimbabwean context as well as the local and international policies in use.

4.1.1 Discussion on Policies

This research established that Zimbabwe had enabling policies that supported access to education by refugee children. Access to education was premised on the availability of a number of enabling legal statutes that promote the right and access to education including not only for disabled refugee children but for the generality of children domiciled in Zimbabwe. These include the Education Act, the Inclusive Education Policy, Child Safeguarding Policy, the P36 and P37 Ministry Circulars and the Encampment Policy. The policies cited uphold the 'Person First Language' (PFL) which critically emphasizes the person before the disability. The encampment policy meant that access to education was by and large not an issue (school structures available in the camp). While Zimbabwe is commended for having progressive policies it should be noted that access does not relate to utilization.

- The Education Act [Chapter 25:04]

This research further established that Zimbabwe had meaningful and progressive policies that included the Education Act which was recently amended in 2019. Zimbabwe recently adopted the Education Amendment Act, 2020, to align its Education Act with the country's Constitution. The amendment, is a result of extensive consultations about how every child could realise the right to free basic education. The Act has fairly extensive provisions to protect, respect and fulfil

the right to education for all children. It addresses issues pertinent to education, including the prohibition of expelling pregnant girls from school, free and compulsory education, sexual and reproductive health issues, and the rights of learners with disabilities. The Education Act was amended to uphold the rights of various previously disadvantaged population segments and to ensure the enforcement of compulsory education. The Education Act on Compulsory Education notes that (1) every child shall be entitled to compulsory basic state funded education. (2) Any parent who deprives their child the right to basic state funded education shall be guilty of an offence and liable to a fine not exceeding level six or to imprisonment for a period not exceeding two years." The rights ascribed to the children are key to the enjoyment of other freedoms. (3) Pupils with disabilities, their parents and other interested parties have the right to participate in the planning, implementation and monitoring, including by making presentations to the responsible authority and Secretary, on the infrastructure, facilities, resources and learning and teaching materials suitable for pupils with disabilities. The research also noted that the Education Act emphasized non-exclusion of pupils from school by highlighting that no pupil shall be excluded from school for non-payment of school fees. Free and compulsory education gives effect to the constitutional right to education and specify its underpinning principles.

While the Amended Education Act provides for the rights of pupils with any disability it should be observed that the provision is fundamentally flawed and problematic. At face value, it places the responsibility on every registered school – not the state – to provide infrastructure for learners with a disability. This is subject to the availability of resources. Many of the schools in Zimbabwe are resource strained and access to quality education for refugee children may be a wild goose chase. The Amended Education Act is however silent on the provision of inclusive and equitable quality education – which is the cornerstone for Sustainable Development Goal 4.

- The Inclusive Education Policy

Inclusivity is among Zimbabwe's guiding principles, on the Curriculum Framework for Primary and Secondary Education (2015-2022) which spells out the desired learner exit profiles. The Constitution of Zimbabwe provides for inclusivity in education through Chapter 2, Section 27: which notes that 1) The State must take all practical measures to promote (a) free and compulsory basic education for Learners; and (b) Higher and tertiary education. (2) The State must also take measures to ensure that girls are afforded the same opportunities as boys to obtain education at all levels). In championing inclusivity, Chapter 2, 22: of the Constitution highlights that 1) The state and all institutions and agencies of government at every level must recognise the rights of persons with physical or mental disabilities, in particular their right to be treated with respect and dignity. 2) The state and all institutions and agencies of government at every level must, within the limits of the resources available to them, asset person with physical or mental disabilities to achieve their full potential and to minimise the disadvantages suffered by them. 3) In particular, the State and all institutor and agencies of government at every level must: a) develop programmes for the welfare of persons with physical or mental disabilities, especially work programmes consistent with their capabilities and acceptable to them or their legal representatives; b) consider the specific requirements of persons with all forms of disability in one of the priorities in development plans; c) encourage the use and development of forms of communication suitable for persons with physic al or mental disabilities and d) foster social organisations aimed at improving the quality of life of peons with all forms of disability. 4) the State must appropriate measures to ensure that buildings and amenities to which the public has access are accessible to persons with disabilities. Inclusion and equity in education is based on

