# ACCESS TO SAFE WATER AND POST-PRIMARY EDUCATION IN RWAMWANJA REFUGEE SETTLEMENT

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An Organizational Survey Report - Advocacy Edition

Hope Community Action Africa

Plot 1085, Uganda Martyrs House, Willis Road Namirembe.

P. O. Box 30421, Kampala, Uganda, East Africa.

www.hcaafrica.org

# **TABLE OF CONTENTS**

TABLE OF CONTENTS	1
SUMMARY	4
INTRODUCTION	6
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT	8
BACKGROUND INFORMATION	
Access to Safe Water	9
Limited Access to Post-Primary Education	10
FINDINGS	13
Access to Safe Water	13
Sources of Water in the Settlement	13
Uses of Water in the Settlement	14
Water Availability	15
How safe is available water?	15
Restrictions	16
Large Water Bodies near the Settlement	18
National Water & Sewerage Corporation	20
Access to Post-Primary Education	21
Challenges Parents face supporting their children through Primary	•
Challenges Parents face supporting their children through Education	-
Vocational Schools in Rwamwanja Refugee Settlement	22

Causes of School Drop-out in Rwamwanja Refugee Settlement	23
Motivation required for Parents to take Children through Primary	
Motivation required for Parents to take Children through	Secondary
DISCUSSION	25
Access to Safe Water	25
Access to Post-Primary Education	27
Challenges Parents Face at Children's Primary Education Level	27
Challenges Parents Face at Children's Secondary Education Level	28
Vocational Schools in Rwamwanja Refugee Settlement	28
Causes of School Drop-out	28
Motivation for Parents	29
CONCLUSION	30
Limited Access to Safe Water	30
Limited Access to Education	30
Can Vocational Schools Provide an Alternative?	31
Is Education Limited to Concrete Buildings?	31
Objective Leadership	32
Support for Parents	32
RECOMMENDATIONS	33
General	33
Government of Uganda	33
National Water and Sewerage Corporation	34

Local Government – Kamwenge District	34
International Agencies	34
Refugees in the Settlement	
Local Leaders	
Religious Leaders	
ABBREVIATIONS	
LIST OF FIGURES	
REFERENCES	

#### **SUMMARY**

Moved by the very long lines of empty water cans at water sources and the number of parents desperately looking for school fees for their children going to secondary school in Rwamwanja Refugee Settlement, HCA launched a research to explore the condition of life in the settlement in regard to access to safe water and post-primary education.

According to the Education Response Plan for Refugees and Host Communities in Uganda, there are a number of hindrances to secondary education access for young people in refugee camps and communities hosting them. A survey implemented by HCA in July 2019 helped to find out what challenges parents faced in supporting their children to Secondary level.

The survey involved interviews involving 190 respondents selected at random from four different areas in the settlement.

There is very limited water supply in Rwamwanja Refugee Settlement. There's hope that National Water and Sewerage Corporation has plans to supply piped water, which might impact the water crisis in the settlement.

Nearly a third of the population (29%) is still dependent on swamp water! There is an urgent need for intervention to save the lives of the population depending on swamp water for sustenance.

Even after piped water has been provided, there remains a great need for filtered, clean drinking water for all schools in and around the settlement; kindergarten, primary and secondary schools. This would yield a double effect if clean drinking water was provided for institutions critical for personal and community health.

There's need for an immediate intervention between now and when the refugees can access piped water. This intervention should aim at providing emergency water to the refugee population at a high risk due to dependence on swamp water.

There's seems to be excessive levels of contamination and some unknown substances in water from boreholes. The ministry of Health needs to urgently check such substances and advise on whether such water should be consumed, before any adverse effects can be reported.

There's only one secondary school available for such a great population.

