



Maintains

Research supporting social services to adapt to shocks

Recommendations to strengthen Uganda's Education Response Plan for Refugees and Host Communities (ERP)

Collecting and using information for the ERP

POLICY BRIEF | March 2021

Introduction

Uganda is seen as a role model for its open-door policy on refugees, including for its ambitious plan to ensure all refugee children access a quality education. The Education Response Plan for Refugees and Host Communities (ERP), launched in 2018, aims to establish a realistic and implementable strategy to improve both access to education and learning outcomes for refugee and host community children.

The ERP aims to consolidate public and private investments in refugee education and to shift service delivery from humanitarian to development response. The ERP aims to reach 567,500 learners per year with improved education services over 3.5 years (January 2018 to June 2021), with an estimated cost of US\$ 389 million.

The Maintains education research seeks to support the ERP's aim through data collection, analysis and reporting of findings on the implementation of the ERP. Our first research report (**available here**) involved engaging with national stakeholders. The research was conducted in the first half of 2020 and analysed three key components of the ERP's implementation:



This brief presents key findings and emerging policy recommendations on improving the collection and use of information in the ERP.

The Maintains research explored what ERP information systems have been established; what is still under development; what challenges have arisen when collecting, consolidating, and sharing information; the overall effectiveness of the information system to date; and what needs improvement. Primary data was collected from national stakeholders connected to the ERP's design and delivery, including government officials, technical advisers, education development partners, humanitarian agencies, and civil society organisations (later phases will involve inquiry at the district level). Findings are based on a compilation and analysis of respondents' opinions, experiences, and documented evidence.

Findings

The ERP advocates for a rigorous system of monitoring and evaluation (M&E) so that data on the implementation of activities and the indicators linked to outcomes are tracked, reviewed, and acted upon in a timely manner, particularly at the district level. Building a robust M&E system for the ERP requires strengthening and supporting organisational capacity at the national, district, and sub-district levels to capture, analyse, review, and apply evidence to inform and improve the ERP's interventions.

Finding 1: The system for collecting, managing, sharing, and utilising data on refugee and host community education service delivery under the ERP is still being developed.

The task of establishing an information system for the ERP is complex, as it must capture information from a range of stakeholders and a variety of projects with divergent indicators and monitoring systems. The ERP Secretariat has provided active leadership to guide stakeholders' collection and reporting of information under an aligned set of indicators and outcomes. The process was consultative and ensured the ERP's information management system complied with established government policies and data systems.

However, several actions, if taken, could help ensure the information system works effectively, such as the ongoing review of tools and reporting systems, as well as engaging partners to provide adequate, timely information that can guide ERP planning and improvements. Capacity building of district officials in the collection, management, analysis, and use of data on refugee and host community children is also critical. These activities have understandably been delayed by COVID-19 in 2020, but must resume in earnest in the final phase of the ERP to ensure the production and tracking of critical data and information.

Finding 2: Information management under the ERP must continuously evolve to align with the government's education monitoring system.

Promoting data accountability and widespread results sharing is key to the success of the ERP's information management system. ERP partners largely demonstrate compliance with reporting requirements, submitting data regularly via UNHCR to the Secretariat using a shared tool aligned with the ERP's targets. Positively, partners largely demonstrate compliance with the ERP's reporting requirements and submit data regularly on their activities, particularly in refugee communities. This supports decision making and coordination in refugee settlements and allows national management of partner inputs, distribution of resources, and reduces duplication of effort.

However, partners share their data with one another but fail to routinely share it with district education officials, inhibiting government engagement in planning and monitoring. Ultimately, this reporting mechanism runs parallel to the government system and is not yet integrated into key national data collection and monitoring structures.

Finding 3: Progress has been made to incorporate indicators on refugees into the national Education Management Information System (EMIS). However, the EMIS is under revision and not operational, so it has not yet produced relevant data to support decision making.

The ERP specifies that data on refugees must be integrated into the EMIS to ensure alignment with the government's national monitoring system, which has not been updated since 2016. The Secretariat is engaging with the team revising the EMIS to ensure it includes indicators on refugees, though it is possible this process will continue beyond the ERP's timeframe as work slowed down due to COVID-19. Positively, stakeholders expect that the revised EMIS will cater for refugee data, supporting the Ministry of Education and Sports (MoES) to make evidence-based decisions on programming across multiple departments and development partners.

Finding 4: Significant progress has been made monitoring and reporting on access and outputs, but the ERP's information system must also provide evidence of education quality and teaching and learning outcomes.

Policymakers responsible for system inputs report that the access data generated under the ERP is largely adequate, helping identify gaps in the provision of classrooms, materials, and teachers. However, there is little data available on the quality of services, such as the improved knowledge and skill level of teachers. Districts lack data on refugee children, especially those in host communities. This is partly driven by delays linking ERP and district information systems, and technical limitations like the use of paper tools in districts for collecting and reporting data. This causes challenges in planning for education services for host communities in terms



of financing and inputs, as enrolment numbers are not available.

Data on the quality of the inputs and services provided under the ERP is critical to assessing the achievement of the policy's outcomes, and must be tracked alongside other indicators. Importantly,

the final year of the ERP must focus on ensuring the information system is capable of capturing, analysing, and reporting on both access and quality outcomes to feed into the assessment of the policy's impact.

Recommendations

Recommendation 1: Enhance district government capacity to coordinate and monitor ERP partners working in their catchment area.

Capacity building of district governments will help ensure effective information collection and processing, and can focus on data collection and management, budgeting, and expenditure tracking for education activities targeting refugees. Empowering local officials to operationalise their district ERPs will help them effectively plan and implement activities, promoting overall accountability. Donors can provide resources and technical support for this as a priority.

Recommendation 2: Review refugee population and enrolment data to assess the accuracy of the ERP's projected targets.

It is important to examine how precise refugee enrolment and population projections were in the ERP, and the extent to which the targets are still meaningful. This will allow an analysis of the gap to determine whether it was due to the larger-than-expected influx of refugees or under-performance against targets. Ideally, a new school census would be carried out by the MoES to capture current refugee enrolment data.

Recommendation 3: Prioritise the revision of the EMIS and ensure the inclusion of data on refugees in the new system.

It is commendable that the MoES's revision of the EMIS has commenced with funding from FCDO and the Global Partnership for Education. The Steering Committee should keep finalisation of the new system and the inclusion of data on refugees high on the agenda given its importance for M&E, and leverage their collective strengths and capacities to help resolve bottlenecks.

Recommendation 4: Fully include refugees in the national education system through planning and financing.

Incorporating refugee education priorities and needs in the national monitoring system and the Education Sector Strategic Plan will help ensure they benefit from quality services and that schools with refugee children receive government resource allocations for teachers and student capitation grants. This requires greater funding and coordinated action from the MoES, the Ministry of Finance, Planning and Economic Development, education development partners, and the Office of the Prime Minister.







About Maintains

Maintains is a five-year (2018–2023) operational research programme building a strong evidence base on how health, education, nutrition, and social protection systems can respond more quickly, reliably, and effectively to changing needs during and after shocks, whilst also maintaining existing services. Maintains is working in six focal countries—Bangladesh, Ethiopia, Kenya, Pakistan, Sierra Leone, and Uganda—undertaking research to build evidence and providing technical assistance to support practical implementation. Lessons from this work will be used to inform policy and practice at both national and global levels.

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In collaboration with Oxford Policy Management, the Maintains' Uganda Education research is being implemented by Ichuli (www.ichuli.africa)