the idea that all children can learn together, regardless of difference or disability. This concept also implies a learner-centered and inclusive response that accommodates the differing perspectives, needs, and experiences of all students. The concept includes individual learners' needs as well as the collective needs of particular groups of learners, such as indigenous learners, in a particular setting. Despite the drive for inclusivity, disability in Zimbabwe carries multiple stigmas that are the source of exclusion from school and society at large. Exclusion from both school and society has cost the intellectually disabled people their right to education. Nziramasanga et al (1999) posit that inclusive education is not just a matter of charity or an oral obligation, rather it is a legal right and therefore an obligation of law, based on both national and international legal frames. While Zimbabwe has made strides in availing the enabling Inclusive Policy , the Inclusive Education Policy lacks the same legal force as the Act. Policies, unlike statutory laws, are not enforceable and may help governments escape compliance. This research has however noted that on a positive note and consistent with UNESCO's policy guidelines for inclusion which states that in order to move systems towards greater inclusion, there needs to be: a recognition of the right of children with disabilities to education and its provision in non-discriminatory ways, a common vision of education which covers all children of the appropriate age range and a conviction that schools have a responsibility to meet the diversity of needs of all learners, recognising that all children can learn, these highlighted circumstances are in place.

- P36 and P37 Education Circulars

This research established that the Secretary's Circular No P36 of 1990 is the primary policy instrument for the regulation of inclusive education for children with disabilities. It makes special education provisions in ordinary schools for children with varying degrees of disabilities and special education placement and procedures for special classes, resource units and special education schools. The same circular set age limits for children with disabilities in special needs. The absence of specific policy on education of children with disabilities means that critical issues and rights on the education of children with disability may not succinctly addressed. While a reasonable policy can in place it may not suffer implementation challenges owing to poor resource allocation to education for the disabled. This is further compounded by limited training of teachers in working with children with disabilities, with no incentives for teachers to do so. Poor identification and screening services, poor school support services, as well as limited or no resources for schools.

While we acknowledge the availability of supporting statutes on inclusive education for refugee we note however that the varied economic challenges bedevilling Zimbabwe could work against the resolve to meet the policy. One of the education officials had this to say:

"Why are you interested in refugee education? Why should we worried about refugee education when we already have enough challenges to worry about and attend to?" (P4).

The above quote demonstrates that while the government of Zimbabwe could be having enabling legal framework, implementing inclusive education could be a challenge as the policy uptake was not a priority and the government education system was already underfunded and had enough challenges of their own to attend to the challenges of refugee disabled education.

4.1.3   Availability of Data on Refugee Education

Respondents to the study had very scanty data on refugee education in Zimbabwe. No statistics on disabled refugee educators were provided. Respondents highlighted that they knew that Zimbabwe's laws did not discriminate against refugees as far as access to education was concerned but they were not very sure of the statistics on refugees access to education. Mental

retardation and physical disability formed the basis of the most forms of disability among the respondents in Tongogara camp. Concerning lack of disability data in the Zimbabwean refugee context, it was not surprising especially given the economic challenges bedevilling Zimbabwe.

Table 1 shows data collected from the schools in Tongogara camp. It can be seen from Table 1 that the ECD, primary and secondary schools at Tongogara Refugee Camp catered for both refugee children and the nearby host communities, giving way to integration of refugee and host communities in the process. Based on enrolments for the different schools, we theorize that educational integration for refugees' manifests in a multidirectional and hierarchical manner. Further education which in this case is Advanced level and tertiary education is restricted to schools outside the camp a scenario that hampers easy and equitable access to education. We highlight that this desired educational mobility may not be readily available to many of the refugee students restricted to the camp. Leaving the camp to access government schools offering advanced level and tertiary education comes at a huge cost and on the positive angle socio integration while the economic cost may be hampering for the refugee students. Furthermore, this research established that UNICEF-supported Alternative Basic Education (ABE) programme facilitated the building of gender sensitive sanitation facilities to ensure girls enrolled in the schools including disabled girls had access to learning without minding the challenges that come with access to such important points in the school such as toilets and water points. However, a yawning gap in this respect is the absence of such facilities as playing fields.