Obtaining secondary education is very costly for parents in Rwamwanja Refugee Settlement. Even with such financial difficulty, parents are required to raise school fees, scholastic materials and food items as non-monitory contributions. Refugees have little space in the settlement where they can grow crops to supplement what UNHCR provides. When this is collected as well that may mean those left behind may not have enough to eat. This indicates that the cost of secondary education in the settlement may be costly beyond imagination. No wonder parents will be found doing massive personal mobilization, sometimes beyond what can be culturally acceptable as noble. They are stressed and it seems there's no other way other than wait for help from elsewhere.

#### INTRODUCTION

Hope Community Action (HCA) Africa is a non-profit organization with mission to equip community based teams for effective ministry through joint prayer, training and providing needed resources. Our vision is a vibrant community of Godly leaders demonstrating Christ's revolutionary love in their Churches and communities across the Great Lakes region of Africa, leading training and provision of resources that will spur hope in the lives of children.

#### HCA has 4 programs:

- 1. Research and Communication: Focuses on sustainable peace processes and essential basic needs; access to safe water, education and family leadership.
- 2. *Sports Ministry:* A Church-oriented program with focus on holistic development for children and teenagers age 3 to 17.
- 3. Special Projects: Our primary goal for research and communication program is to support more actors with up-to-date information essential for designing up-to-date interventions in target communities. Our secondary goal is to implement special projects to address critical gaps observed, in collaboration with relevant existing development practitioners in the target community.
- 4. Leadership Development: Focuses on empowering Community Based teams (CBT) and enabling them to reach out to their larger target communities using available resources and a language most of the people understand. Our leadership development scope includes program design, planning, implementation, monitoring and review, ICT integration and participatory community based interventions with practical focus on HCA active programs within the target community.

Inspired by the very long lines of empty water cans at water sources in Rwamwanja Refugee Settlement and an outcry of parents in the settlement over their failure to raise money to support their children through secondary education, HCA launched a survey to explore the condition of life in the settlement in regard to access to safe water and post-primary education.

Ten volunteers were selected at random from four different areas in the settlement. Each of these interviewed 19 different people on average. These volunteers spread themselves in four areas selected at random; Base Camp, Nkoma, Mahani and Kyempango.

The volunteers helped to manually classify data when interviews were done. Data was analyzed using excel for accuracy and better understanding.

A total of 190 adults 18 years and above were interviewed.

#### **ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

This survey was successful due to support from specific institutions, individuals and groups.

The Office of the Prime Minister, in particular the office of the Commissioner for Refugees, provided authorization to visit and run this survey.

UNHCR and related agencies had clear and up-to-date, easily accessible data available on their websites.

A team of committed volunteers from Rwamwanja Refugee Settlement performed excellently, beyond expectation, during the survey, data analysis and translation.

Several local leaders in the settlement provided their views. Specific international partners provided motivation and others, the inspiration.

#### BACKGROUND INFORMATION

There are over 78,000 refugees in Rwamwanja Refugee Settlement located in Kamwenge district, Western Uganda (Location coordinates 0.205°N 30.586°E). The refugees fled tribal clashes and armed conflict in Eastern Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) in 2013. The hope that these refugees will be returning home soon is dim due to unceasing tension in Eastern DRC.

Rwamwanja Refugee Settlement was established in 1964 to host refugees from Rwanda, and closed in 1995 when most of them returned home. The settlement was reopened in 2012 to host refugees from the DRC (UNHCR, 2018).

Life in the refugee settlement is disturbing, especially when overpopulated and under facilitated. The settlement is characterized by limited access to clean water, alarming poor hygiene, inadequate food supply, orphans as an effect of war and very limited access to education.

# Access to Safe Water

There's water available to a reasonable extent both in the refugee settlement and in the surrounding community of residents. However due to the camp being overpopulated, the refugees are always lining up at water sources. Some of these lines can be about 25 meters long and people can take hours before accessing water.

