

# The right to education is under threat in refugee settlements

Education is a universal human right protected under International and National laws, including The 1951 Refugee Convention under Article 22, which guarantees the refugees rights to education; The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) under Article 26 speaks about the right to education; The Convention on the Rights of a Child (CRC) under Article 28 and 29 speaks about protecting the rights of a child without discrimination, and the 1995 Constitution of the Republic of Uganda.

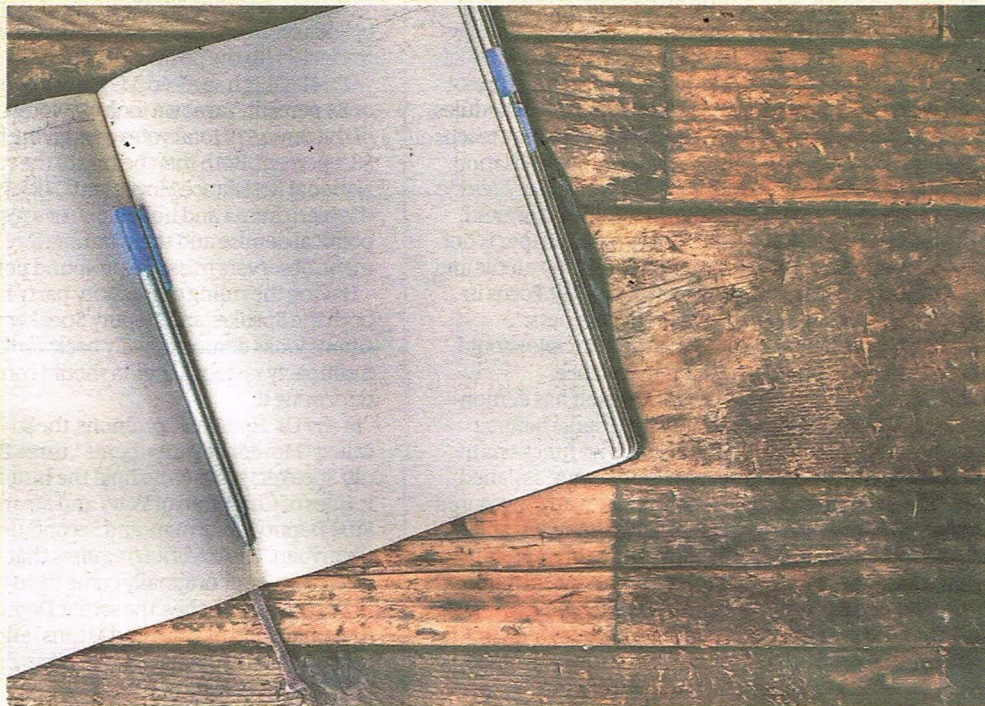
Every child, regardless of nationality or background, deserve access to quality education. However, for thousands of refugee children living in settlements across Uganda, this right remains difficult to fully enjoy.

During a recent conference that brought together refugees from different camps in Uganda, participants raised serious concerns about the challenges affecting education in refugee communities. Their voices revealed the growing gap between the legal promise of education and the reality faced by refugee children every day.

One of the major challenges was the shortage of schools in refugee settlements. Existing schools are too few to accommodate the large number of learners. As a result, many children walk long distances every morning to reach school.

In some areas, students reportedly arrive as late as 10am because of the distance they travel on foot. Such journeys are exhausting and contribute greatly to school dropouts, especially among young children and girls.

Overcrowded classrooms were also highlighted as a ma-



major problem. In many schools, a single classroom contains 200 learners; too many for one teacher to manage effectively. This affects concentration, participation, and the overall quality of learning. Teachers are left overwhelmed while students struggle to receive enough attention in class.

Participants further noted that there are very few private schools within refugee hosting areas, and many refugee parents cannot afford private education due to poverty and limited sources of income. This leaves most families dependent on over stretched public and humanitarian supported schools.

Another concern raised was the limited number of Early Child Development Centres (ECDs). These centres are important in preparing young chil-

dren for formal education, yet many operate with inadequate funding, few learning materials, and insufficient staff. Without strong early learning opportunities, many children begin school already disadvantaged.

Refugees expressed concern about the continued use of outdated curricula and the lack of awareness within communities about the right to education. Many parents and children are not fully-informed about educational opportunities and protections available to them. This limits community involvement in advocating for better services.

The challenges raised during the conference show that more effort is needed to protect the right to education for refugees in Uganda.

Government institutions, humanitarian organisations, and

development partners must increase investment in refugee education by constructing more schools, recruiting more teachers, supporting ECD programmes and strengthening awareness campaigns within communities.

Education gives children hope, dignity and an opportunity for a better future, refugee children should not be denied this opportunity because of displacement, poverty or conflict if the right to education is truly to be respected, then practical action must be taken to ensure that every refugee child has access to safe, accessible and quality learning.

---

Atim Edith Labeja,  
Humanitarian