BRITISH COUNCIL

THE IMPACT OF REFUGEES ON SCHOOLS IN UGANDA

A study into the impact of refugees on schools in three districts in northern and western Uganda affected by their arrival, with special emphasis on language mapping and language use

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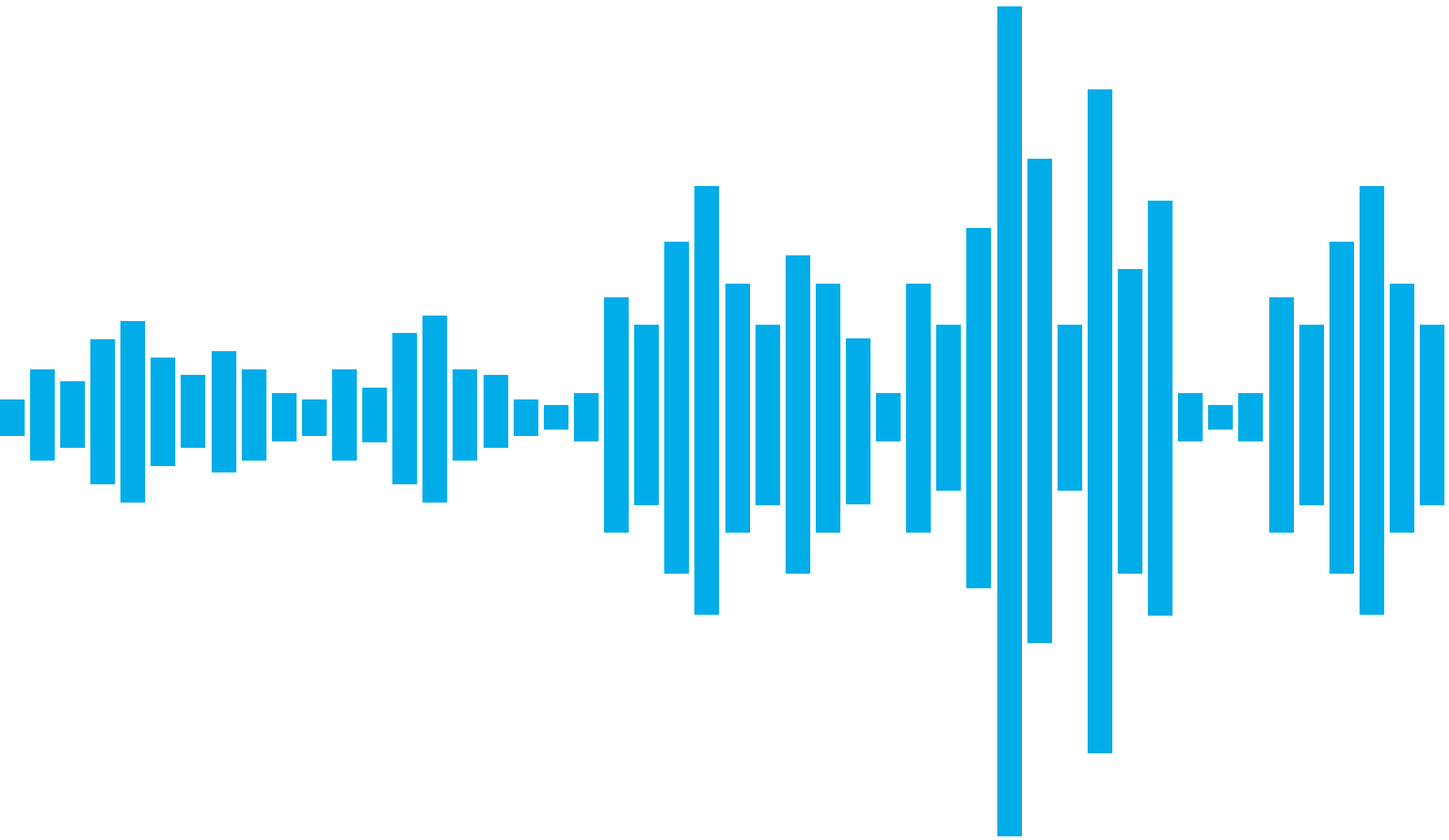
Abbreviations

ALP	Accelerated Learning Programme
DRC	Democratic Republic of the Congo
FGD	Focus group discussion
L1	First language (see terminology below)
LoI	Language of Instruction
MoES	Ministry of Education and Sports
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
UNHCR	United Nations High Commission for Refugees
WTU	Windle Trust Uganda (previously known as Windle Trust International)



Terminology

First language: Throughout the report the term 'first language' is used in preference to 'local language' or 'mother tongue' or 'dominant language'. It is recognised that many children may have more than one first language, especially in diverse linguistic settings. The term does not exclude this fact, and is also inclusive of the concept of a child's 'familiar language' which means that the child can operate in that language comfortably in much the same way as in a first language, even if it is not, chronologically, the first one learned.

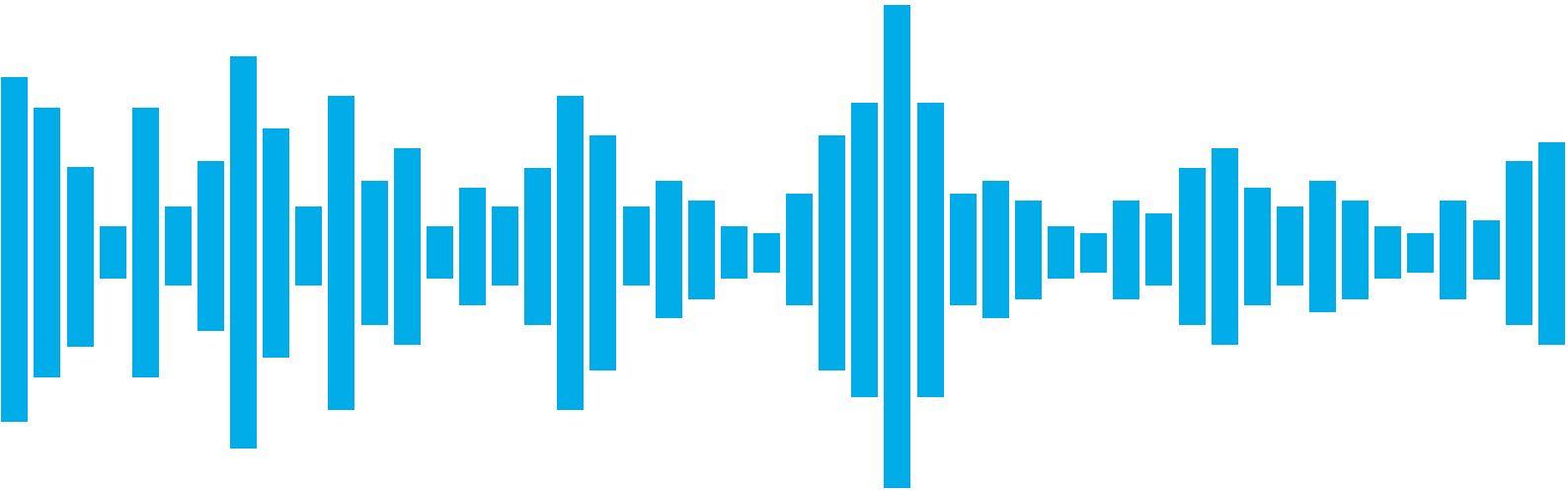
Home language: It is invariably used to clarify which language is used in the child's home. It will usually be the same as the first language but, at certain points in the research, this term is used to help clarify the child's most commonly used language outside school, i.e. with parents and guardians.

Host community: The report uses the term 'host' to apply to the Ugandan community among whom the refugees are settled, i.e. the Ugandan nationals in the area.

Language of instruction (LoI): This is the language used in the classroom as the main language in which the child is taught. The official language of instruction should be used both for written and spoken instructions and should be the language used in textbooks and any assessments given. It is also recognised that, in many settings, teachers may use more than one language for instruction – a fact not necessarily recognised by official language policy.

Primary 1–7: The report has followed Uganda's terminology by using the word 'Primary' or 'Primary class' rather than 'grade' when describing the year of schooling.

Refugee: A person who has left their own country for a different country as a result of an emergency situation. Such a term does not include internally displaced persons.



1. Executive summary

In response to the large influx of refugees that Uganda is accepting, and in response to the pressures this influx has on both the schools where the refugees are settled, and on the language policies of the Ministry of Education and Sports (MoES), the British Council agreed with MoES and the task force on refugee education to carry out a brief survey of the language situation in the schools, and the impact that the influx of refugees is having on learning and language. This report is the result.

The review is intended to be preliminary and focuses on language in education rather than broader issues related to refugee education. The review was carried out in 30 refugee-impacted schools, ten in each of three districts – Arua, Isingiro and Yumbe – which have recently received the greatest numbers of refugees.

The preparation for the review involved developing four different tools that would be used to interview head teachers and teachers, interview a cross-section of learners, observe a selection of lessons and, finally, to assess the English skills of the same cross-section of learners. These tools and the data collection approach were then piloted in five schools in Isingiro using ten enumerators who had been trained. As a result of this pilot, changes were made to the tools to ensure they collected the data required and could more easily be used by the enumerators.

The tools were designed to collect data on the learners' English language skills and the language that is used, both as the main language and as a supplementary language at home and in the multilingual settings of the classrooms, with both refugee and host children. The report also looked at the capacity of the teachers and the capacity and practice of the language or teaching assistants. In addition, the researchers interviewed the head teachers and senior education officials asking them about the existing status quo in the school and their own opinions of language policy, use and standards of achievement.

The enumerators were trained and then the data was collected from the 30 schools over a two-day period, with two enumerators visiting each school. Some 96 lessons were observed, 615 learners interviewed and their language assessed; 319 teachers and senior education officials were also engaged in discussions. The data was then brought together and inputted into a database for analysis using the computer package Stata. The findings were then written up in this report, with provisional recommendations proposed. The report is presented to the British Council for them to present to the task force and MoES for their consideration.

The key findings include the following:

- **Schools were very overcrowded, with an average of over 100 children in a classroom with just one teacher, and there were examples where classes were over 300.** This is as a result of recent increases in numbers, with many schools more than doubling in size in two years, some increasing fourfold, and the total number of refugees in the 30 selected schools increasing by a multiple of five (from 6,090 to 33,333).
- **The multilingual language situation in schools was very complex, with over 19 different languages being represented by significant numbers of speakers.** In addition, a majority of refugee children were trying to learn in a language different from the one they had used in their home country and, as a result, were having difficulties in understanding.
- **Partly because of language, many children were being placed in classes well below that appropriate for their age, or the level they had reached in their home country.** This has led to children being, on average, between two and three years older than they should be for that class.
- **A majority of lessons used English as the LoI, but 14 out of 96 lessons observed used a local language, even where only a minority spoke that language.**

- **Approximately a third of the lessons used more than one language in discussions or in explanations, and thus such teachers were clearly adopting their own bilingual or multilingual approach to teaching.** However, over half the classes observed were monolingual, using no language other than English, even though many children did not understand English.
- **Although 87 teaching assistants had been employed in these schools, they were only observed helping in seven of the 96 lessons observed.** In fact, many of these assistants were on their own in the class taking on the role of class teacher. In fact, many were qualified teachers used to taking on this role in their country of origin.
- **The findings on the children's language levels showed that only 15 per cent of Primary 3 and 5 children could identify at least four out of five letters by giving the sounds.** However, 33 per cent were able to identify four out of five words; some 44 per cent could answer written questions independently and appropriately. Host children in Isingiro, and to a lesser extent, in Arua, were better at these tasks than the refugee children. However, the reverse was true in Yumbe, though host children were a very small minority in that district.

Key recommendations include making improvements in the following areas:

1. **Train the teachers to use bilingual or multilingual approaches in the classrooms.** This will support children with different languages, and improve approaches to teaching English and reading.
2. **Rethink the duties, job descriptions and profiles of teaching assistants, language assistants and potential refugee teachers.** This will ensure maximum use of the language and teaching skills available among the refugees so that those potentially or actually qualified to teach do teach and so that separate language assistants are appointed with lower-level but specific skills in helping children with a different language profile understand their lessons through both in-class and out-of-class support.
3. **Provide simple, non-fiction readers, including bilingual readers.** These resources can support those coming from a different language background and different curriculum content, to fill both the language and the curriculum gaps between the refugees' curriculum and the host country's curriculum.
4. **Encourage a language policy in nursery and Primary classes 1–3 that will maximise the use of familiar languages.** This avoids a monolingual English classroom where children have a poor background in English.
5. **Rethink the placement policy so that children can be placed in a grade appropriate to their skills, knowledge and age, rather than just their language ability.**
6. **Provide support and short, but intense, language classes for those coming from different language backgrounds.** This will help students catch up with the language they need to match their grade, or at least be able to keep up with others in the class, rather than being held back by their lack of English.

2. Introduction to the study

2.1 Reasons for the study

This study is based in northern and western Uganda, and is specifically looking at the impact of the influx of refugees in district schools that are most affected by this influx. It is set against the context of an exemplary government policy towards refugees, a policy that recognises the rights and needs of refugees and attempts to ensure an inclusive approach so that refugees can become a part of the society. Uganda is widely recognised and praised (World Bank, 2016) for having adopted an approach that is positive and humane and, throughout this report, the researchers recognise the value of the government policy.[1] It is an approach that, as far as the researchers could assess, was also accepted by the societies concerned, including the school communities. Now, Uganda is facing one of the largest refugee influxes in recent years, fuelled by events in South Sudan and, in the last few weeks, by events in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) and the Burundian crisis. According to the latest figures for March 2018, there are 1,444,873 refugees registered.[2] These figures precede the latest influx from Burundi.

2.2 Purpose of the study

In response to the influx of refugees in 2016–17, a task force was set up and chaired by the Ministry of Education and Sports (MoES) to develop a response strategy to meet these new challenges. The British Council, with the support of the task force, offered to look specifically at the language issues that arise in schools as a result of the numbers of children coming into the education system with a range of different languages, language needs and language levels.

The objectives of the survey are to gain a more nuanced understanding of the range and use of languages and the challenges to learning and teaching posed by multilingual classrooms in schools in refugee affected districts. The study will look at the disparities between LOI practices, materials and language policy; highlighting where the greatest disparities exist (Terms of reference for the study).