Table 1: Education Enrolment Disaggregation of data

Level		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
ECD	Refugee Children	550	69.4	69.4	69.4
	Non Refugee Children	242	30.6	30.6	30.6
	Total	792	100	100	100
Primary	Refugee Children	856	50.4	50.4	50.4
	Non Refugee Children	829	49.2	49.2	49.2
	Total	1685	100	100	100
Secondary	Refugee Children	632	58.8	58.8	58.8
	Non Refugee Children	442	41.2	41.2	41.2
	Total	1074	100	100	100

Source: Field Work

This research has established that legal statutes such as the Education Act and the Inclusive Education Policy in principle affords every student the opportunity to access education unhindered. This open access is however hampered by systemic bottlenecks and gaps that may include limited and lack of assistive devices and parental attitudes.

4.2   Nature of Impairment

Despite limited data that we could glean from government education and Social Welfare Ministries as well as the schools in as far as the disability prevalence was concerned, based on the sample and engagements we had with the respondents, this research established that there were a number of cases of disability among the refugee students' population and these had the proportions illustrated in Figure 2 with physical disability being the most prevalent. It was also possible to have disabled children exhibiting a combination of these impairments.
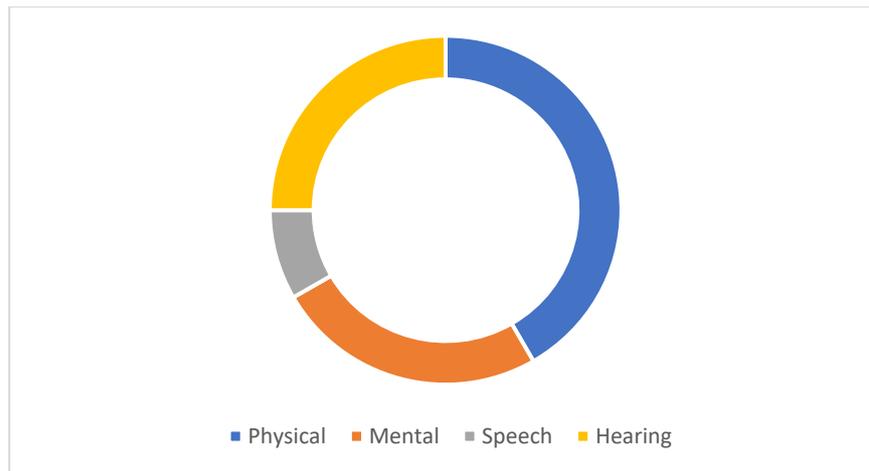
Figure 2: Disability Type by students interviewed from the Schools and Education

This research further established that disaggregated reporting on education for refugee children with disabilities is not only limited but non-existent. This appears to have been a result of attitudinal problems as officials often appeared to suggest that they had enough of their own challenges in Zimbabwe and cared less for the refugee children. Despite these glaring challenges this research also established that children with disabilities in host communities that do not attend school in the camp face a greater risk of being excluded than children in camps due to concentration of services by different NGOs.

4.3   Access

Accessibility is an enabler that allows children and adults with disabilities to enjoy their rights and entitlements. It is also a precondition for children and adults with disabilities to live independently and participate fully and equally in society. WE established that access varies and was not static. Access to education varies. According to one NGO respondent, '*access to education is not only physical but also social, assessment and informational*" (NGO, 8).

4.3.1   Physical Access

This research established that ramps in the schools and to the, toilets were a major noticeable feature giving credence to the charge towards access to education. When a person is unable to visit a facility, building or live in a house because of physical barriers, the building is deemed to be inadequate and requires modification. Provision of ramps was consistent with the Leave No One Behind mantra and agenda which involves a commitment to ensure the participation of persons with disabilities in all aspects of family and community life. Special' facilities such as ramps for children with disabilities was found to maximize inclusion. However, whereas the ramps were available, this research laments the presence of narrow doors that interfere with mobility of students especially on wheel chairs a measure that curtails access to major facilities. While the above issues were a major highlight on access to education, a major barrier was the slow acquisition and distribution of assistive devices. This research established that a lot of refugee learners were waiting for assistive devices to ensure that they progress meaningfully in education. Many reported that they had been waiting for the assistive devices for over 6 months at the time of research. Learners with disabilities highlighted long waiting periods to receive assistive devices. One parent had this to say, "My child has been waiting for th hearing aid since two years ago. It is a long time and I don't know if they have not forgotten about it" (Parent, 14)

