

The Education Response Plan (ERP) Secretariat for Refugees and Host Communities in Uganda Ministry of Education and Sports September 2018 - 2021

Introduction

The Education Response Plan for Refugees and Host Communities in Uganda (ERP) is a multi-year costed plan for provision of education to 567,500 children and youth in refugee-hosting areas. The ERP was launched in September 2018 as the first sector-specific operationalization of the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework worldwide and is an Addendum to the Education and Sports Strategic Plan (ESSP). Following arrival of over 1.3 million refugees in Uganda, the initiative represents collective national efforts to respond to the learning and protection crisis for children and youth in refugee-hosting areas. The plan builds on Government of Uganda's existing and progressive policy framework for hosting refugees and translates into practice Uganda's commitments in the Global Compact on Refugees as well as the IGAD Nairobi Declaration and Djibouti Declaration on Refugee Education.

The ERP aims to strengthen access, quality and the education system's capacity to respond to the refugee education crisis. With a dual focus on response and system strengthening, the ERP is a strategic instrument for the long-term strengthening of a Uganda's refugee-inclusive education system. The response budget of USD 389 million from January 2018 to June 2021 is based on refined costing and prioritization of shared learning services for refugees and host communities.

The governance and management of the ERP implementation is undertaken by an inter-departmental, interagency ERP Steering Committee, chaired by the Permanent Secretary and ERP Secretariat anchored within the Ministry of Education and Sports. The delegated Chair of the ERP Steering Committee is Dr. Cleophus Mugenyi, Commissioner Basic Education and Co-Chair is Jan Bijmens, Skills Development Manager, ENABEL.

Main activities

The Education Response Plan represents and contributes to strengthened coordination and collaboration across governmental, non-governmental and UN agencies. From 2017 onwards, the ERP has been at the center of sector-wide situation analysis, collective target setting and consultative prioritization of interventions within an ambitious yet achievable plan.

Deepening of sector coordination, alignment of refugee response with national standards, prevention of duplication and mainstreaming of best practices are key elements as the ERP comes to life. The national ERP is cascaded in 2019 to sub-national planning to inform refugee-inclusive public planning and budgeting and to enhance integrated education sector coordination at local level. These coordination systems built around the ERP bridge the humanitarian-development continuum and emphasize two-way commitments for both refugees and host communities from all actors.

In the first 18 months of implementation, significant investments have been made in improving equitable access to education. The plan informs strategic resource mobilization collectively by the sector and for individual agencies. Annual tracking of funding streams injected into the priority areas of the ERP empowers the sector with information about sub-sector and geographical funding gaps. In sum, Uganda's ERP has contributed to a more united, coordinated, needs-informed education sector with enhanced capacity to provide multi-year education services for refugees and host communities.

Achievements

Uganda's Education Response Plan was developed with achievability in mind. At the mid-point of the 3.5-year implementation period, there has been an apparent significant rise in access to education and the quality of education. To date, it is estimated that about 100,000 out-of-school children and youth have accessed learning since the initiation of the plan.

Uganda's Education Response Plan sets a precedence of refugee-inclusive education being a crucial priority both at the onset of an emergency and in the longer term that follows. Preliminary results show the following emerging trends:

- Refugee Gross Enrolment Ratio in Primary education has increased from 58% in 2017 to 73% in 2019
- Refugee Gross Enrolment Ratio in Early Childhood Development has increased from 38% to 50% in the same period
- 617 classrooms are being constructed to increase education system's absorption capacity
- An official Accelerated Education (AE) curriculum has been developed, 618 teachers trained in delivering AE with 22,351 learners benefitting
- Development of thematic operational guidance for implementers on inclusive education, double shifting, District coordination, cash-based programming and more to foster increasing harmonization and policy adherence in the response
- Refugee-hosting local governments undertaking refugee-inclusive planning and budgeting
- Collective, government-led results monitoring, gap analysis and financial tracking of the ERP

In Uganda, the process of developing and implementing the ERP has cultivated collaboration across actors in the sector that augments the coordination and system strengthening that makes up both a means and an end in the efforts towards strengthening Uganda's education system capacity to provide equitable, quality education to *all children* in Uganda's refugee hosting areas.

Challenges

The USD 389 million dollars ERP budget is ambitious, reflecting an average annual unit cost per beneficiary of USD 196. The significant achievement in enabling children and families to overcome barriers to education calls for action to sustain their progression and protection. Thus, additional multi-year commitments are required to fulfil the plan's intentions for continuous access to quality education.

A lesson learnt from the ERP process is that instituting a collective framework and collaboration quickly increases demands on the system that is being built. Capacity to manage and analyze data, effectively facilitate coordination and integrate national and sub-national planning processes are therefore key investments to be made early in such a process. This optimizes effectiveness and transition toward harmonized planning and implementation.

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