It was agreed that the study would target three districts which have high levels of refugee influx. The districts agreed were Arua, Yumbe and Isingiro. As an initial stage, it was also agreed that a pilot study would be carried out, prior to the main study.

To achieve the objectives outlined above, the study needs to address the following questions:

1. **What is the language situation in the schools affected by refugee influx?**
   a. How has the rapid increase in numbers affected class practice and especially language use?
   b. How many languages are represented?
   c. Which are the dominant languages?
   d. How are they used in the classrooms?
   e. How far are the schools following the ministry's language policies?
2. **What are the levels of learning achieved in refugee-affected schools?**
   a. What language issues are having an impact on learning in the class?
   b. What support is available to children who do not know the language used in class?
   c. What further support can be given to address these language issues?
3. **What is the present admission practice and how effective is this in maximising learning opportunities?**
   a. What are the admission criteria, and how far are they related to language levels?
   b. Are over-age children an issue and, if so, are present policies or practice contributing to the problems?
4. **What is the actual and potential human capacity of those involved in the teaching?**

1. Policy is embodied in Uganda's 2006 Refugees Act and 2010 Refugees Regulations.
2. *Uganda Refugee Response Monthly Snapshot.* UNHCR. March 2018.

3. Education system in Uganda and its impact on research design

Schools in Uganda follow a clear language policy as formulated in the White Paper of 1996, and then adapted and implemented through the curriculum reforms that were rolled out in 2007. The curriculum (MoES, 2007) states that children in nursery and Primary 1–3 should learn in a language they know well. This should normally be their first or home language (L1). Primary 4 should be seen as a transition year in which children move gradually from learning in the local language to learning in English. This policy is now well established and accepted across Uganda. Where a school is in a rural community which has its own language, the implementation of the policy works well and is popular. Interpretation becomes more difficult when there are mixed language communities, and here the ministry has used the rough guideline of 80 per cent, i.e. if 80 per cent of the learners speak one language as their home language, then that language should be selected as the LoI. Where it is less than 80 per cent, then the district education officer works with the community to decide on which language to select. Where groups are very mixed, such as in Kampala, then schools can use English or Swahili.

In practice, the decisions about which language to use are made by the District Education Office and endorsed by the National Curriculum Development Centre. In addition to the language policy, the curriculum is also arranged by theme from Primary 1 to 3, rather than by subject. This is likely to be reflected in the Primary 3 classroom observations, as the observation sheets record a theme or a strand. Thus, there is a clear distinction in the way learning is arranged in Primary 1–3 and in Primary 5–7, with Primary 4 acting as the transition year, not only for language, but also for the way learning areas are arranged. This knowledge influenced the selection of Primary 3 and Primary 5 as target years for data collection. As the data was collected near the start of the new academic year, it means learners have completed Primary 2, a year in which they should have established strong literacy skills in their LoI. Primary 5 learners have just completed the transition year, and therefore should have successfully transferred their literacy skills from the L1 to English.

A second important policy decision by MoES was the decision that refugees, wherever possible, should be integrated into local schools, not segregated from local nationals or host communities. While there are clearly very strong reasons why schools need to be integrated, and why schools should avoid any ‘Balkanisation’ of the learners, this policy does complicate the language issues. Some schools and districts have significant numbers of L1 Swahili speakers and Kirundi speakers, with the host community children all speaking Runyankole, with sufficient numbers to form a separate nursery class or Primary 1–3 classes for each of these three main languages. However, both UNHCR and the Ugandan government recognise that such divisions in the early years could lead to a separation of the communities into separate language and ethnic groups. This would reinforce the differences between host and refugee communities when the aim is to integrate them and, even more probable, could encourage conflict and competition between the different refugee communities, leading to increased instability in the settlement areas.

4. Background to the study

4.1 Purpose: why the study is needed

The need for the study has already been touched on. The major influx of refugees into Uganda, especially northern Uganda, has put strains on how far the present policy is sustainable, with over one million refugees entering Uganda in under a year. This has also had an impact on the schools and, in particular, has led to a complex language situation, and put a strain on the practicality of the existing language policy to meet the needs of both refugee and host communities. Host children, who were originally in schools with a majority of Lugbara or Aringa speakers, suddenly found themselves in a minority, with the majority speaking Kakwa or Arabic. As a result, there is clearly some confusion as to what language or languages should be used and how refugees, with a very different language profile from the host community, can be helped to settle into the schools, and be helped to fit into the education system, without disadvantaging either the refugee or host children. Thus, clear guidelines are needed, but such guidelines can only be based on accurate knowledge of the linguistic mapping of host and refugee children in the schools, the complexities that exist and an awareness of what the common practice is in the classroom. This study hopes to provide this background knowledge and, based on this, put forward some tentative, but evidence-based, recommendations.

4.2 Background on refugee influx

The recent influx of refugees is what has made such a study necessary, and led to the complexity of the language situation in schools. As of March 2018, Uganda has taken in, and is now hosting, 1.44 million refugees across 12 refugee districts, with just over one million from South Sudan and 240,000 from the DRC but also significant numbers from Burundi, Rwanda and Somalia. Indeed, a total of 13 countries are currently represented (UNHCR, 2018). In Kampala, there are estimated to be 100,000 urban refugees. The Bidi Bidi settlement in Yumbe, one of the sites of this study, is believed to be the largest single refugee settlement in the world; it was expected to cater for 40,000 people, but now hosts over 280,000. Last year, 2017, was a particularly bad year for numbers due to renewed conflict in South Sudan which led to a spike in numbers in April, May and again in August of 2017. To add to the problems for Uganda as host country, there have been further conflicts in areas of the DRC leading to a spike in their numbers from September 2017 onwards. In fact, the research team found several children in their samples who had arrived from the DRC just two weeks earlier.

Given the size of influx, it is not surprising that the capacity of many local schools has been exhausted. Structures cannot support the numbers of children nor can teachers effectively teach the very large classes. Children face language barriers to access the local curriculum and often drop out. The associated costs of education (e.g. books and uniforms) are prohibitive for many refugees: only around 60 per cent of refugee children attend primary schools and at present only five per cent attend secondary. Some parents may delay enrolling children, hoping their displacement is temporary. However, as of April 2018, the situations in both South Sudan and the DRC have all the hallmarks of being protracted crises.

No skills audit is at present carried out on the incoming adult refugee population, so their skills are underutilised in general. However, in education there is a special urgency to use any refugees who have teaching skills and could help to reduce the shortage of teachers in the system. The beginnings of a system to accredit foreign qualifications is being put in place, but the route to achieving certified status in Uganda for a refugee teacher is still uncertain. In addition, in Kampala there are good models of integration where community-based, intensive English lessons allow children to enter school at the appropriate level. However, these are NGO-supported, and no formal processes for language integration currently exists.

As the recent Save the Children report *Restoring Hope, Rebuilding Futures* notes, many South Sudanese refugee teachers are trained and speak the home languages of refugee children. Recent arrivals of refugee children from South Sudan belong to the Kakwa and Pojulu ethnic groups from Central Equatoria, and the Madi and Lotuko groups from Eastern Equatoria. Of these

languages, there are host communities that also speak Madi and Kakwa. However, refugees do not necessarily arrive in areas that have a matching L1. Many refugee children were previously taught in a mixture of Arabic and their home language and thus struggle to transition to Uganda's English language curriculum (from Primary 4 onwards) or the local language used as an LoI when different from their own. A lack of access to textbooks and other materials is particularly pronounced among refugee children, and Ugandan schools lack additional equipment and materials to support them. Those children coming across from the DRC also have a mix of languages, with many speaking Swahili or Lingala as a first language, dependent on area of origin. They have been taught in a mix of these two languages, with French as the international language for upper primary, thus increasing the incompatibility with the languages they meet in school.

There are clear cases in which the successful integration of refugee and migrant children can have a positive impact on overall school performance (Burgess, 2014), but the rapid integration of new students needs to include targeted support to bridge language barriers (Hickman et al., 2008). In addition, being able to speak the language of the host country is important for the entire refugee community, not only the children (Dempster and Hargrave, 2017).

4.3 Refugee education: the issues and UNHCR guidelines

Uganda has been widely praised for the freedoms it allows its refugees, who are given houses, land to grow food, access to education and the right to work and travel within Uganda. Refugees are either settled on community-owned land (West Nile) or in settlements, which has implications for future service delivery. Following the Ugandan government's request for support for the Settlement and Transformative Agenda, the UN and World Bank have developed a five-year Refugee and Host Population Empowerment strategy for social service provision to be mainstreamed through district governments. Uganda has been selected to pilot the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework.

One contentious policy issue has been the decision concerning which curriculum refugees should follow. If the children are expected to return to their own country in the not-too-distant future, then it would follow that it is in their best interests to study the curriculum of their own country and therefore study in the languages used under that curriculum, for example, Swahili or Lingala and French for those coming from the DRC. However, the data suggests that, in most refugee situations, authorities need to plan for at least the medium term with, based on past experiences, 20 years being the average length of stay of most refugees. The present situation in the DRC and South Sudan also suggests a longer-term problem, resulting in children needing to stay in Uganda, at least for the medium term. As a result, UNHCR in its Education Brief encourages the early adoption of the curriculum of the host country so that children will more easily integrate and will be able to continue their education over a number of years.

A further reason for adopting the host curriculum is that it provides access to accredited, supervised and accountable education services. Thus, it is generally the most sustainable and protective option in the medium to long term, ensuring safe and reliable access to examinations and certification, access to teaching and learning materials, quality assurance and improved access to national education services, including options to continue education at higher levels. A further reason for this is the general respect neighbouring countries have for the Ugandan curriculum. In fact, even in peace time, many South Sudanese try and send their children to Uganda for their higher education so that they have qualifications that will be respected in both Uganda and South Sudan.

5. The preparation for research

Prior to undertaking the study, the consultants carried out two preparatory activities:

First, they carried out an orientation visit to two refugee camps, Rhino Camp in Arua District and Bidi Bidi settlement in Yumbe District. Second, based on this visit, they conducted a pilot study in Nakivale Settlement, Isingiro.

5.1 Orientation visit

On the orientation visits, the consultants were accompanied by the education adviser to the British Council, and a consultant from USAID. The visit included meetings with the UK's Department for International Development education adviser for Uganda, as well as regional education, NGO and UNESCO officials, and visits to two schools in each district which involved discussions with teachers and head teachers, making classroom observations and gaining a brief overview of both the facilities and the burgeoning numbers of refugees in the schools.

Based on information gathered on this orientation visit the consultants designed four basic tools that would gather data on both the language situation and on the numbers and capacity of the schools. The tools were designed to be trialled during the pilot and included:

- a school checklist, including information from the head teacher
- a focus group discussion-based questionnaire to be used with teachers
- a classroom observation form
- a questionnaire for individual children which included both information about them and an assessment of their English language competencies.

The pilot targeted Primary 3 and Primary 5 classes and children. These two classes were selected because, as the data collection was only two months into the new year, these classes represented Primary 2 and 4 completed – two crucial years for achieving learning outcomes. By the end of Primary 2, children should have acquired basic decoding skills and, by the end of Primary 4, they should have transitioned into English medium.

It was also recognised that there would need to be structured interviews with key education officials within the ministry at each site. However, it was felt that these should be undertaken in the main study rather than the pilot, as the consultants felt it unnecessary to interview the same people twice, and their inputs would be needed for supporting the main findings.

The visit also revealed the crucial role being played by Windle Trust Uganda (WTU), in partnership with UNHCR, in supporting the refugee-affected schools, and thus this organisation was asked to help with the logistics of both the pilot and the final data collection, including advice on the selection of schools for the pilot.

Table 1: Scope of the pilot study

Number of schools	4
Number of teachers involved in focus group discussions	16
Number of nursery classes observed	3
Number of Primary classes observed	10
Total number of Primary 5 learners interviewed and assessed	40
Total number of Primary 3 learners interviewed and assessed	40

5.2 The pilot study

The pilot study was intended to feed into the overall aims of research. In particular the pilot was intended to achieve the following:

- trial the four key tools and make sure they are user-friendly and able to collect the data necessary without overloading the enumerators or informants
- develop an approach to training that is efficient and provides maximum support to the enumerators, but ensures that they collect reliable and encodable information
- work with a small sample of informants to test out and adapt the templates for encoding and analysing the information as it comes in
- test out the logistics and estimate the timing and logistics of data collection.

5.2.1 Conduct of the pilot

Under the pilot, four schools were used, ten enumerators were identified and trained for two days on data collection, and a programme to be carried out in each school was tested. The enumerators had all completed at least secondary-level education and were themselves selected from the refugee community. The training covered the four tools, explaining their purpose and how to use them to collect the data. The training included role play of the interviews and the tests that they were to use, with clarifications given as needed.

The enumerators worked in teams of two, with each team visiting one school for the full day, using the four tools to collect the data. This meant that they talked to the head teachers, walked round the school, observed at least four classes (more if the school had a nursery), and then held a focus group discussion with teachers. Finally, they interviewed and then tested the language of 20 learners, ten from Primary 3 and ten from Primary 5. The following day the enumerators met with the two consultants and provided feedback on the previous day's activities. The data they had collected was fed into the templates designed, using Stata for this purpose. Consolata Wandera, an IT data analyst employed by the British Council for this assignment, was responsible for inputting the data. She completed this task over the next two days and would play the same role in the final study.

5.2.2 Initial findings from the pilot

Obviously, the size of the sample was too small to make any firm conclusions, especially in relation to host children, and this was not the purpose of the pilot. The purpose was to confirm the value of the approach, and to confirm that the data tools were useful and serving their purpose. The sample size was sufficient for this. However, while this pilot is not intended to draw firm conclusions or overall results, it has thrown up some issues that should be noted as the main data is collected. Several key tentative findings were observed that particularly surprised the enumerators. These included:

- the use of the local first language as the LoI, especially in nursery and Primary 1–3, which was mainly Runyankole, the language of the host community, even though this was not the first language of the majority in the class
- the level of complexity of the language situation
- the levels of reading ability, which were very low in both primary classes.