4.3.2 Access to Education

Although most disabled refugee children were in school, the parents of disabled refugee children that were not in school that were interviewed indicated that the reasons for lack of access were mostly to do with the extent of disability. Respondents reported that opportunities for enrolment in education were potentially high and not traumatic as can be the case in most fragile settings. In Zimbabwe, refugee-hosting schools reported having small numbers of teachers recruited from the refugee population. It would appear that these were established to help refugee children acclimatise and integrate into the national system and engage with host communities. It is critical to observe that there are no particular policies that address disabled refugee children's education in the Zimbabwean context and these are generally subsumed in other legal frameworks that address disability in general. While opportunities for pre-primary, primary and secondary education abound in the camp for every student it was noted that some students were not in school based on various reasons that had nothing to with access but often cultural including overprotection especially for disabled children while fear of bringing out disabled children was often cited.

While legal frameworks are attentive to the needs of disabled refugee children, the encampment policy meant that specialised education for children with disability was largely not available. The availability of vertical mechanisms meant that legislative pieces in place that are attentive to the needs and rights of disabled children. The research established that the Centralised Assessment system for placing disabled children in the school system where remedial tutor at the province is tasked with placement act as inhibitors to quick placement of students. One of the NGO respondents observed that "*Critically, accessibility goes beyond provision of a wheel chair and should address other related challenges that stock learners like intellectual and visual impairment challenges*" (NGO, 6).

4.3.3 Social Acceptance from friends, teachers

Much of the barriers to participation in this research centred on physical and educational access. Beliefs regarding people with disability in many African settings are often complex and conflicting. Learner respondents reported that friendly co-learners who befriended them and helped them with their work and mobility in some cases for those using wheel chairs made them feel accepted and warm within the group. This finding dovetails with the requirements and advocacy of the UNESCO 1994 Salamanca statement on inclusive education that proclaimed and recognized that the schools that create an inclusive orientation are most effective in "combating discriminatory attitudes, creating welcoming environments, building an inclusive society and achieving education for all".

This research established that friends and teachers served as enablers to full participation in education. The research highlighted that friends and teachers provided the necessary support for education. We established that where people with dignity are treated with dignity and respect, they tend to be motivated to want to belong to such supportive communities and vice versa. This research noted that where attitudes and public discourse are positive and empowering, where services are available to all regardless of disability, refugee children with disabilities will experience the benefits of education and inclusion. One family member had this to say about families of children with disability that they regarded their children as: " *..rare, who did not go to school and must be hidden and stashed away. We kept them away from the public glare out of protection*". This research established that inclusive education was violated at the schools in

Tongogara refugee camp as learners with disability especially mental retardation were categorised on their own learning set ups while the non-disabled were learning on their own. This is despite the fact that inclusion and equity in education is based on the idea that all children can learn together, regardless of difference or disability (The World Bank, 2019). This is despite the fact that inclusive education concept implies a learner-centered and inclusive response that accommodates the differing perspectives, needs, and experiences of all students. The concept includes individual learners' needs as well as the collective needs of particular groups of learners, such as indigenous learners, in a particular setting. Access does not translate to participation and achievement.

4.3.4 Instruction and Assessment for Refugee Children in Elementary Grades

Zimbabwe recognizes the diverse cultural–linguistic communities from which children come from and notes that children can be taught in their mother tongue from grade 1 to grade 3. Language can be a barrier to refugee students accessing schools in Zimbabwe. The official Zimbabwean language policy provides home language instruction in lower primary grades and English instruction in upper primary and secondary grades. However, in camp settings, refugee children start learning both Kiswahili and English upon enrolment. The above recognition is critical for access to education for the refugee children. While this should be the case, this research has established that practically, children from refugee communities have largely been denied the opportunity to get instruction and progress in their mother language with the language of instruction serving as a barrier to effective teaching. A key tension in medium of instruction (MOI) policies and practices related to refugees is instruction in host language at the expense of refugee children's mother tongue. On one hand, research in the field of language-in-education policy and practice supports mother tongue-based multilingual education (MTB MLE). In this model, schools use home languages that students understand best in the early years of schooling, and continue doing so alongside a structured introduction of international languages like French or English thereafter if required by the school system. MTB MLE supports interlinguistic transfer between the language(s) students are most comfortable with and a foreign language so that reading skills are taught once in the home language and can be transferred to the foreign language (Benson, 2016; Heugh, 2011; UNESCO, 2013). See here.