One highly populated zone, Kyempango, has 11 villages and 17 water sources (Kyempango A: 5 Villages with 8 Boreholes, Kyempango C: 3 Villages with 4 Boreholes, Kyempango C: 3 Villages with 5 Boreholes). A source with many people can have about 130 families collecting water from it (About 910 people

sharing one limited water source). Current water sources have been facilitated by Oxfam, Lutheran World Federation, World Vision, Water Mission. Despite the current effort to provide water to the settlement, long lines of empty water cans at wells indicate a continuing water crisis that needs to be addressed.

A survey implemented by Hope Community Action (HCA) Africa in July and August 2019 helped to provide guiding information on what specific water needs are in Rwamwanja Refugee Settlement, what actions are currently being done to improve access to safe water, gaps seen and recommendations for intervention.

# **Limited Access to Post-Primary Education**

Uganda has a great education policy for refugees. Refugees have access to the same education as the children and youth in the local community hosting them (Uganda Education Act 2008). This implies refugee children in Uganda can access free Primary education in their local community.

There seems to be a reasonable number of primary schools children can access in and around Rwamwanja Refugee Settlement, though some have to walk a very long distance.

According to the Education Response Plan for Refugees and Host Communities (ERPRHC) in Uganda (2018), 58.2% of children in the refugee community were in primary school, while only 11.3% were able to attend Secondary education. 17.9% of children in the host community were able to attend Secondary education, according to a Ministry of Education survey that covered 8 refugee hosting districts; Adjumani, Arua, Isingiro, Kamwenge, Kiryandongo, Kyegerwa, Moyo and Yumbe. The figures indicate that children and adolescents in both refugee and host communities face common similar to education.

The ERPRHC points out a number of hindrances to secondary education for young people in rural areas. There are mostly the same communities hosting refugees.

- i. Unlike primary education, secondary school education is not compulsory. Only a number of children who get good grades at their primary leaving exams can study free at Secondary level.
- ii. The Government provides a grant to one participating secondary school per sub-county. There are sub-counties without a secondary school and these areas include refugee-hosting communities. The Government of Uganda has plans to build more secondary schools, in the Education and Sports Sector Strategic Plan 2017-2020, but children are growing! They can't wait.
- iii. Where a secondary school may be available, some applicants will not be having enough documentation to enable them get enrolled.
- iv. The long distances children travel to and from school required patience and strong determination.
- v. In other instances, language becomes a problem. Children who came to Uganda speaking French and Swahili need to adjust to English or they won't have teachers available to teach them in those languages.

A survey implemented by Hope Community Action (HCA) Africa in July 2019 helped to provide guiding information on what education specific needs are in Rwamwanja Refugee Settlement, from the refugees' perspective. The survey helped to answer the following questions:

- i) What challenges do parents face supporting their children through primary education?
- ii) What challenges do parents face supporting their children through Secondary education?

- iii) What types of vocational institutions are available in or around Rwamwanja Refugee Settlement?
- iv) What kind of motivation is required for parents to support all their children through primary and secondary education?
- v) How can we motivate children to remain in school until completion?

## **FINDINGS**

# Access to Safe Water

76% of the refugees in Rwamwanja Refugee Settlement have no access to safe water.

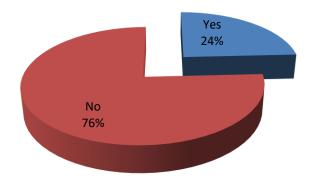


Figure 1: Access to safe water in Rwamwanja Refugee Settlement

69% of the population gets water from a borehole. 5% of these are linked by pipe from a central solar powered borehole system. 29% are still fetching water from a swamp.