5.2.3 Feedback from the pilot

In general, the process of data collection was achieved with considerable efficiency and those problems that did occur can be addressed before the main study. The enumerators took the whole day as expected, but do seem to have finished just before the end of the school day. It was clearly an exhausting day, but they were very committed and enjoyed the work. The feedback received directly or indirectly from the pilot was based on discussions the day after, as well as on the observations of the two consultants. They include:

a. **The four tools are reliable and usable**
   However, a number of adjustments in the wording were agreed and simplified, with some redundancy eliminated.
   - Two questions aimed at assessing the ability of refugees to understand lessons in the local language were added to both the Focus group discussion (FGD) and observation sheets.
   - Pictures in the tests were changed so that they were better contextualised.
   - In addition, and to speed up the process, it was agreed that the last two exercises would be done independently by the learner while the enumerator moved on to the next child.

b. **Training prior to data collection**
   The enumerators were positive about the benefits of the training prior to the school visits. However, from the consultants' observation it was realised that more time will be needed to practise the tests and interviews, especially the exercise on letter sounds. In addition, more role play of the interviews would improve the enumerators' preparation.

c. **Adapting the templates for encoding and analysing the information as it comes in**
   The templates for collecting data were adapted to meet the needs of the data. These were mainly small changes and, in some cases, making changes to the questions so that responses are more easily coded.

d. **The logistics and timing of data collection**
   Specific changes were made in terms of transport and lunches to economise on time.

Overall, the pilot was very useful in refining the tools, eliminating redundancy and improving clarity. It provided useful insights into the training of enumerators which would be reflected in the training for the final data collection. The pilot also provided guidance on how to improve the logistics so that enumerators could collect all the data needed from two schools over the allocated two days.

6. The methodology

The orientation visit and the initial pilot informed the final methodology of data collection used. The tools developed were specifically focused on the key issues of language and refugees, and avoided asking questions outside the main purpose of the study. The key elements were as follows.

6.1 Selection of schools

The three districts were selected based on the number of refugees that these districts had accepted. Arua and Yumbe have received more refugees than any other district, and Isingiro has received more refugees than any other district outside Western Nile. Ten schools were then selected from each of the three districts. The selection was carried out by WTU under advice from the task force and the consultants. It was agreed that the selection should be stratified to ensure sufficient representation of different types of schools and a reasonable mix of host and refugee children. It was agreed that WTU would select 30 schools for the main study – ten from each of the three districts, omitting those used in the pilot, with selection based on the following guidelines:

- Select schools so that the mix of refugees and host children reflects the same mix that there is in that particular refugee settlement or camp under WTU's mandate. For example, if 20 per cent of the schools in the area are entirely refugee schools, then two such schools should be selected as part of the sample of ten schools.
- Select schools so that there is a mix of host languages that reflects the same mix in refugee areas, i.e. if all schools are majority Kakwa speakers, then select schools that are the same.
- Insofar as is possible, the sample should reflect the mix of refugees' language background. This could be more difficult, especially in Isingiro.
- Selection should then be randomised if there is a larger number of schools representing a particular type in the sample.
- Schools should be government or community schools rather than private schools.

Based on these criteria, 30 schools were selected. One school was a private school, but was retained. The schools were drawn from a total of two settlement schemes in Arua and Isingiro and two camps in Yumbe.

Thus, of the 30 schools selected, 15 were supported by UNHCR through WTU, three were community and 11 were government schools. In fact, UNHCR did provide support in some form to all the schools that had enrolled significant numbers of refugees. The selection included one private school.

Table 2: Schools selected by type

Total of 30 schools (10 per district)	Yumbe	Arua	Isingiro	Total
Community	1	2	0	3
Government (with UNHCR support)	0	4	7	11
UNHCR/NGO	9	4	2	15
Private	0	0	1	1
Opened 2016–17	10	3	0	13
Opened 2012–15	0	0	0	0
Established school before 2012	0	7	10	17
Large school (over 3,000)	3	2	0	5
Medium size (1,000–3,000)	7	6	6	19
Small school	0	2	4	6
Nursery attached	0	2	9	11

6.2 Selection of students

Multiple stratified sampling was used for the selection of schools and individual learners. It was necessary to get a reasonable sample of both refugee children and those from the host community in order for comparisons to be made. If selection had been purely random, then insufficient host children would have been in the sample. Therefore, enumerators were told to have at least 25 per cent from the host community in their samples. To do this, they either used the class register or, more frequently, they physically lined up the children prior to selecting those to be tested. They then divided the children into two groups, those from the host community and those from the refugee community. After this, they took a random sample using every fifth name on the register, class list, or line of learners, until they had the required numbers. If there were insufficient students, then the enumerators would select every second or third student. Those selected were then taken to a separate room where the two enumerators tested each student. Once tested, the learners returned to their class.

6.3 Training of the enumerators

Following the pattern of the training for the pilot in Isingiro, and prior to the main study in Arua and Yumbe, the enumerators for Arua and Yumbe underwent two days of training. The training consisted of the following:

- explaining the purpose of the study and the approach that was to be used
- outlining the key principles behind data collection, including ethical issues and issues related to accurate data collection
- studying the four data collection tools that were to be used
- role playing each of the data tools to be used, with others acting as informants
- agreeing the procedures and the logistics for completing and returning the data
- discussing any areas that might have been omitted, and the results they expected, leading to discussions of how to avoid bias.

The two-day programme is outlined below. The training for both rounds followed this timetable. As the enumerators for Isingiro had been trained prior to the pilot, they did not need to attend a second training, but were given a half-day orientation prior to the data collection.

6.4 School checklist (Tool 1)

This was largely factual and included statistics on the numbers of learners and teachers, as well as questions about the school's official policy on language and learning materials. In each school, the enumerators would gather this information by first interviewing the head teacher or their representative, and then by walking round the school to observe for themselves the state of the classrooms.

6.5 Focus group discussions (FGDs) (Tool 2)

The enumerators were trained in how to conduct FGDs. During the training, they conducted several role plays using the forms designed for this. The need to involve everyone in the discussion, to summarise the agreements or disagreements reached, and to vary how the questions were framed was emphasised. They were expected to hold discussions with teachers available at the time agreed, usually at lunch time or during the tea break. The numbers expected were a minimum of five and a maximum of ten teachers. If discussions took longer than planned, then sometimes, as they still had teaching commitments, some teachers might leave during the discussions, and others might join in, so that the numbers occasionally fell below five. The tool for the FGD involved mainly attitudinal questions and questions around teacher perceptions. These perceptions were often at odds with what was observed in the classroom, or during the testing of the children, and the teachers' answers provided useful ways of triangulating information, especially in relation to language use and the learners' levels of language.

Table 3: Training programme for enumerators

Day 1	**Training day 1**	
8.30–10.30	Introductions of participants to the training and agenda	All
	Discussions of expectations of the workshop, including housekeeping	Rod
10.30–11.00	**Tea break**	
11.00–13.00	The pilot study's aims, terms of reference and introduction of the tools	Rod
	Introduction of new terminology Principles of research including ethics and 'do no harm'	Lucy
	Tool 1: school checklist – Tool 1 explained Participants fill in the questionnaire so as to understand the questions	Lucy
13.00–14.00	**Lunch**	
14.00–16.00	Tool 2: teacher questionnaire Explain Tool 2 Participants fill in the questionnaire so as to understand the questions	Lucy
	Role play initial interviews with head teacher regarding the school visit	Enumerators/ Lucy
Day 2	**Training day 2**	
8.30–10.30	Recap of the previous day Discuss and role play FGD using Tool 2	Lucy
	Tool 3: class observation – observation tool discussed and practised using a demonstration by one of the teachers as a sample lesson to analyse	Lucy/Rod
10.30–11.00	**Tea break**	
11.00–13.00	Tool 4: enumerators Agree on sampling processes to select 20 learners for interviews and tests Explain and practise letter sounds Explain and practise the pupils' questionnaire – using role play Explain, and role play, the listening tests and reading tests	Lucy/Rod
	Introduction of new terminology Principles of research including ethics and 'do no harm'	Lucy
	Tool 1: school checklist – Tool 1 explained Participants fill in the questionnaire so as to understand the questions	Lucy
13.00–14.00	**Lunch**	
14.00–16.00	Plan logistics for data collection, including selection of specific schools, selection of learners in a school, introductions by team to the school	Team then Lucy/Rod

6.6 Classroom observations (Tool 3)

In each school enumerators were expected to observe two lessons in Primary 3, two in Primary 5 and one lesson in the nursery class, where one existed. Selection of which lesson was entirely dependent on the school timetable for that day and how these observations fitted in with the other activities involved in the data collection. In fact, in some schools which only had a single stream, only one Primary 3 and one Primary 5 could be observed. The observations were supported by the observation sheet, which largely concentrated on language use and the children's understanding, but also recorded other data that could have a bearing on language and learning outcomes, including questioning, class size and presence or absence of teaching assistants. The observations were role played during enumerator training, with an emphasis on not disturbing the class and ensuring the class teacher was comfortable with the enumerator's presence, as well as ensuring consistency in the way enumerators recorded the classroom data. Enumerators were advised that they should spend between 15 to 20 minutes in a lesson, rather than the whole lesson, and that they needed to talk to the children briefly so as to ascertain what their first languages were, and whether they had textbooks with them.

6.7 Interviewing and assessing individual learners: Primary 3 and Primary 5 (Tool 4)

Tool 4 had two separate purposes and, as a result, was in two parts. The first part of the tool was an interview to collect information from the selected cross-section of learners in Primary 3 and Primary 5 in relation to their own history. In particular, data was collected about their age, the languages they could speak, and which languages the refugees used before they came to Uganda. In addition, they were asked to say which languages they used in their school in Uganda and whether or not they found English difficult. Once a child had been interviewed, then they were assessed for their English language ability. The tests included an assessment of all four skills: listening, speaking, reading and writing. The reading skills included both their ability to decode letters and words, and to read and respond with comprehension. In training, the enumerators were trained on all sections of the form, but with special emphasis on the interview and on the recognition of letters. Role plays were used to ensure understanding of the questions. Training time was spent on letter recognition to make sure enumerators were able to assess if learners could use letters to decode words, i.e. knew the sounds that matched the letters, rather than just the names.

6.8 Discussions with senior education officials

The two consultants leading the research conducted discussions with a number of key educationalists including senior WTU officials who were active in the field (and knew the schools well), district education officers and inspectors, and the head teachers in the targeted schools. These discussions related to the key questions of:

- how they assess and place learners on admission
- what their language policy is and how far it is implemented
- what their most pressing challenges are and what changes they suggest.

Table 4: Summary of scope of final study

Number of settlements/zones* included (two per district)	6
Number of schools	30
Number of school checklists	30
Number of teachers involved in focus group discussions	198
Number of nursery classes observed	8
Number of Primary classes observed	88
Total number of Primary 5 learners interviewed and assessed	319
Total number of Primary 3 learners interviewed and assessed	296

*Yumbe has one large settlement, Bidi Bidi, divided into two zones.

6.9 Ethical considerations

Ethical considerations were embedded in all stages of the research and throughout the training. In particular, the following key considerations were discussed, practised through role play and implemented while collecting data:

- Confidentiality of data: all participants of the study were informed of the confidentiality of the data, including any limits of confidentiality, as part of the process, such as: data coding, disposal, sharing and archiving, and when confidentiality may be broken, if necessary. All data collected would be confidential and the names of individuals and of the schools would not be used. Every care should be taken to ensure that key findings, and especially any implied criticisms or critical comments, could not be attributed to any one school or person. Thus, at no point in this report are the names of people or schools used. The data collected will not be used as a basis of any actions other than those specific to the report, and thus any results or comments would not lead to schools or individuals having action taken against them.
- Right to refuse to participate/withdraw: the participants were informed of their rights to decline to participate or to withdraw from the research once it had started, as well as the anticipated consequences of doing so. Thus, all the enumerators explained to schools, teachers and learners at the start of the data collection that they had the right not to participate in the research or answer any specific questions. This was also practised in training through role play. In addition, all schools had been given this option and had already agreed when contacted initially by WTU. In practice, no one opted out.
- Non-incentivised participation: the participants were informed there were no incentives for participation.
- Any prospective research benefits: the participants were explained of the possible research benefits, which were mainly to identify how best to help children achieve learning objectives.
- Principle of 'do no harm': this is a principle of all research as well as of donor-supported interventions. Areas where this had an impact on this research included: avoiding conflict, especially within the FGDs, and avoiding highlighting issues that could lead to antagonism, especially any antagonism that could occur between the refugee and host communities. This meant that any comparisons between the performance of each community would be kept within this report, rather than feeding back to the schools.
- In addition, it is important that learners who are subject to tests do not feel demoralised, or that they have 'failed' or done poorly, even when they cannot answer any questions.

6.10 The research timetable in each school

The timetable followed by enumerators in each school varied according to a number of factors and was based on the advice of the head teacher. However, a typical routine, and the one recommended as a guideline during training, was as follows:

Table 5: Typical routine on school visit

	Activity/tool	Description of activity	Timing
1	**Visit head teacher:** **Tool 1**	Introduce self and purpose of visit Interview head teacher and complete Tool 1 Look round school	1 hour
2	**Observe at least one class: Tool 3**	Select classes to observe from timetable Observe one of two classes	30 mins
3	**FGD: Tool 2**	Hold FGD with available teachers during break or lunch	1 hour
4	**Observe remaining class or classes**	Hold FGD with available teachers during break or lunch	30 mins
5	**Interview and assess Primary 3 and Primary 5 children**	Select ten children from each year Take them to a quiet room and interview one at a time Select Primary 3 first	2 hours
6	**Head teacher**	Debrief head teacher thanking the school and saying farewells	5 mins

6.11 Constraints on the data collection

Inevitably, there were constraints on this review, and especially on the data collection. However, although the constraints discussed below existed, none were so serious as to detract from the main findings, especially those related to language use and its impact on student learning outcomes.