The languages used in school have significant implications for children's wellbeing. These implications range from students' academic performance and learning to identity formation and sense of belonging within families and communities (Benson, 2012; García, 2012; Shin, 2013). Children from nondominant linguistic and/or immigrant backgrounds whose languages are not represented in schools and who are not supported in bridging from home language to the language of school, can face challenges for their identity development. These include language loss, the development of a negative self-image, and a diminished connection to both the community of origin and the host community (Hornberger, 2001; Qorro, 2009; Tse, 2001; Anzaldúa, 2007). See here.

Disabled refugee children reported varied experiences as far as access to education in Tongogara was concerned. We highlight that in pursuit of locational inclusion, students needing high levels of support attended ordinary schools in the camp and are taught the national curriculum in a secluded resource room within the school (for those with severe disabilities while the rest with mild disabilities are mainstreamed in classes. The above set up was only very evident at the primary schools, and the units are set up with the help of the SPS & SE. The students in the special

class typically have deafness, blindness, and students requiring high level of support. Less than one percent of Zimbabwean primary schools offer locational inclusion; a significant minority of students who could be enrolled in ordinary schools with locational inclusion attend residential special needs education schools. Refugee child respondents who learnt and participated in school and classroom set ups that mirrored inclusion reported feeling warm and accepted by peers. We highlight in this research that policy commitments can only be implemented with adequate funding and as such the continued economic comatose affecting Zimbabwe may have seen half-hearted results.

4.3.5   Assessment and low vision

Respondents highlighted limited use of braille and sign language with learners with hearing impairment, and the use of font sized papers, as well as campaigns by teachers, school authorities, especially in the Primary School. This was not noticeable in the secondary school creating banners to learner education for children with hearing impairments. Education respondents highlighted that in terms of assessment, they followed guidelines that stipulated the rights of learners with disability where the correct font sized papers for examinations were availed upon confirmation by the health authorities. This demonstrates that the country is following a disability inclusive development framework which is framed very much within a rights-based approach. One educator had this to say, "We are very sensitive to the implementation of the standard procedures for assessment of disabled learners with braille and correct font sized papers being used"

4.4   Resources

From the interviews data, it was evident that the resources required by disabled refugee children were categorised under human, material, financial and assistive technologies. The inadequacy of the suitably trained human is an albatross. Although special education teachers were available at primary and secondary schools in Tongogara camp, they were not trained to deal with all the forms of disability experienced in the camp.

In terms of material resources, the ECD, primary and secondary schools all had clean well-structured learning infrastructure and resources as shown in Figure 3. In addition, all learners had their school fees, uniforms and stationery requirements covered by the NGOs operating in the camp. The ECD pupils also had their meals supplied and prepared at school, something that greatly incentivised them to attend school.
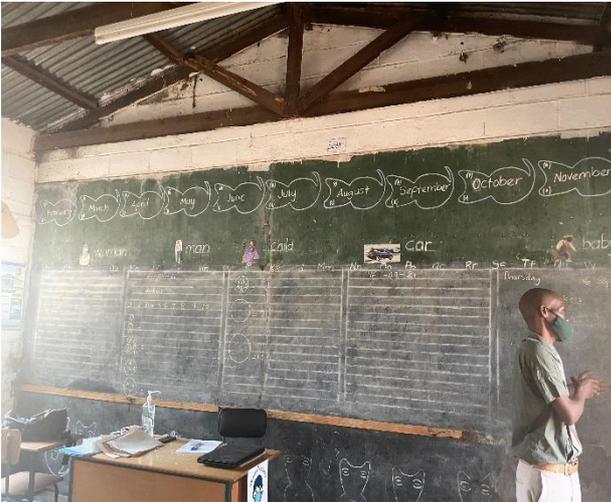
Figure 1: ECD Centre

Figure 2: Special Education Classroom

Figure 3: Vocational Learning at Tongogara Refugee Camp

The area that was lacking was that of provision of assistive gadgets and technologies to enable learning of disabled refugees. These included prescription glasses, hearing aids, specialised laptops and computers as well as access to Wi-Fi and online resources. The remoteness of the camp meant that even the mobile and Wi-Fi infrastructure and signals were not available. One education official emphasised this point in reference to the COVID-19 pandemic as follows:

The absence of gadgets needed to access e-learning platforms are not available in Tongogara refugee camp thus having a knock-down effect on access to teaching and learning materials in the advent of COVID-19, lockdown and WHO requirements which have been stipulated by government.

