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Cohere: Community-led Inclusive Quality Education for Refugee Children With Disabilities in Uganda Initiative

What problem is the innovation addressing?

Refugee children in Uganda face barriers to accessing quality education, these barriers are significantly greater for refugee children with disabilities. Parents and caregivers of children with disabilities can struggle to provide adequate care and support to their children due to limited information, knowledge, skills and resources. The children and their

families may suffer social exclusion because of community attitudes to disability. Teachers lack skills to support children with disabilities, while schools are not equipped with appropriate resources or strategies for inclusive education, nor are they safe and accessible.

Innovation overview

Cohere's "Community-led Inclusive Quality Education for Refugee Children With Disabilities in Uganda" initiative is holistic and locally-led. It brings together community leaders, parents, schools and teachers to improve access to quality education for children with disabilities in refugee hosting communities.

Cohere strengthens refugee-led organisations (RLOs), enabling them to identify children with six conditions (epilepsy, cerebral palsy, autism, Down syndrome, hydrocephalus and microcephaly). Identified children are assessed by specialists and receive follow up support through home visits or group mentoring sessions, as well as assistive devices where appropriate. A personalised

learning plan is prepared for each child, and parents are encouraged to enrol children in school.

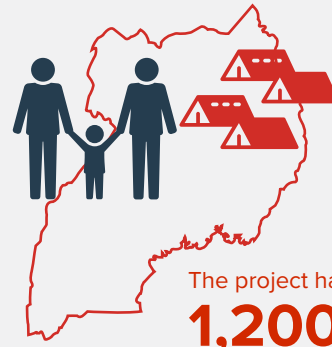
Support is organised by RLOs, provided with help from education experts, physiotherapists and occupational therapists contracted by Cohere. RLOs lead in providing material support and training (for teachers and education administrators) to improve school physical accessibility and use of appropriate learning strategies.

The project is part of Cohere's broader ambition to ensure that more funding is provided directly to RLOs, thereby disrupting established modes of operation of humanitarian aid.

Impact and learning

To date, the initiative has:

- Trained 348 teachers and education administrators.
- Demonstrated that RLOs have made effective use of capacity strengthening to lead on project implementation.
- Successfully identified and provided advice and support to parents and caregivers which is valued by the recipients as an improvement to previous forms of support to children with disabilities.
- Collected anecdotal evidence indicating improvements in the wellbeing of both children and their caregivers as a result of the support provided.
- Through intensive mobilisation and awareness campaigns, the project has been very successful in improving the visibility of children with disabilities.
- Development of Reframe (<https://www.reframe.network/>), a platform for RLOs to showcase their work and connect to international donors, networks and opportunities. There are currently over 150 profiled RLOs from 7 countries.



The project has reached **1,200** children with disabilities and their parents in four refugee settlements in Uganda through four RLOs

By the end of 2024, refugee led community educators of 12 RLOs will be impacting 6,000 refugee CWD in three countries. By 2031, the aim is to be impacting 45,000 refugee children with disabilities in five countries. Expansion beyond Uganda is envisaged from 2023.

Scaling Approach: Decentralised scaling through refugee led organisations

RLOs are well positioned to establish and maintain stakeholder partnerships to ensure continued support for children with disabilities in their communities as well as coordinate locally to advocate and fundraise for community priorities. The scaling process so far has involved activities along three dimensions:

1. Decentralised delivery by RLOs within their locations, who now lead on school and teacher components that were previously delayed during the pandemic.
2. Implementation of the initiative at an additional refugee settlement.
3. Development of Reframe (<https://www.reframe.network/>), a platform for RLOs to showcase their work and connect to international donors, networks and opportunities. There are currently over 150 profiled RLOs from 7 countries.

Scaling questions

- How should continued professional support be resourced after the initial implementation period in each location? Who should fund such support?
- Is there a way to extend the programme approach beyond education settings? Can benefits of training and sensitisation integrate with other RLO activities?
- Is pooled fundraising (by RLOs in multiple locations) a viable revenue model? What should the role of Cohere be in this? Will international donors engage?
- Can we help the Office of the Prime Minister to set realistic classifications for implementing organisations, improving confidence, compliance and accountability for RLOs -- thereby making it easier for RLOs to fundraise for and lead programmes?

What next?

Cohere is building evidence to support its model of elevating the role of RLOs in humanitarian response through capacity strengthening, creating opportunities to fund RLOs at scale and mitigating the risks for both donors and RLOs, showcasing the work of RLOs and connecting them with other RLOs and the wider international aid sector and supporting RLOs generate evidence to influence donors and implementing partners.

Call to Action

Support refugee led organisations all over the world to reach the most vulnerable within their communities through direct funds to refugee led organisations or via the reframe platform at

<https://www.reframe.network/>