- Time and timing: the data needed to be collected in a reasonably short window of opportunity while schools were open, and while the students were starting the academic year so that results could reflect Primary 2 and 4 complete. Financial constraints also restricted how long enumerators could stay in a school. Thus, enumerators had to collect the data from each school within one day. Although this put pressure on the enumerators, they did exceptionally well in completing all the tasks, even if in some cases they returned to their base late in the day.
- Training: two days were put aside for training. As a result, training could not include trialling of the tools in the schools prior to the data collection. The exception to this was those schools involved in the pilot, as the ten enumerators from Isingiro had the advantage of practising during the pilot. This was clearly an advantage when it came to the main study, as the enumerators from Isingiro were quicker and there were far fewer queries on the data they collected. In future, it would be useful if all enumerators could pilot the tools in real schools. However, once a school has been used in a pilot, it cannot also be used in the main study.
- Some of the enumerators were not trained teachers. This may have had an impact on some of their more subjective comments during the classroom observations and when assessing children. However, the research has avoided using the more subjective comments.
- Sample size: the number of schools and the number of learners was limited due to the time available. However, 30 schools is a reasonable representation and covered virtually all the government schools. The only schools not represented were the private schools. The number of children remains small – 600 samples from a potential of number of over 100,000. Thus, findings from the actual learning outcomes remains indicative. However, the ongoing pilot carried out by Uwezo, which focuses specifically on learning outcomes, has gathered similar findings and can thus reinforce these as the pilot is based on a larger, stratified sample.
- Only three districts were used. However, we feel that the findings can still be generalised as they were the largest settlements and represented both the north and the west.
- Where possible the enumerators needed to speak at least one, preferably more, local languages so they could communicate with participants who had little English. Some enumerators were not able to speak the language of the child, e.g. there were not enough Kakwa or French speakers among the enumerators.
- The potential enumerator bias was also discussed and how this could potentially influence the data collection including choosing a known group with a particular background to respond to surveys, response bias, social desirability bias, cultural bias and interviewer bias.
- During the collection of data in West Nile, we were informed that there was an ongoing teachers' strike. While there were no obvious signs of its impact, and all classes we wanted to observe did have teachers, it could have created some bias in which teachers attended the FGD, and could have resulted in larger classes than normal during lesson observations. However, the latter seems unlikely, as the class size information was also triangulated with teachers' student numbers. When collecting data on the numbers of teachers, the data was of those who normally taught in the school, irrespective of the strike.
- Inevitably, the act of observing lessons can in itself change the behaviour of the teachers, especially as they may try and teach in the way that they think the observer will approve. In particular, it is possible that they are more likely to teach in the language they consider as the approved language for instruction. This would have explained the large number of monolingual English classes observed. However, the enumerators were all either local teachers or themselves refugees who would not be seen as outsiders. The teachers all also saw the research as being managed by WTU rather than the British Council, whom most had not heard of. WTU would not be seen promoting English to the same extent that the British Council might have been (even if mistakenly) as the correct language of the classroom.

7. Findings

7.1 Findings in Area 1: contexts that impact on language and learning

7.1.1 Expansion of enrolment and impact on quality education

A clear and predictable finding is the very rapid increase in enrolment in all 30 schools selected for the study. The total increase over the three years is show in Figure 1.

As can be seen, the host community is increasing, but at a manageable rate, doubling between 2015 and 2016 and then slowing. Refugee numbers, however, are increasing far more dramatically – over five-fold between 2015 and 2017. The result of this rapid increase is that now the ratio of both learners to classroom, and learners to teacher, is alarmingly high, leading to overcrowding with classes of over 300 children in some schools. In addition, in some areas the host children become a very small minority in the school. This growth in refugee numbers has a significant impact on the quality of learning, on the sense of community ownership and on decisions about which language to use in early years of education. The rapid growth can be broken down by district as well as disaggregating the host and the refugee learners. The statistics below were collected from the schools, and the trends verified through FGDs and the classes observed.

Figure 1: Total of host and refugee children for 30 schools in 2015, 2016 and 2017

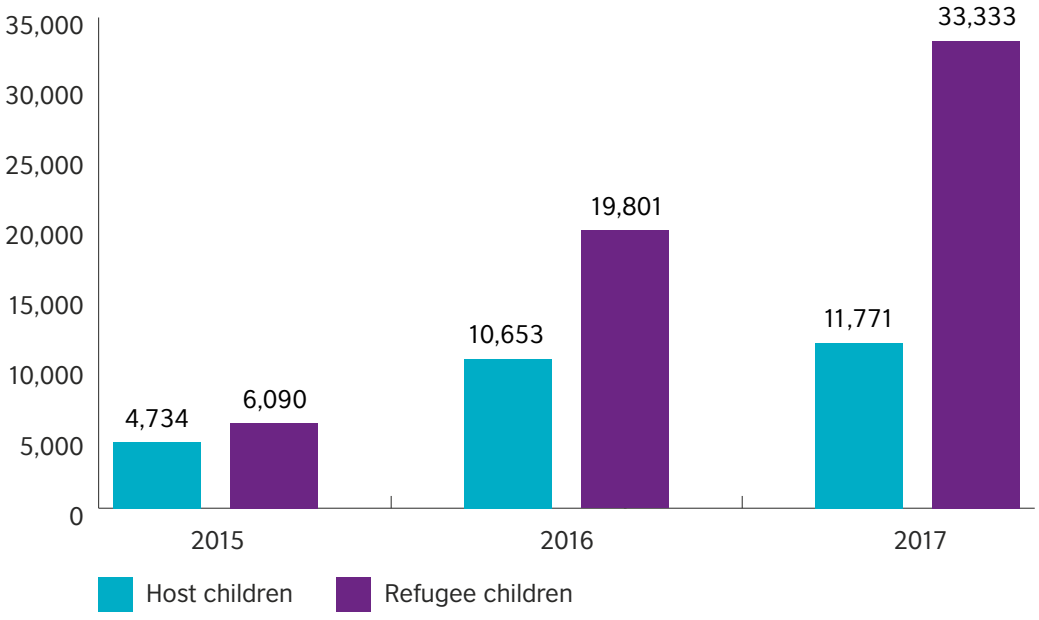


Table 6: Increase in host and refugee children between 2015 and 2017, broken down by district, and between refugees and host children based on answers to Tool 1

District	2015			2016			2017		
	National	Refugee	Total	National	Refugee	Total	National	Refugee	Total
Arua	3,035	1,851	4,886	3,122	2,198	5,320	3,367	5,343	8,710
Isingiro	1,699	4,239	5,938	1,913	5,062	6,975	2,812	5,345	8,157
Yumbe	N/A*	N/A	N/A	5,618	12,541	18,159	5,592	22,645	28,237
Total	4,734	6,090	10,824	10,653	19,801	30,454	11,771	33,333	45,104

*Bidi Bidi settlement had not opened in 2015.

Table 7: Teacher learner ratio and classroom learner ratios

District	Teacher: pupil ratio 2016	Teacher: pupil ratio 2017	Class: pupil ratio 2016	Class: pupil ratio 2017	Class size based on observations 2018
Arua	1:96	1:125	1:128	1: 198	115
Isingiro	(2015 – 1:52) 1:60	1:65	1:100	1: 106	88
Yumbe	1:85	1:92	1:176	1: 227	126
Average for three districts	1:80	1:94	1:135	1:177	1:110

Table 6 shows there is a rapid increase in refugee numbers across the three districts, but this is especially marked in Yumbe, with the opening of new schools and zones to meet the increasing numbers. The increase in the total number of learners is more than fourfold in two years, but with very different patterns in Isingiro with a 20 per cent increase in the number of refugees, as against Arua which has tripled the number of refugees, and Yumbe which started at 0 in 2015, rising to 12,541 in 2016 and then almost doubling in 12 months.

These rapid increases also result in a change in the ratio of host communities to refugees, with Yumbe having over 80 per cent refugees, thus dominating host numbers. In some of the most recently established schools there are only a handful of host children. In contrast, the Isingiro ratio of host to refugees has only risen marginally, with host children still a third of the number and almost half in some schools.

Inevitably, such an increase poses massive problems in terms of trying to increase capacity, both physical and human, to keep up with these numbers. The results are shown in Table 7. Although MoES, WTU and UNHCR have made amazing efforts to build classrooms and find teachers, the numbers have outstripped their efforts. The result is both the provision of many temporary but still overcrowded classrooms, and an alarming shortage of both teachers and learning spaces. The situation has got worse over the last two years (2016 and 2017) though it was already challenging, and now a majority of classes (54 out of 96) have over 100 children, and in some cases the number is going up to 300 children. Clearly, Yumbe has the greatest problem, with the average classroom to pupil ratio at 1:227.

Table 8: Class size and textbooks availability

No. of children in classes observed	0–50	51–75	76–100	Over 100	Lessons with textbooks
Arua	0	4	6	13	4
Isingiro	4	11	13	11	3
Yumbe	0	0	4	30	0
Total	4	15	23	54	7

Although the problem of class size may not be seen as directly relevant to language issues, it does relate very closely. In such large classes, no child can expect any individual attention and, if the child needs remedial support for language, it is almost impossible to identify the need or to provide any help. Teacher-to-learner ratios and classroom-to-learner ratios that average over 100 are alarmingly high. In Table 7 the first four columns are compiled from the schools' own statistics. The final column shows the 'real' situation as reported through the observation of 96 different classrooms. These numbers/statistics reinforce the findings that there is a very challenging situation for teachers. Comparisons between 2016 and 2017 show that, in spite of valiant efforts by MoES, UNHCR and WTU, as the numbers entering are increasing, so the situation is getting worse. One encouraging element is the way the figures given by the teachers and the schools' statistics and those from classroom observations are very similar. This shows that perceptions of the authorities are reasonably close to reality on the ground, a prerequisite for addressing the problem.

Number of over-sized classes observed: these concerns are verified by the enumerators, who observed 96 different lessons and were able to record the numbers of children in each class they observed – not an easy task where over 300 children needed counting. In fact, in many cases the enumerator accepted the numbers given by the teacher's record, but verified this with their own informed[3] estimate based on those seen in the class. For the purposes of this study, we have defined under 50 children in a class as an acceptable class size within which language concerns could be addressed and minority language interests looked after. As the class becomes larger, the possibility of this rapidly declines. It is unrealistic in classes over 75, even more so when over 100, to expect a teacher, even with an assistant, to be able to pay attention to every child challenged by the LoI that is used, especially those with a language background different from the majority. In Yumbe, all the classes were over 100 and some over 300, with many children standing. One of the schools in Yumbe is piloting the use of shifts, with one shift from 08.00 to 12.00 (Primary 1–3) then a second shift from 14.00 to 17.30 (Primary 4–5), while Primary 6–7 study throughout the day. This is an attempt to reduce class sizes and maximise the use of learning space available. Two schools in Arua are conducting similar trials. Hopefully, this approach can be rolled out to other schools where class size is over 100. It is better to have a shorter learning day with improved teaching than a long day in which few children can learn or have any real teacher contact. Such an approach would hopefully be short term, but is particularly appropriate within the refugee context when no one can be certain how long particular groups of refugees will stay/be in Uganda.

As illustrated in Table 8, only four out of 96 classes (all four in Isingiro, with two being nursery classes) were observed where the class size was reasonable. Over half the classes had more than 100 children in them while 16 classes observed had over 200. Indeed, three classes exceeded 300 children with one teacher in each and no teaching assistant.

Table 8 also plots the number of textbooks available in the classroom. Just seven of the 96 lessons had any textbooks available for use. Of these seven lessons, five had books in English and two had books in Runyankole. The teachers in several classes, especially in Isingiro, said that they did have textbooks available in the staff room but hadn't brought them on that day. The head teachers confirmed this, and said that they now had a reasonable number of textbooks in Runyankole. In Arua and Yumbe, teachers said they had only a handful of textbooks – not enough for class use, and only useful as a teacher's copy or a reference book.

3. Where it was difficult to count numbers, enumerators were advised to count across the class, count from front to back and then multiply. If the numbers were close to the teacher count, accept the teacher's number. If not, make your own estimate. Even more difficult was to verify the gender split as it is almost impossible to identify male from female just looking at head and shoulders. Thus, we haven't reported on observed gender splits.

7.1.2 Admission procedures and their impact on learning and over-age children

Information about criteria and procedures for admission was gathered through discussions with education officials, head teachers and WTU field-based officers. MoES officials confirmed that they did not have any fixed policy for schools on the placement of new learners. The criteria used for placement of new refugees at the correct level, i.e. the 'right' primary class, seemed to vary from school to school, but is initially based on their previous school history where this could be established, and on the level of their skills, especially language skills. The head teachers, when presented with a new entrant, have to decide first whether they were the right level for primary school or whether they should be in nursery or secondary schools. Some schools also have the option of recommending them for the ministry's Accelerated Learning Programme (ALP), designed for older and out-of-school youth, but only available in a few schools – mainly in Rhino Camp and Yumbe. Age did not seem to be used as a criterion. For those children in need of primary schooling, the next decision was to decide in which class or level they should be placed. When asked how these decisions were being made, there were surprising variations in the answers received, including the following responses.

1. **Using existing available information and evidence**

   If the learner could provide evidence of which school year they were in, in their country of origin, this would be used as a guide. Evidence of this, such as a school report or a certificate, was required, but was seldom available. Some schools would accept the word of the parent at interview, provided this was consistent with the school's observations of the learner's oral performance. However, it would seem that only a minority of children could be placed using records or information relating to the level they had reached before they became refugees.

2. **Interviewing the children**

   Basing the placement decision on an oral interview seemed the most common practice among the schools. Approximately half the head teachers spoken to stated that this was their preferred method. Some used a very formalised interview with set questions for the children following guidance from WTU. The interview would be in English, and thus any child who could not speak good English would be placed in a lower-level class so as to learn the language.