4.5   Awareness

The interview data from disabled refugee children and parents clearly showed that there was awareness on the capabilities of disabled refugee children through education and skill development. The responses to the question "What profession do you (your child) intend to follow?" were not limiting. They aspired to become engineers, doctors, mechanics, teachers etc. just like any other non-disabled children. It is clear that disabled refugee students dream big and they should be supported to realise their dreams.

4.6   Synergies

Well pronounced synergies that acted as enablers to disabled refugee children emerged from the interview data with respect to ECD and primary school levels but not at the secondary school level. These were categorised as home-school, parent-teacher, refugee-host and disabled-non-disabled synergies as detailed below:

4.6.1   Home-school synergies

There exists a close relationship between the school and the homes for disabled children at ECD and primary school levels. An example of this synergy is the fact that parents volunteer to take turns to cook for the ECD learners to the extent that some pregnant parents actually visit the ECD for food and some learners take food home in lunchboxes as encouragement for them to value school. ECD and primary school teachers meet once every week with parents of disabled children to co-develop and harmonise sign language used at school and at home after having realised that these are different. They also take that opportunity to discuss the progress of their wards as well as any other important issues.

4.6.2   Parent-teacher Synergies

Parental empowerment and inclusion in the education of their child with a disability is very important. For example, parents can provide very valuable prenatal, perinatal and postnatal history during the assessment process for a child with a disability. ECD and primary school teachers were reported to be undertaking visits to homes of disabled children who would have missed school thus spurring improved attendance. No such relationship existed in secondary school thus impacting on school attendance and the students' perceived acceptance by teachers and peers. Respondents highlighted that weak parental teacher synergies meant that students were not fully supported in their quest for access to inclusive education as was the case at secondary school level. A certain level of mutual understanding between the teacher and parent should exist for the benefit of the child.

4.6.3   Refugee-host synergies

The co-existence between the refugee and the indigenous community children in school created bonding and synergies between the two groups. These synergies acted as enablers to the quality

of life for disabled refugee children through the formation of lasting friendships. For example, one ECD teacher explained:

> *If he (a disabled boy child) does not come to school, his friends from the host community will run to his house to check on him. Even here at school if anything happens to him, his friends will rush to tell me.*

4.6.4 Disabled-non-disabled child synergies

Disabled children were reported to be making friendships with their non-disabled counterparts that were mutually beneficial. Even outside close friendships, the co-existence of these two groups created in them a certain level of awareness that acted as an enabler to their tolerance of each other, participation and success. Small gestures like non-disabled children or teachers accepting to have their hair clipped by a disabled learner went a long way in boosting their morale, assisting them to move on and have a positive outlook to life.

4.7 Capacity building

Capacity building was described by participants as a structured and intentional programme for supporting and strengthening individuals, families and communities to be alert to the importance of empowering disabled children to improve their lives through education and skills training. The study revealed that capacity building was needed particularly by education officials, teachers and parents for reasons explained below:

4.7.1 Officials

Some education officials who were interviewed were not even aware of the presence of disabled refugee children in Zimbabwe and the need to consider their education. Furthermore, some questioned the need for this study considering that:

> *Zimbabwe is facing so many challenges and the children are also burdened by numerous educational needs. I cannot imagine why you think it important to focus your study on refugee children and disabled ones for that matter! Have you even provided solutions to our own local ones?*

Evidently, capacity needs to be built for education officials to enable them to come up with awareness programmes that bring better and inclusive services to all children regardless of origin and disability status.

4.7.2 Teachers

The interview data revealed that although schools had embraced inclusive education, most teachers taking mainstream classes were not trained to deal with disabled children. Even the few teachers trained in special education were also unable to deal with children with various forms of disability. Further tooling and re-tooling were necessary in order to strengthen their capacities and to make inclusive education a success.