3. **Written tests**

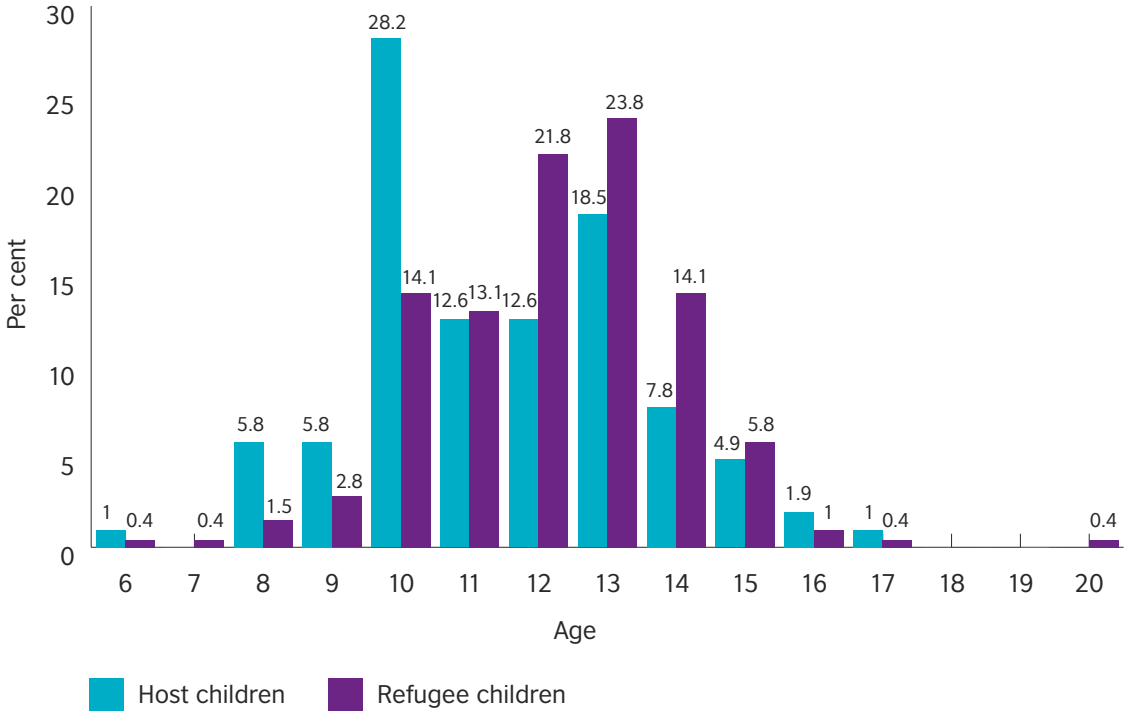
   Several head teachers said that they set written exams, either for all children or for those who didn't have a clear record of which class they had been in. It wasn't possible to access any of these tests or to obtain clear evidence that they existed, but we were told in Nakivale and Oruchinga settlements that WTU had provided such tests. Other schools set their own tests. All such tests were in English, and thus, as with the oral interview, any child who had not previously learned in English was likely to do poorly and be placed in a class based on their English level rather than age or cross subject learning.

4. **Impact related to over-age children**

   As a result of these placement procedures, language ability (specifically English language ability) was used as the primary decider of which class a child was placed in. If a child was weak in English, especially spoken English, then, based on an interview, they would be placed in a lower grade, usually Primary 1–3, so that they could 'catch up' with the language. This meant that many children could be in a grade much lower than was justified by their knowledge of maths or science. Learners coming from Arabic, Swahili or French medium tend to be the most affected. There were cases of learners who said they had been in secondary school in their country of origin, but were placed in Primary 3 because of their lack of English. Such a demotion in terms of grade must be very demotivating for any learner, and will result in the child spending several years 'relearning' skills and content that they had already mastered, but now in a new language. In addition, just because a child is weak in English, they may be labelled as 'weak' or a 'slow learner' across subjects by the teachers, even when, in fact, the child is skilled and knowledgeable when using a different language. Such labels are of course self-fulfilling, especially in very large classes where assessment of individuals is difficult. Furthermore, over-age children, especially girls, are far less likely to complete their education. If a girl is 17 in Primary 5 she will be 20 by the time she enters secondary school, and 26 before she can qualify to enter university. The likelihood of her being married with children by then is very high. Figures 2 and 3 show how the over-age pattern emerges based on our sample of children in Primary 3 and 5.

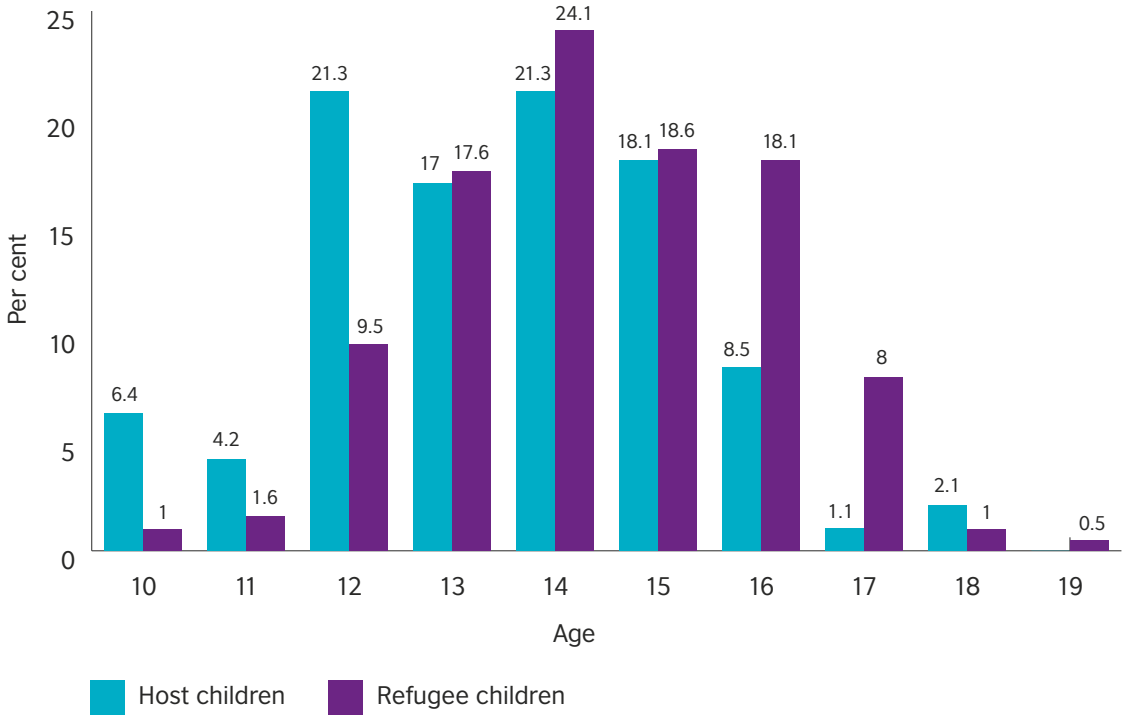
Assuming children start primary school at seven years of age, which is the latest one would expect, then they should be nine years old in Primary 3 and 11 in Primary 5. The data in Figures 2 and 3 was collected in March 2018, i.e. early in the first term of school. However, the greatest number of Primary 3 children are 13 years old, i.e. four years over age. Thus, we have a common pattern of a majority of children being over-age in all three districts, with some children significantly older. Of the 50 children selected in Primary 3 in Yumbe, nine (18 per cent) were aged 16 and 17.

Figure 2: Comparing host and refugee children's ages in Primary 3



Note: Totals have been rounded to one decimal place.

Figure 3: Comparing host and refugee children's ages in Primary 5a



Note: Totals have been rounded to one decimal place.

The split between host and refugee children shows that, on average, refugee children are older than host children by about one year for both Primary 3 and Primary 5. In Primary 3, 87.4 per cent of the host children and 94.6 per cent of the refugee children were over-age (given the expected age of nine in Primary 3). In Primary 5, a similar pattern emerges, with 89 per cent of host and 98 per cent of refugee children over age (given an expected age of 11).

It isn't possible to say whether this pattern of over-age children is primarily due to the methods of placing children based on their language and performance, rather than other factors. However, placement clearly plays a part and any policy needs to be reconsidered if it results in children being placed in levels very much below their age and knowledge levels. Such a policy is going to exacerbate the pressures on the children to drop out of school as they get older, as they feel that they are not achieving in comparison with their age-mates or their own expectations.

7.2 Findings in Area 2: how language is used as the LoI

7.2.1 The complexity of the language situation

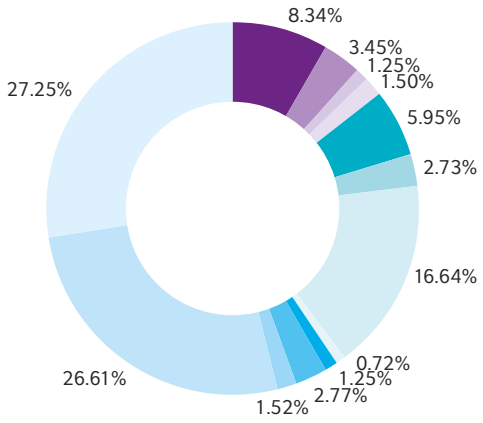
This can be illustrated through the three pie charts in Figure 4, one for each district. Across the three districts, which include four settlements and two zones, a total of 19 different languages have been identified as first languages of a significant number of children in the classroom. In addition to these, French is a frequent second language, especially for those from the DRC who have passed Primary 3. The patterns across the three districts is in many ways dissimilar, but there seems to be a pattern with the most recently established settlements having the most complex language situations. This may be because, as refugee families settle, the families, and especially the children, begin to adopt the language of the host communities, especially when there is a significant number of host children in the schools. Thus, while 34 per cent of the children in Isingiro are from the Runyankole-speaking host community, just over 44 per cent of the children claimed the local language as their first language, whereas in Yumbe, where both settlements are very new, only 18 per cent claimed to be from the host community, and less than three per cent claimed to speak the host language, Aringa.

Table 9: Languages used in countries of origin

	Dominant host language	Dominant refugee language	Host LoI in nursery to Primary 3	Dominant refugee LoI in country of origin
Yumbe	Aringa (6) Kakwa (1) Lugbara (2)	Kakwa (3) Arabic (5) Lugbara (1) Nuer (1)	English (10) (No change as new schools)	Arabic (4) Kakwa (1) English (5)
Arua	Lugbara	Kakwa (9) Arabic (1) 9 others	English (9) Lugbara (1) (In 2015 only 1 school had English LoI)	Arabic (5) English (1) Arabic/English (3) Kakwa (1)
Isingiro	Runyankole	Kinyarwanda (8) Swahili (1) Kirundi (1)	Runyankole (8) and English (2) (No change since 2015)	Kinyarwanda 1 French (3) French mix (3) Swahili/Kirundi (1) (Primary 4–7 French 5)

Figure 4: The first (or familiar) languages of the children observed

Yumbe



Number of languages: 13

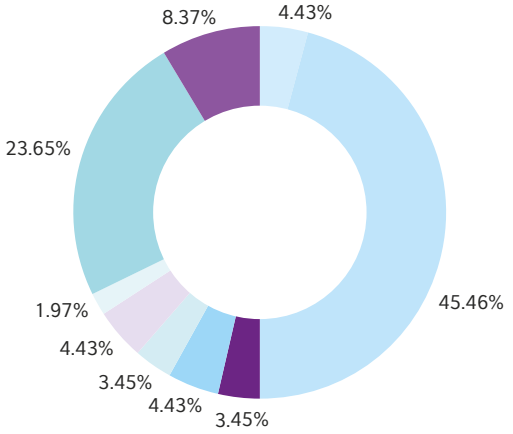
Most dominant languages: Arabic and Kakwa

Host language: Aringa and Lugbara

Evidence from interviews: greatest mix of languages, both host and refugees, with 10 languages represented in sample.

Refugees: Kakwa 40% and Arabic spoken by 27%

Arua



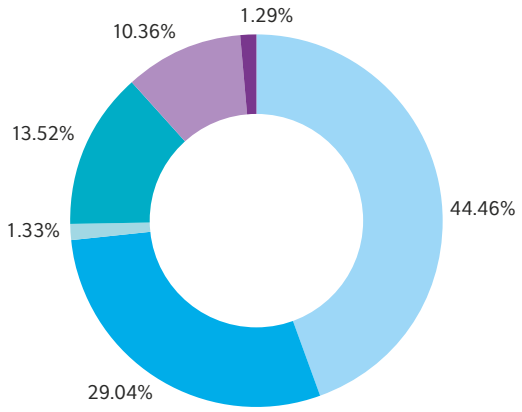
Number of languages: 9

Most dominant languages: Kakwa and Lugbara

Host language: Lugbara

Interviews showed 100% of hosts spoke Lugbara and over 75% of refugees spoke Kakwa. Large numbers had Arabic as a second language and Lol.

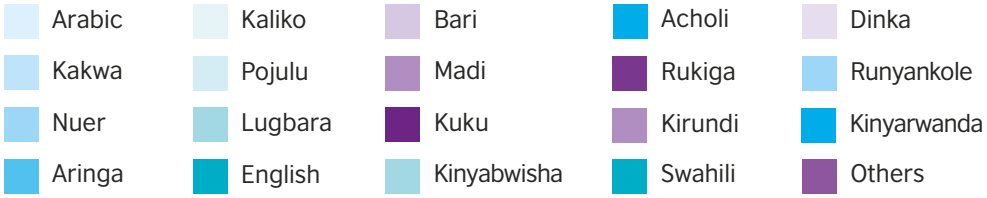
Isingiro



Number of languages: 6

Most dominant languages:
Runyankole, Kinywarwanda and Swahili

Interviews confirmed all but two hosts were Runyankole speakers. Refugee mix with Swahili, Kinyarwanda and Kirundi most frequent.



7.2.2 Which languages did the refugees use in their country of origin? (based on Tool 2)

The numbers are based on the number of schools. Thus, Aringa was the dominant host home language in six schools, and English was the LoI in all ten schools in Yumbe, while in only five schools had the refugees used English as the LoI from nursery to Primary 3 in their countries of origin.

It should be noted that the information above was provided through the focus group discussions with teachers and is, therefore, based on the information the teachers had. However, the pattern is confirmed by the interviews with children (Tool 4). As can be seen from the chart above, there is a considerable mismatch between the languages that refugee children had been using in nursery and lower Primary, and the language they were now expected to use in their new school. There could be a common language for some refugees and their host communities in that Kakwa is a common language on both sides of the border. However, with the exception of one school, a majority of the refugee families who use Kakwa have ended up in the Lugbara or Aringa-speaking areas. There was an equal mismatch between the home language of the refugees and the home language of the host community. Head teachers in Isingiro assured the researchers that children picked up the local language very quickly. However, we were not able to verify how far this was true and, even if true, refugee children on their initial arrival in school were, without doubt, facing a very alien language environment.

7.2.3 Which languages are used as the LoI in the classes observed?

Of particular relevance to the language patterns is the discussions as to which language teachers should use in the classrooms, if government policy is to be followed, and if children are to understand. Official policy, confirmed by MoES representatives, states that the local or familiar language should be used as the language of instruction and of initial literacy, up until the end of Primary 3, and then learners should transition to English. However, where there is a multilingual situation, English or Swahili may be selected. The research study therefore attempted to establish how the schools are interpreting that policy.

Language of instruction policy and practice: the research tool attempted to triangulate information on the actual languages being used. The consultants discussed school policy with a cross-section of head teachers, the enumerators asked the teachers in the FGD which languages they thought were being used, and finally they used the class observations to see what was actually happening. In addition, the same question on language policy was discussed with the district education officers to establish how they thought the policy was being interpreted.

The district education officer in Isingiro stated that the schools were following official government policy and using Runyankole as the medium up to the end of Primary 3. In contrast, the district education officer in Yumbe stated that they were using English, also in line with policy, because it is such a multilingual context.

In discussions with head teachers, the consultants were told that in Isingiro, all schools (apart from the one private school) were using Runyankole, even where the host children were in a minority. One head teacher was confident that the young refugee children are, in fact, learning the local language very quickly. A second head teacher explained that they used to use English, but had switched to Runyankole, following advice from trainers, who also supplied them with textbooks in Runyankole. Thus the pattern in Isingiro clearly favoured the use of the host language up until end of Primary 3, and the mixing of languages happened in the classes observed, irrespective of primary level. In contrast, schools in Arua had switched in the opposite direction. Two schools explained that they had been using Lugbara as the medium of instruction but, with so many different languages, they had been advised to switch back to English.

Table 10: Languages used as the LoI in Primary 1–3: the official view versus practice in the classroom

	Responses from officials (head teachers)		Responses from FGDs		Responses from classroom observations from 96 classes		
	Uses English*	Use L1*	Uses English*	Uses L1*	Uses English	Uses L1	Includes mixing
Arua	10		9	1	25	1	9 mixed
Isingiro		10	2	8**	26	13	20 mixed
Yumbe	10		8	2	31	0	2 mixed
Totals			19	11	82	14	31 mixed

*The numbers in columns 2–5 represent the number of schools, whereas columns 6–8 represent the number of lessons observed.

**Teachers in FGDs said that classes mixed Runyankole with Kinyarwanda and English, but Runyankole remained the dominant language used in the classroom.

Arua: out of the 26 lessons observed, one was in Lugbara and the remaining 25 lessons were in English. In these classes the teacher and the children mixed languages in nine lessons, using their different L1, with the other 16 lessons being monolingual English classes. The enumerators state that in 14 of the 26 classes many, or most, of the children were not paying attention, but in some classes they were and seemed to be understanding. In fact, in nine classes all but about 15 per cent of the class were seen as 'understanding the lesson', and thus the language, while in four classes, over 30 per cent of the students did not understand the lesson. Only one lesson had a teaching assistant present. Only three classes had textbooks.

Isingiro: in Isingiro 39 lessons were observed of which eight were in nursery, 24 in Primary 1–3 and seven in Primary 5. These lesson observations show a very different pattern, with far more use of the local language in all lessons. Out of the 39 lessons observed in nursery to Primary 5, 11 were in Runyankole, one in Kinyarwanda and one in Swahili, mixed with English. Out of the 39 lessons, only six were monolingual, five of which were in Runyankole. Thus, there was only one lesson in which only English was used – a contrast with Yumbe and Arua where, in 36 out of 57 lessons, the teachers only used English irrespective of primary level. There was a significant number of textbooks in four (Primary 3) classes – two classes had textbooks in Runyankole and two in English. Four classes had teaching assistants present in the class and helping children with translations. Two were classes in English, one was in Swahili and one was in Runyankole.

Yumbe: in Yumbe there were 31 observations, all the lessons were in English, and only two used any mix of languages. As a result, 29 were monolingual English, with no use of any other language by the teacher. However, there were nine lessons in which the children, but not the teacher, used a local language and, in two lessons, there was a teaching assistant present who assisted with translation.

In 19 classes, most or many of the children were not paying attention and, in 11 classes, a third or more of the children were clearly having problems understanding. There were no textbooks in any of the classrooms.

7.2.4 Findings related to nursery schools

Unfortunately, only 11 schools had any nursery classes, nine of these in Isingiro, and only seven lessons were observed. The sample is therefore too small for any significant conclusions on how nursery schools are operating, other than what may be true for Isingiro. This is a pity as, generally, nursery education can give learners a very important basis for future schooling, and is particularly important for learners' language development. If any conclusion were to be drawn, it would be to conclude that nursery education is receiving insufficient attention and that, in future, more attention should be paid to this area. However, the nursery schools in Isingiro had reasonable facilities with significant numbers

of play areas and equipment. Three lessons used Runyankole as the default language, while the other five used English. However, all the lessons used at least two languages while teaching, mainly mixing English and Runyankole. In three of the eight classes there was also a teaching assistant helping with translations. The classes tended to be combined so that the three years of nursery could be found in one class with one teacher. Class size was reasonable in four of those classes, but three had over 100 and one class had 220 learners. This last class had no teaching assistant. Teaching 220 pre-school children in one class, with no assistant to help, is beyond challenging.

7.2.5 Conclusion on language use

There is obvious uncertainty as to what should guide schools in choosing the language to be used in nursery and Primary 1–3, with Isingiro interpreting the MoES language policy in a different way to Yumbe or Arua. It is clear that selecting a language which under 50 per cent of the class is familiar with is a misinterpretation of the policy, especially if only that language is used. Similarly, not using a language even where 80 per cent of the class know the language may also be a mistake. A policy needs to be developed that will ensure that the local languages are used as a support to learning as much as is possible, especially when children have recently arrived, but without mixing too many different languages in the same class.

The complexity of the language situation is not surprising, given the large number of different home languages. One point to emphasise, however, is the number of refugees that had used a different LoI in their country of origin. South Sudan, the DRC, Rwanda and Burundi all used languages other than English as their LoI, including Swahili, Arabic, Kakwa, Kinyarwanda and Kirundi, in their early school years, and some areas used Arabic or French in their upper classes. Addressing the problems resulting from refugee children having to switch the language of education is probably more important for assisting their integration into Ugandan schools than what their home language might be.

It would seem that there is a significant difference in classroom language use in Isingiro, compared with Arua and Yumbe. Isingiro teachers either use the local language or use English, but mix with other languages to help children understand.

This researcher observed a teacher using four different languages during a lesson: Runyankole, Swahili, English and French. She was fortunate to have that range of languages, and this certainly helped the children understand and feel part of the lesson. However, in Arua this was far less common, and in Yumbe this hardly happened at all. The teachers in these districts seemed to consider that they should maintain a monolingual classroom and avoid using any language other than English, even when they could speak other languages that could help. From the results in Table 9 it can be seen that this monolingual approach was applied in two-thirds of the lessons observed. The reason for English being the dominant language in so many Primary 1–3 classes is partly due to the stated language policy. Teachers and the head teachers in all 20 schools in Yumbe and Arua stated in their FGD that English was the LoI in nursery and Primary 1–3, while teachers in Isingiro stated that Runyankole was the LoI. This, however, doesn't explain why the classes were monolingual and teachers made no apparent use of any other language in two-thirds of the classes observed. This could be due to their confidence in another language though this is not supported by evidence, as at least half of these teachers were able to speak the relevant local language according to Tool 3 (classroom observation). Thus, the most probable reason for this is the common misperception that one should not mix languages if you wish for children to learn in English. During the early development of the language policy in 2009 the ministry blocked any use of the term 'bilingual' or recommendation for a 'bilingual' approach in the concept papers or any policy papers.[4]

Nursery classes observed were mainly in Isingiro, where a mixing of languages was effectively used, but as these were in Isingiro alone, no conclusions can be drawn about how languages were used elsewhere in nursery schools. Clearly, a multilingual approach is even more important when teaching in pre-school, and the attitudes of teachers and education officials towards how languages should be used may need to be addressed. Thus, it is important for the ministry, UNESCO and WTU to think through different ways of supporting children who have used a different LoI in their country of origin and have a different first language, but have very little English. This will be revisited in the recommendations.

4. The result of the consultant's personal experience when drafting the language policy for Primary 4 in 2009 with NCDC and Creatives Associates. The resulting compromise was to talk of a 'transitional language approach'.

7.3 Findings in Area 3: learning levels achieved by children

The learners were asked to perform a range of listening, reading and writing tasks in English. The tasks were all at, or below, Primary 3 level, and included basic letter and word recognition. The results are in the main consistent across the three districts, and levels of achievement are shown in Table 11. All the tests were based on face-to-face assessment with the enumerator. The enumerators first selected the children by lining up the host and the refugee children and then randomly selecting three host and seven refugee learners from Primary 3 and the same from Primary 5. Prior to the assessment, the enumerator would talk to the child, ask some questions about the language they use at home and in school, and try and put them at ease.

Tables 11 and 12 show how well children are succeeding. Table 11 looks at the percentage of children still not able to achieve basic literacy. The tests assess their letter recognition, their ability to read words, to match words to pictures and then whether they can independently read written questions and show their understanding by responding with appropriate answers. Finally, they were asked to write a few sentences about themselves. Table 12 gives the mirror image, and a more positive slant on the results, by showing how many learners had mastered that competency and performed successfully. It records the numbers that were able to answer all, or all but one, of the items in each activity.

Table 11: Learners that had not mastered the competencies tested in English

Number of children unable to perform the task	Arua	Isingiro	Yumbe	Total
Answering oral questions (score 0 or 1 out of 6)	11	30	13	54
Percentage of the total learners	5.47%	14.93%	6.50%	8.97%
Listening comprehension (score 0 or 1 out of 4)	86	106	60	252
Percentage of the total learners	43.88%	53.54%	30.15%	42.52%
Letter recognition (score 0 or 1 out of 6)	108	101	108	317
Percentage of the total learners	54%	48.79%	53.21%	52%
Word recognition (score 0 or 1 out of 6)	92	40	66	198
Percentage of the total learners	46.24%	19.71%	32.67%	32.87%
Matching sentence to picture (score 0 or 1 out of 5)	18	15	15	48
Percentage of the total learners	9.23%	7.43%	7.35%	8%
Answer question in writing (score 0 or 1 out of 6)	58	47	31	136
Percentage of the total learners	29.74%	23.50%	15.19%	22.81%
Free writing of sentences (score 0 or 1 out of 5)	128	96	97	321
Percentage of the total learners	65.98%	46.83%	48.26%	53.69%

Table 12: Number of learners who had mastered the competencies

Number of children unable to perform the task	Arua	Isingiro	Yumbe	Total
Answering oral questions (scored 4–6 out of 6)	138	105	144	387
Percentage of the total	69%	52%	72%	64%
Listening comprehension (scored 3 or 4 out of 4)	68	53	88	209
Percentage of the total	35%	27%	44%	35%
Letter recognition (score 5 or 6 out of 6)	22	39	29	90
Percentage of the total learners	11%	19%	14%	15%
Word recognition (score 5 or 6 out of 6)	38	121	44	203
Percentage of the total learners	19%	69%	22%	34%
Matching sentence to picture (score 4 or 5 out of 5)	140	162	159	461
Percentage of the total learners	72%	80%	78%	77%
Answer question in writing (score 5 or 6 out of 6)	71	100	90	261
Percentage of the total learners	36%	50%	44%	44%

The results from the three districts are relatively similar overall. Isingiro learners do not seem to do nearly as well as the other two districts in the oral work, i.e. answering oral questions and responding to the listening comprehension, both of which are in English. However, they do better than the other districts in recognising the letters and do a lot better than the other two districts in word recognition (59 per cent recognising four or more words, as against 19 per cent and 22 per cent in the other districts). Isingiro also does better in the reading and writing activities which involve comprehension and are also in English. Although the evidence may be too slight to provide strong evidence of causality, it could be explained by the fact that Isingiro has used the children's first language much more extensively than Arua or Yumbe (see Section 7.4 and Table 9). It is predictable that using a familiar local language as LoI could result in their spoken English being less advanced, especially in Primary 3, but that their decoding abilities would be much stronger, as they would be based on first or familiar language competence. Such a conclusion reinforces academic arguments in favour of using a familiar language as the basis for initial literacy, and reinforces the recommendations made here that, wherever possible, both host and refugee learners should use a language with which they are familiar in the early years.

A second interesting feature is the way that, across the board, all the children have difficulty in decoding the letters, even if Isingiro does a little better than the others. As explained earlier, children were asked to give the sound of the letter. If they only gave the letter name (the English name), they were then asked to also say the sound for that letter. The fact that 52 per cent could not sound out the letter suggests that the children are not being taught to read through phonics, and therefore are not acquiring the strategies they will need for decoding new reading words when they meet them.

However, the overall findings are comparable with findings from the 2016 Uwezo surveys across Uganda in which it concluded that in Primary 3, only two out of ten children (20 per cent) could read a Primary 2 level English story, and four out of ten children could not read one English word. This means that 60 per cent are unable to read any English words as reported in the 2016 Uwezo survey, which is comparable to the above findings across the districts, which show that 33 per cent of Primary 3 and Primary 5 children are unable to read more than one out of five English words (Uwezo, 2018).

Uwezo, which adapted its own tools to a refugee setting, is at present also carrying out a pilot survey using their tools for reading and numeracy skills in the same three districts (Uwezo, forthcominig). It will be very important to compare their findings with these, to see to what extent they are similar and what further lessons can be drawn from the two sets of results, prior to Uwezo conducting its full survey in the near future.

Table 13: Correlation between letter recognition and answering of questions in writing

	Letter recognition	Answered questions in writing
Letter recognition	0	1
Answered questions in writing	1	0

Table 14: Comparison between scores of 'host/national' (H) and 'refugee' (R)

	Arua		Isingiro		Yumbe	
	H	R	H	R	H	R
Answer oral questions (average score out of 6)	3.9	4.4	3.9	3.5	4.3	4.5
Listening comprehension (average score out of 4)	1.8	1.9	1.4	1.5	2.0	2.2
Letter recognition (average score out of 6)	2.1	1.6	2.4	1.8	1.6	1.9
Word recognition (average score out of 6)	2.4	2.2	4.3	4.0	2.6	2.9
Match sentence to picture (average score out of 5)	4.0	4.2	4.3	4.4	4.3	4.3
Answer question in writing (average score out of 6)	3.5	3.0	3.9	3.6	3.8	3.9
Free writing of sentences (average score out of 5)	1.9	1.4	2.4	2.2	1.9	2.5
Average	**2.8**	**2.7**	**3.2**	**3.0**	**2.9**	**3.2**

A further point to emerge from our study's assessment results is the relatively high number of children who were able to match sentences to pictures and respond appropriately to the six written questions. The responses are clear indicators that they had independently read and understood the questions, and thus were reading and comprehending English at the very simplest level. Picture matching is the lowest level, with 75 per cent able to match four out of five pictures to sentences. Responding to written questions is a slightly higher-level test, but still within Primary 3 level, and 44 per cent of respondents were able to answer at least five out of six questions. This would suggest that they are able to read at a low, but more holistic, level, as clearly many learners couldn't decode a letter or recognise a word in English but could manage at the simple sentence level. This is again a reflection of how they are being taught and there has to be a concern that, though they can read simple sentences with familiar words, they do not have the decoding strategies when they meet less-well-known words and tasks. Furthermore, the correlation between those who could recognise and decode letters correlated positively and at a perfect level of correlation with those who could answer the questions appropriately.