- *Teacher Competence*

Teacher competence is a critical ingredient in the provision of inclusive education. This research established that teachers' attempts to address students' psychological challenges comes with limited professional trainings and structural support. Respondents also revealed that one of the greatest challenges to provision of education was the presence of very few specialised teachers. One respondent had this to say:

"*We have very few specialist teachers in those areas*" (Respondent P4).

- *Stigmatisation of special education teachers*

We established that teachers addressing the educational needs of children with disabilities in the camp were actively discriminated against as a result of stigmatising public attitudes on the students that they taught. This pervasively negative public attitude towards disability and persons with disabilities, was a dehumanising and devaluing discourse, which pose a formidable barrier to the educational and socioeconomic participation of children with disabilities as teachers shun the classes. One of the Special Class teachers had this:

"Vanhu vanoti handisi mudzidzisi wakazara sezvo ndiri mudzidzisi we special class" (People assume that I am a less capable teacher than my counter parts as I teach special class).

Capacity building would be key to raise the awareness of all teachers to the need to treat all children as the same.

4.7.3 Parents

Some respondents also noted that some parents do not accept that their disabled children should go to school. Some were overly protective particularly towards the girl child. As a result, they hide these children from public view. Where parents hide their children from school, it means access to education will remain a pipe dream. Research has repeatedly proven that parental participation in the education of their children plays a major role in their academic performance and general development (Emerson, Fear, Fox & sanders, 2012). Such parents would also benefit from capacity building programmes

4.8 Curriculum

The curriculum was lauded for its inclusivity and its ability to embrace both academic and vocational aspects. For example, intellectually challenged learners were able to benefit from skills training in fence-making, agriculture, hair dressing and poultry rearing whilst at the same time managing to empower the disabled learners with basic literacy skills. However, respondents noted that the curriculum was deficient in some respects. A major highlight on curriculum issues was the omission by educational authorities to roll out instruction in the learners' indigenous languages as stipulated in the revised Education Act. Curriculum not as broad as idealised. Languages like Swahili are not examined.

One of the issues reflected upon by education officials was the place of special education and non-progression of students in special classes. Relating to Special Class education some respondents cited that parents sighted no progression when students were placed in special classes as they maintained their grades year in and year out and resultantly saw no achievement. It would appear parents saw this as exclusion with an opportunity to "separate and sort their children into their allotted tracks, into the streams that assign them to unequal destinations" (P3 respondent).

This research also established that a centralised assessment model for placing children in special education was available and run by the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education. However, we submit that in testing and assessing the academic performance of disabled children, there has to be a shift away from standardised, mainly psychometric, tests, towards predominantly teacher-produced diagnostic testing that determines a child's learning potential and identifies how it can be improved. We believe this process makes education inclusive for all learners.

4.9   Challenges

In line with objective two which sought to explore the experiences of disabled refugee students (disaggregated by gender), and their families with educational access, participation and success in the host country, several challenges were identified. The challenges were categorised as attitudinal, cultural and stigmatisation.

4.9.1   Attitudinal

Interview data revealed that negative attitudes towards disabled children by siblings, parents, teachers and the community at large militate against their access and participation in education. These negative attitudes make people blinded towards the abilities and capabilities of disabled children. Resultantly, disabled children are either excluded or given low priority when accessing educational opportunities. Parents of children with disabilities appeared unwilling to incur costs to assist their children ease their way into education often expecting donations from well-wishers because they were not convinced that their children would succeed. NGO 2 had this to say,

> *So those negative attitudes start with the parents who look down upon their own children and think that they are useless. Some go to the extent of not acquiring a birth certificates for a child with a disability. From there you would see that even when it comes to time that that child should go to school, they don't value the education of a child with a disability.*

4.9.2   Cultural

Respondents reported that most African cultures tended to view disability as a curse brought about by bad behavior such as for example sorcery, evil spirits, breaking traditional taboos, theft and promiscuity. As such most people had low levels of tolerance towards disabled children. In explaining this challenge NGO 1 said:

> *"First of all, we should understand the culture and also the traditional practices in our country. Whereby when you expect to have a child, automatically you know you should have a healthy child and when you give birth to a child with a disability then it becomes an issue."*

Refugee parents were likely to be even more averse to allowing their disabled children to attend school in Zimbabwe for fear of the perceived negative cultural challenges and tribal differences.