This is a positive correlation, indicating that as learners' scores increase on letter recognition, so do their scores in answering questions in writing. The +1 correlation is indicating a perfect positive correlation between the two variables. This also means that a child who identifies all the letter sounds has a higher tendency of answering all the questions in writing. In simple terms, if learners are able to recognise letters then they are also able to read and answer questions.

A final correlation conducted was to compare the scores of the refugees with those of host children. This was in response to the suggestions of many in the field, both teachers and enumerators, that the refugees are doing better and learning faster than the host children. This was often attributed to the high motivation of the refugees.

In Arua and Isingiro, host children have outperformed the refugee children in all the competencies tested. In contrast, in Yumbe, refugee children have scored better than host children in all the competencies tested. It has previously been shown how the host children in Yumbe are a very small minority with only a handful in some classes. This may be a factor in these results, especially when one sees that the hosts do best in Isingiro where there is a substantial number in all ten schools, and nearly half in some others. If this correlation between the numbers of host children and the scores they achieve were to be found as a constant, then more attention may need to be paid to the hosts where their numbers are very small. There may also be a need to compare these findings with those emerging from the Uwezo pilot, which also finds similar patterns of performance being different for Yumbe and Isingiro. Such comparisons need to be made with sensitivity, as causal factors are discussed.

Table 15: The teaching force in the 30 schools

	Yumbe		Arua		Isingiro		Totals
	2016	2017	2016	2017	2016	2017	2017
Qualified national teachers	159	199	77	94	184	184	477
*Qualified refugee teachers	35	38	11	50	13	16	104
Total teachers	194	237	88	144	197	200	581
Teaching assistants national	3	5	6	8	1	2	15
Teaching assistants qualified in country of origin	40	23	6	12	4	7	42
Teaching assistants unqualified	Nk	21	Nk	2	Nk	1	24
Total teaching assistants	43	49	12	22	5	10	81

*Qualifications recognised in Uganda

7.4 Findings in Area 4: teacher resources, qualifications and ability

7.4.1 Teacher capacity

The final area in which the data reflected relevant findings was the extent to which the capacity of the teaching force was appropriate, and whether there was more potential skilled teachers who could be used. As already shown in Section 7.1, there is a massive shortage of (qualified) teachers qualified to teach classes in the schools. In initial discussions, the researchers had come to understand that virtually all the teachers were from the host community and that, although many refugees may have been teachers in their country of origin, they did not have the qualifications needed to teach in a Ugandan school. As a result, many of the refugees with teaching experience or qualifications from their home country were being recruited as teaching assistants or language assistants. There is already a scheme in place either to try and get teachers trained to a level needed to qualify or to establish a system of equivalence for those trained outside Uganda. Thus, the data first looked at how true the perceived situation was and, second, looked at how teaching assistants or language assistants were being used.

As can be seen from the above, of the 581 qualified teachers within the 30 schools, 104 (18 per cent) are of refugee origins, but have qualified in the Ugandan education system or at least have qualifications recognised by Uganda. This is a higher number than suggested from initial discussions, but those concerned have probably been refugees for many years. Partially, this is a result of various scholarship schemes from both UNHCR and WTU to provide opportunities for refugees to upgrade their qualifications and partly this is a result of teachers who had, earlier in their career, chosen to obtain Ugandan qualifications, rather than Sudan or South Sudan qualifications.

In addition, there is obviously plenty of opportunity to expand the teaching force by using a policy of encouraging and facilitating refugees to upgrade their qualifications. Within the 30 schools, there were a further 42 potential teachers, i.e. teaching assistants who were qualified within their country of origin and therefore potentially, with support, upgradable to full teacher status. In fact, evidence would suggest that most of these teaching assistants are already being used as teachers because there were too few fewer teachers, or the teacher was absent. In addition, if the opportunity was there to be a full teacher, other refugees, who do not wish to be just teaching assistants, might come forward. We recognise that both UNHCR and WTU are working in this area, and there was an ongoing recruitment drive in Yumbe while we were there.

7.4.2 The use of teaching assistants or language assistants

The provision of teaching assistants in schools has been an important strategy aimed at addressing the problems of children with different language backgrounds. For this reason, they have also been called 'language assistants'. This was seen as a way of coping with teacher shortages and very large classes. Already a total of 87 language or teaching assistants have been employed, all but 15 of refugee origin, and Isingiro is in the process of recruiting a further 40. These teaching assistants have a great potential for contributing to solving the problem of teacher shortages and the overcrowded classrooms already described, but they should also have the important role of acting as language assistants, helping children who do not understand the LoI. However, it may be problematic for them to fulfil both roles, i.e. reducing teacher shortage and acting as language assistants. In practice, a majority are being used as classroom teachers on a temporary basis. This is completely understandable if, as was the case in one school, there are three qualified teachers and 900 children. However, as a result of them fulfilling this role, they are not able to give support as language assistants. During the 96 lessons observed under this study, language or classroom assistants were only observed in seven lessons, four of these in Isingiro, and they were particularly absent from many of the largest classes with the greatest number of children who couldn't speak the language of instruction.

7.4.3 Teachers' English language ability

The study attempted to assess the extent to which the teachers' own English was strong enough for their task. It was felt that it would be unwise to try and assess the teachers' English directly, or to insert questions in any of the tools related to the teachers' language, as this could result in negative attitudes toward the enumerators, especially as in some cases the teachers had actually taught the enumerators previously. Thus, rather than a specific item in training and during final orientation, the enumerators were asked to comment, in Tool 3, in the area for comments if they considered that the teacher's language was weak or was resulting in children not being able to understand. Out of the 96 lessons observed, only four lessons were recorded where the enumerator judged the language of the teacher as being an issue. This finding can only be used as an indicator, as the constraints of the data collection may have hidden some problems. First, as it was not a specific question in Tool 3, some enumerators may not have remembered to comment and, second, because the enumerators were not necessarily teachers and may have found this element difficult to assess. However, at best we can say that the teacher's own language levels did not stand out as a major problem. In addition, no real issues related to the teachers' language competence were reported during the FGD, or during discussions between the two authors and the teachers. It might, however, be advisable to conduct a survey specific to the teachers' language ability before making any firm recommendations or decisions on the need for actions in this area.

8. Conclusions and recommendations

8.1 Summary and conclusions

The overall findings are based on data collected from 30 schools across three districts. The data was collected through:

- classroom observations of a sampling of 96 lessons
- interviews with 200 teachers and education officers
- interviews with, and assessments of, 615 children from Primary 3 and 5, including 25 per cent from the host community.

The schools selected were a mix of community schools, government schools and schools set up by UNHCR, with one private school. All the schools were supported by UNHCR through WTU. They were purposefully selected as having been severely affected by the refugee influx. In 2017, all of them had a majority intake of refugees, but with percentages varying from schools with only a handful of host children, especially in Yumbe district, to schools with almost 50 per cent host children, as found in Isingiro. As a result of the data collection and analysis, the following broad conclusions can be drawn.

8.1.1 Increasing enrolment and impact on human and physical capacity

The evidence of the rapid increase in enrolment is clear and was expected. The overall increase in enrolment in the sampled schools across the three districts was 400 per cent between 2015 and 2017, with particularly marked increases in Yumbe of 500 per cent in 12 months, but only about 20 per cent in Isingiro. The rapid increase is due to the recent increase in refugees from both South Sudan and the DRC, resulting in children from the host community becoming a very small percentage of school enrolment in many schools, especially in Yumbe. There was, however, no evidence of any local resentment with respect to the increasing percentage of refugees versus host children, but there were some signs that, where hosts were becoming fewer in percentage terms, their interest could be overlooked, especially in terms of language use. The most significant impact of this increase is the shortage of teachers and learning spaces, resulting in alarmingly high classroom-to-learner and teacher-to-learner ratios. The class-to-learner ratio had risen from approximately 1:137 in 2016 to 1:177 in 2017, and the teacher-to-learner ratio rose from 1:80 in 2015 to 1:94 in 2017. Over half the lessons observed had over 100 children in the one room, with one teacher; some classes had over 300 children with only one teacher. This is in spite of the efforts of the ministry and UNHCR to build both permanent and temporary classrooms, and their opening of new schools to meet the increasing numbers. The provision of temporary classrooms rather than permanent ones was due to considerations as to whether the refugee influx was expected to be for the short or long term. Obviously, if the refugees are only in Uganda for two or three years, it would be unnecessarily expensive to build permanent structures that would become surplus to requirements in a few years. Of the 30 schools sampled, 12 were new schools and two were trialling a double shift system to address overcrowding. Inevitably, the recommendations that follow are aimed at, and dependent on, addressing this overcrowding.

8.1.2 Language complexity

The language situation in the 30 schools was also predictably complex, and most schools had developed into multilingual contexts. Data from both the classroom observations and the interviews with individual children show that there were significant numbers of learners from 21 different language groups across the survey, with some classes having five or six different language groups in the same class. While some learners in nursery and Primary 1–3 had come from English-medium schools, a majority had learned in their first language, or in Arabic or French.

Those with French as the language of education pose a particular problem, as in their home country they continue with French medium throughout primary and secondary schools. Thus there were examples of learners who had achieved secondary level, and had high levels of knowledge in maths and science, but had virtually no English. A further complication was that in many areas the host language, or language of the district, was different from the language of the majority in the class even where both were Ugandan languages, e.g. Kakwa-speaking children in a Lugbara-speaking district. However, at least both languages have some similarities, and there may be an opportunity to consider moving refugee families to areas that speak their language.

8.1.3 Choice of languages for the LoI

This remains a complex issue, and some schools seemed uncertain which language to use. A majority of classes used English as the medium of instruction. However, a significant number (14 out of 96) of classes observed used a local language (Runyankole(11), Swahili (one), Kiyruwanda (one), Lugbara (one)) as the language of instruction. In the lower-grade classes which used English as the LoI, there was some attempt to support children with a minority language who were refugees, but no recorded attempt to support the language of the host children, a language that would have been the medium of education were it not for the impact of refugees. However, in contrast, where host children were in significant numbers, the choice of the LoI was made to suit them, and Runyankole was used as the medium of education even where only 25 per cent were Runyankole speakers.
An added confusion is that, in many classes, the majority of children in the observed class and the school, had a different first language from that of the district. Thus, in Arua District, in seven of the ten schools, the majority of the children were Kakwa speakers even though the district language was Lugbara. In Isingiro, one class had 107 Kinyarwanda speakers even though the class was using Runyankole with 25 speakers. Another class had a majority of Swahili speakers, but was again using Runyankole as the LoI. In fact, some schools in Isingiro informed the consultant that they were using Runyankole as the LoI as a matter of policy, as it was the local language and they were being encouraged to do this by education partners, irrespective of the make-up of the class. While this report fully endorses the use of a local language at this level, more care may need to be taken in selecting which language. A MoES representative recommended conducting research among refugees to identify if there are any unifying language(s). Teachers need to be in agreement once the language is established, and MoES may need to look at its recruitment policy to ensure there are enough speakers of that LoI in the school.

8.1.4 Mixing languages or monolingual classes

Where teachers were able, some of them used several languages while teaching. They would use one language as the default language, usually English, but in some cases a local language. They would then rephrase the main points of instruction into any other languages they could speak. Although this seems a sensible and pragmatic solution, it was only observed in some 18 out of 96 lessons. A majority of the classes observed were monolingual. In two-thirds of the lessons observed, the teachers only used one language, English in 54 lessons, Lugbara in one lesson and Runyankole in five lessons. From these lesson observations, and from discussion with teachers and education officials, it is apparent that many teachers consider that any mixing of languages is 'a bad methodology' and will hinder the children acquiring English – a somewhat dated belief promoted in the 1970s as part of the 'direct method' approach. Clearly, training is needed on the advantages of using the children's first language, on positive methods of code-switching, and on approaches that can make the most of the multilingual context.

8.1.5 Language assistants

Although a number of language assistants have been employed (86), and are obviously very useful, they are not being used in the way that was initially intended. Most of the teaching assistants, also called language assistants, were employed to give support to learners who didn't know English, by working with the teacher and learners and rephrasing the lesson into a language the learner knew. However, a majority of these assistants, 43 of whom were qualified teachers in their country of origin, were being used as class teachers, not teaching assistants. Out of 96 lesson observations, only seven teaching assistants were observed helping in lessons in the way intended. The role of the language assistants, which could be crucial, needs to be re-examined. It should be noted that there were plans to recruit another 40 or more in Isingiro at the time that data was being collected.

8.1.6 Placement of learners into the correct grade/primary class

There seemed to be no clear policy for placing children at the most appropriate primary class level. Thus, some children were placed according to the grade they had completed in their home country, but a majority were placed in a primary class based on either an oral interview or a written test, both heavily dependent on their English language ability.

8.1.7 Over-aged children

This reliance on English language competence as a basis for deciding which primary class a learner should be in has resulted in many new entrants, especially those who had not learned in English, being placed in a much lower grade than the grade they had been in in their home country. This adds to the problem of large numbers of over-aged children learning in lower primary classes. For example, based on the interviews of children in Primary 3 and Primary 5, a majority of children are at least three years older than they should be for that grade, some more than five years older. This will lead to lower completion rates, as learners who are 16 in Primary 3 will be 20 before they can enter secondary school, and 26 before they can enter university. The figures also show that on average, the refugee children are older than the host children in both Primary 3 and Primary 5 by at least a year.

8.1.8 Learning outcomes achieved

The selected Primary 3 and Primary 5 learners were all tested on a range of literacy skills, including letter recognition, word recognition and their ability to read and match sentence to picture, and read and respond to written questions. The overall results have been reported in more detail in Chapter 7. However the main conclusions are that:

- Large numbers are unable to recognise letters, with over half the learners unable to identify more than one letter out of six. In testing learners, the enumerators insisted on children identifying the letter sound, not just the letter name and, where the letter name was given, the enumerator would ask for the sound as well.
- Learners did better on word recognition, with 70 per cent able to recognise more than one out of five words.
- They also did better on items asking for a silent, but written, response. Such items were testing comprehension rather than any decoding ability. Seventy-five per cent were able to respond correctly to more than one out of six questions asking for an appropriate answer, and 44 per cent were able to respond correctly to at least four questions.
- Uwezo is at present carrying out its own pilot survey of reading and numeracy skills, piloting tools that have been adapted to refugee settings. It will be important to compare the Uwezo results with these, and take lessons from both when conducting a full Uwezo survey.

These results may be a reflection of how learners are being taught, with insufficient emphasis on phonics, and may also be a reflection of the large classes, which do not allow for individual responses. However, the results also show a close correlation between the learners' ability to recognise the letters and their ability to answer the comprehension questions, i.e. while those who couldn't recognise the letters were able to answer some of the comprehension tasks, those who could recognise the letters scored the highest marks on all the other tests. Overall, the host children marginally out-performed the refugee children across all the competencies tested in Isingiro and Arua. This is contrary to what school teachers and even the enumerators had stated. The 'informed opinion' was that refugee children were doing much better than the host children. The evidence does not support this assumption. However, note should be made of how the reverse was true in Yumbe where the hosts were a very small, almost insignificant number, in many schools and were performing less well than the refugees.

In addition, considering the very poor conditions in which children are learning, such as the language complexities, the overcrowding and lack of sufficient textbooks, the results, though far from good, are not as poor as might be expected. Levels of reading comprehension are reasonable at sentence level, even though children are clearly not getting sufficient knowledge of phonics. It would be interesting to correlate children's letter knowledge and word recognition skills with the language in which they are learning. There may be a correlation between learning to read in a more analytic way when one's oral language is weak, but learning in a synthetic way when the language is familiar and the learner has oral mastery.

The enumerators were asked to record any lessons in which the teacher's own language was an issue that could have an impact on the children's understanding. Out of 96 lessons, there were only five in which the enumerators considered the teacher language inadequate. Thus, from this study, teacher language is not seen as a major issue or one to be prioritised.

8.2 Recommendations

8.2.1 Placement and admissions

Recommendation 1: Develop a clear policy on placement of new refugee children into the appropriate level of primary or secondary class.

At present, each school follows their own practice and most placements are based on oral interviews. The result is that most children are placed according to their language ability rather than their age or general ability across the curriculum. This leads to many grades having over-age children. The worst case identified was a fluent French-speaking Congolese student who was in Secondary 5 in the DRC, but is now placed in Primary 3.

There need to be agreed criteria, including an assessment for placement that is based on factors such as age, cognitive development and knowledge/skills across the curriculum, and not just on language ability. Assessments should include, where necessary, a test in what the children can do in their language of study, e.g. French, Arabic or Swahili. Such assessments need to be combined with the recommendations for action to fill gaps in language skills and curriculum knowledge gaps and the development of more ALPs linked to the schools (see below).

Recommendation 2: Maintain the present policy on curriculum.

Whether the curriculum that refugees follow should be that of their country of origin, or the country of settlement, is always a contentious issue. In theory, the choice should be based on probable length of stay, and the interests of the refugees. In practice, the curriculum of the host country is usually followed for financial and logistical reasons as well as the value of greater integration. UNHCR and MoES have chosen this option on the grounds of what is practical, provides the best child protection and will enhance the ability of refugees to settle. Furthermore, the neighbouring countries hold Uganda's education and qualifications in high esteem and such a policy will thus not greatly disadvantage them on resettling on return to their own countries. In spite of the obvious disadvantages, in terms of disruption of learning and gaps that may occur between different national curricula, this study fully supports the present approach. However, this decision should be combined with ways of bridging the gaps between the country of origin and Uganda's curriculum, especially in areas of language, but also in areas of social studies and other knowledge and skills gaps.

8.2.2 Languages and the multilingual context of the schools

Language in nursery and Primary 1–3: the mix of languages and the mix of policies in the early years means any recommendation are very difficult to make. If one was to have one recommendation across all refugee situations in Uganda, it would have to be the fallback situation of using English at all levels. However, this would probably reduce the potential learning outcomes of younger children and lose many of the advantages of learning in a more familiar language. It may also increase the level of shock, isolation and alienation for young children who find themselves in a classroom with no language they can understand. Thus, we recommend that the decision should be made at the school level, but be guided by clear policy considerations and supported by a multilingual approach, both in and outside the classroom. The recommendations related to the choice of the language of instruction are as follows:

Recommendation 3: For nursery and Primary 1–3 select the language of instruction at the school level, but follow clear criteria for this selection to meet the needs of the majority.

a. Each school to identify one language that is common as a familiar language to a majority of the children in nursery and Primary 1–3. Use that as the main language for instruction in nursery and Primary 1–3.

b. If no language can be identified as familiar to at least 60 per cent of the classes, use English as the fallback choice. Note that the language is not necessarily the language of the host community. Most of the classes observed in Arua, where the hosts speak Lugbara, had 60 per cent or more Kakwa speakers. Another class in a Runyankole-speaking area had over 50 per cent of the learners fluent in Swahili, and two other schools had over 60 per cent Kinyarwanda speakers.

c. Provide support to other language groups through language assistants in class (see recommendations for teaching assistants below).

d. The language assistants to provide an introductory intensive six-week language course for new arrivals where numbers justify it. In addition to language, some psycho-social support should be offered.

e. Involve the parents and community as a whole, to sensitise them to the advantages of using a familiar language in the early years of school.

f. Train the teachers at all levels in the advantages, and the practical use, of a multilingual approach in the classroom. This will include the advantages of using local languages to support learning, either as the main language or as a supplementary language to be used in the classroom. Where the teacher does not know the language of the learners, then language assistants can be used and, where these are not available, then bilingual children in the class can be used to help explain to their peers.

Recommendation 4: In Primary 4–7 keep to the present language policy, but build in support for those whose English is weak or who have used a different language of instruction, and allow use of other languages in the classroom.

Primary 4–7 should follow the National Uganda Curriculum and language policy with Primary 4 as a transition year if English has not been the LoI earlier, and Primary 5 onwards using English as the medium of instruction. However, many refugee children will have insufficient English to be placed in these grades even though they may meet all other criteria. (see Recommendation 1). To address the needs of these children the following is recommended.

a. English crash course: accelerated language learning in English over a six-week period for recent arrivals who can be placed into Primary 4–7. This is for recent admissions who are literate, meet the other placement criteria for Primary 4–7, but have insufficient English. While it should be recognised that such a course cannot give them the level needed for academic studies, it can at least provide enough English for them to be able to understand the lessons and compete with others in the class from English-medium education classes.

b. Those who are already in Primary 4–7 but have literacy problems in English (see findings related to Primary 5) should be offered a catch-up programme following the 'Teaching at the Right Level' approach, but with emphasis on developing literacy in English. Such an approach may use the familiar language as a bridge to literacy in the initial stages, where applicable.

c. Teachers should have training on how to use local languages as a support to learning, especially for learners who have recently arrived and have been learning through a different language.

Recommendation 5: Expand the use of ALPs to meet the needs of over-age children who would otherwise be put in low primary classes due to gaps in language skills and curriculum (knowledge) gaps (see Recommendation 1).

a. Where schools have an ALP attached to the school, then over-age children (i.e. at least three years older than the selected grade level) may enter an ALP course at a lower-grade level if their English and one or more other skills are weak (literacy, numeracy or lack of knowledge in key areas of the curriculum). Clear policies as to how children are placed on formal classes, rather than ALP, need to be clarified.

b. Open up more ALP courses in schools for the large numbers of learners who are behind in terms of language and curriculum coverage and where appropriate ensure learning is conducted at the right level rather than age.

Recommendation 6: Develop language and curriculum support learning materials.

The above recommendations on placement will need considerable support in terms of materials, course guidance and training. This will include:

a. Teachers' guides to provide guidance on how to teach classes with mixed-language and mixed-language abilities, including use, and guidance in the use, of language assistants. These guides may also be the basis for short INSET teacher training courses for teachers in the system.

b. Simple English and bilingual non-fiction readers on simplified, Ugandan-specific social studies topics to help newcomers slot into the curriculum. Many newcomers may have covered materials and developed skills in their own country, using their own curriculum, but there will be curriculum content gaps, especially in social studies, a subject with heavy local content, that may force the child to be downgraded. Therefore, simple topic readers can be developed so that they can learn about geography, history and civics that are specific to Uganda in their own time, and in simple English. Such readers should have a dual purpose:

- provide curriculum knowledge that is specific to the Ugandan curriculum
- provide simplified readers that will help learners practise purposeful reading in English. Some such readers could be bilingual, using English and Arabic/ French/Swahili.

c. In addition, readers can be provided that simplify the existing textbooks. These simplified topic readers would provide extra subject and language support and access to the information in English, especially for Primary 4 and 5, and especially as a bridge for those who have taken the English crash course and are re-joining the main classes.

d. Simple topic readers about the refugee children's own country of origin, especially related to their home syllabus, should be considered for refugees who may be short-term refugees.

e. Out-of-school language and culture clubs should also be considered so that refugees can continue to maintain their own language and culture.

Recommendation 7: Develop a teacher training course for both short-term training and built into pre-service programmes.

This will include:

- how to teach initial reading and writing (see findings)
- how to handle lessons with language support available
- how to use a multilingual approach in the classroom
- how to handle very large classes
- how to teach English in mixed-ability classes, using a strong activity base.

8.2.3 Teacher assistants and refugee teachers

WTU, in conjunction with UNHCR, have provided schools with language assistants, also called class or teaching assistants. This initiative is very important, has had important positive impacts and needs expanding. However, the findings show that the teaching assistants are not being used in the way originally intended. In particular, most are being used as classroom teachers rather than language assistants, with the result that there are no assistants to help children in their classes. One reason for this is, of course, the lack or absence of teachers, e.g. three qualified teachers for 900 children, and no common language. Inevitably, an assistant who can speak the same language as the children will become a key teacher, and valuable resource.

A second reason is that the language assistants are fulfilling two somewhat contradictory roles. First, those are who qualified in their country of origin (but not in Uganda) are utilised in a very constructive role as class teachers. Second, people are selected who can speak the language of the refugee children and therefore can support them in the class as language assistants. The recommendations therefore try to show a way of dividing these two roles, while also strengthening the role of each: class teacher and language assistant.

Recommendation 8: Accept teachers who are qualified in their own country but not in Uganda (or equivalence not yet validated) as temporary class teachers, and put in place systems to ensure further training or validation and equivalence of their qualifications in Uganda, possibly through observed teaching practice.

UNHCR and WTU already have such a programme which should be expanded. In addition, this needs to be achieved without taking such teachers out of the classroom, so a part-time course needs to be made available. Develop clear but separate job descriptions both for teachers whose qualifications are not yet recognised, and for the language assistants. In particular, ensure that language assistants are used to assist with language, rather than being absorbed as teachers. Those who can teach, however, can be used to alleviate the teacher shortage and large classes.

Recommendation 9: Develop a cadre of lower-level language assistants.

This can be based on the model of school mothers or parent educators. Recruit respected local refugee adults who have low levels of training. Provide a stipend and training that concentrates on language and psycho-social support. These language trainers would not need the same level of qualifications that are being recruited at present. They would, however, need to be reasonably fluent in English and the languages to be targeted, should have empathy with the children and should be respected in the community. They should also have some training in psycho-social skills and thus, for nursery and Primary 1–3, be supportive of the whole child: both their learning and their ability to settle in the school, rather than be seen as just a translator. As such, they would be suitable to assist in classes, but not appropriate as alternative class teachers, and would be a cheaper model for supporting the refugee children.

8.2.4 Reducing class size

Few of the above recommendations can really be effective while class size is over 100, or as seen, sometimes over 300. A policy should be put in place to work towards reducing class sizes.

Recommendations 8 and 9 should both help address class size and teacher shortages. However, additional action will be needed.

Recommendation 10: Use the double shift system and temporary buildings.

The pilot trialling of a double shift system is a welcome initiative that hopefully can be expanded. Although not necessarily a long-term solution as it does reduce contact hours, it is an effective short-term solution that can double available learning spaces, and is especially appropriate where refugee stays may not be long-term. Similarly, it needs to be recognised that building new, permanent classrooms may not be the answer, especially where it is expected that the refugees will be repatriated and returning home in the next few years. Therefore, temporary shelters should be seen as acceptable in the short term.

It is better to have four classes with 70 children, each taking place in temporary structures or through a shift system, than one class of 280, however nice the room that they are in may be. Thus, the ministry and UNHCR's minimum standards, which tend to focus on physical descriptions, need to emphasise a maximum number in any classroom, as part of those standards.

Recommendation 11: Conduct more research in specific areas of learning.

- Cohort studies to establish enrolment and drop-out rates.
- Studies in the reading development in a multilingual setting, including comparing this data and the present Uwezo pilot survey.
- A study into the causes of differences in learning outcomes between host children and refugees to ensure that they are addressed, and that neither group is disadvantaged.
- Further research of the languages used by refugees to identify which, if any, are unifying language(s) within a settlement and the extent to which these can be supported as LoI by teachers ad learning materials
- A study into the language abilities of the teachers combined with a study into the impact their proficiency has on learning outcomes

Estimating the drop-out rates and the actual size of intake In the data collection was problematic because one could never be sure if changing numbers was due to drop out, to resettlement, or to do with more learners joining the system. A series of cohort studies would be better able to measure what is really happening in terms of numbers and language change. The results of the reading assessment show how few children were able to use decoding skills, but were still able to match written text to meaning. Studies as to how the different language contexts have an impact on what strategies children develop when trying to read in a different language to the one in which they are fluent, could provide guidance on how to improve the teaching of early grade reading in such complex linguistic settings.

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