4.9.3 Stigmatization

Stigmatization and discrimination of children with disabilities was identified as a key challenge impeding educational access, participation and achievement. The severity of the stigma intensified as one advances from the family arena towards the public sphere. Thus exclusion and denying children with disabilities access to education became compounded with issues of attitudes and cultural beliefs.

5. Conclusion and recommendations

Based on the above findings, the following recommendations are made that:

- Make disabled refugee children visible in the education discourse
- Ensure equitable and adequate funding for all
- The realisation of the intent of any law or policy is heavily dependent on the issue of funding and how that funding is applied. Despite the crucial importance of funding in the realisation of the right to education of children with disabilities, laws and policies are by and large silent on how to fund the education of such children.
- To make education inclusive for refugee learners' epistemic accessibility can be improved by using special materials that facilitate the accessibility and learning of pupils with disabilities by removing barriers of the teaching system, including through providing facilities for accessing information related to the curriculum.
- The teacher is the most precious and valuable of school resources. Curricula in teacher training institutions should ensure that trainees can be helped to acquire and demonstrate the necessary competencies to qualify as teachers capable of handling children with disabilities in all respects.
- Fruitful engagement between home and school should be done to ensure that the challenges facing the implementation of inclusion in schools are addressed. A healthy partnership between schools and the community at large, in which the home and family is the singular important unit is vital

Conclusion

Access to education for refugees is a challenge and the situation is dire for disabled refugee children who are facing multiple impediments. This research establishes that the encampment policy implemented by Zimbabwe has advantages and equal disadvantages that work to include and exclude refugee students access to education.

References

1. UNESCO Institute of Statistics. (2019). Out-of-School Children and Youth. Retrieved from https://uis.unesco.org/en/topic/out-school-children-and-youth

2. S. J. Feldman. (2007). Development Assisted Integration: A Viable Alternative to Long Term Residence in Refugee Camps?. *PRAXIS The Fletcher Journal of Human Security.* 22, 49-68.

3. F. Nicholson and J. Kumin. (2017). A guide to international refugee protection and building state asylum systems.

4. R. Horn. (2010). Exploring the Impact of Displacement and Encampment on Domestic Violence in Kakuma Refugee Camp, *Journal of Refugee Studies.* 23(3), 356–376. Retrieved from https://doi.org/10.1093/jrs/feq020

5. G. Verdirame and B.Harrell-Bond with Z. Lomo and H. Garry. (2005). RIGHTS IN EXILE, *Janus-Faced Humanitarianism*

6. Human Rights Watch. (2002). Annual Report. Retrieved from https://www.hrw.org/legacy/annual-report/2002.pdf

7. S. Sytnik. (2012). Refugee Law Initiative, *Rights Displaced: The Effects of Long-term Encampment on the Human Rights of Refugees.*

8. A. Jamal. (2000). Camps and freedoms: long-term refugee situations in Africa. *Forced Migration Review.* 16, 4-6.

9. E. Walton, J. McIntyre, S. J. Awidi, N. De Wet-Billings, K. Dixon, R. Madziva, D. Monk, C. Nyoni, J. Thondhlana, V. Wedekind. (2020). Compounded Exclusion: Education for Disabled Refugees in Sub-Saharan Africa. *Frontiers in Education.* 5. Retrieved from https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/feduc.2020.00047

10.

11. I. Dey. (1993). Qualitative Data Analysis: A User Friendly Guide for Social Science. *London: Routledge*. Retrieved from http://dx.doi.org/10.4324/9780203412497

12. L. Emerson, J. Fear, S. Fox and E. Sanders. (2012). Parental engagement in learning and schooling: Lessons from research. *A report by the Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth (ARACY) for the Family-School and Community Partnerships Bureau: Canberra.* Retrieved from: http://www.familyschool.org.au/files/3313/7955/2295/parental-engagement-in-learning-and-schooling.pdf

13. The World Bank. (2018). Inclusive Education. Retrieved from https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/education/brief/inclusive-education

14. C.T. Nziramasanga, et al. (1998). Report of the Presidential Commission of Inquiry into education and training. Retrieved from http://hdl.handle.net/10646/1191