Sources of Water in the Settlement

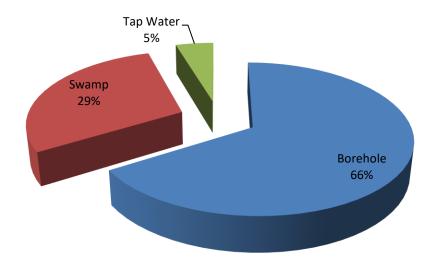


Figure 2: Sources of Water in the Settlement

# Uses of Water in the Settlement

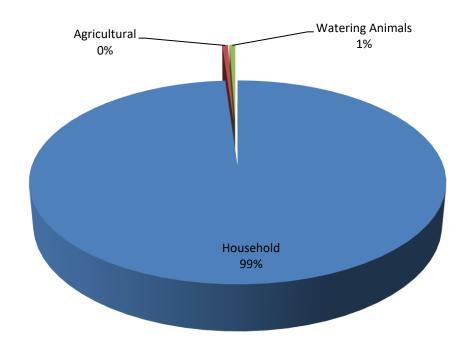


Figure 3: Water Usage in the Settlement

### Water Availability

Clearly there's not enough water for everyone in the settlement, yet 99% of the water needed is for household use. 67% of the population can access only 40 liters of any available water per day out of 70 liters respondents indicated they required per household on average.

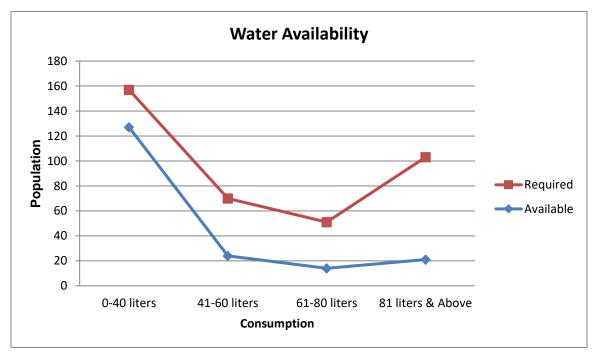


Figure 4: Water Availability

# How safe is available water?

i) Water is mostly dirty during the dry season, especially swamp water, being stagnant. Dust from the road, children playing and irresponsible adults are contributing factors.

- ii) People share water with animals. This leads to more contamination. Water turns muddy and changes color as a result of a number of causes. Eventually the water has bad smell.
- iii) Swamps are very dirty. They are not treated, have frogs and worms.
- iv) In some cases, a poorly maintained borehole system can also lead to contamination.

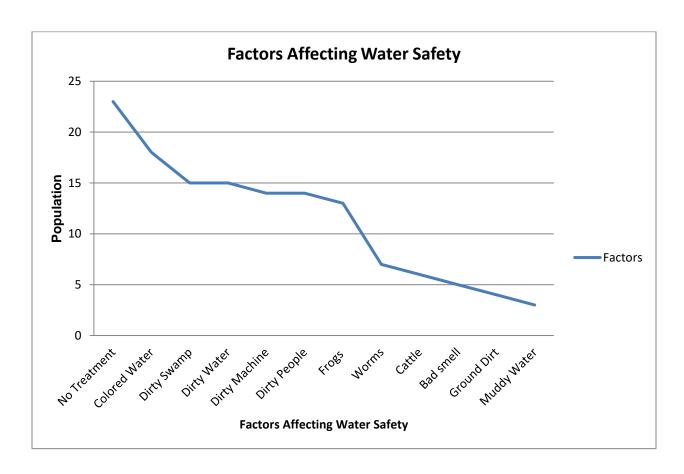


Figure 5: Factors Affecting Water Safety

#### Restrictions

95% of all respondents are facing restrictions while 3% are not. 2% did not answer.



Figure 6: Water Restrictions

#### Common restrictions:

- 53% of all respondents indicated there are too many people accessing one source of water. This limits how much water each household can get.
- ii) Except for swamp water, every household is required to pay a fee of 2,000 Uganda shillings per month, to be able to fetch water from the borehole in their community. 28% indicated this was a hindrance to accessing available water.
- iii) 14% mentioned other hindrances mainly;
  - a. Closing and opening time. In Nkoma, water can be closed as early as 10:00AM.
  - b. Fighting. Obviously fighting will keep some people away and send others to the swamp for alternative water.
  - c. Little water on some water sources.

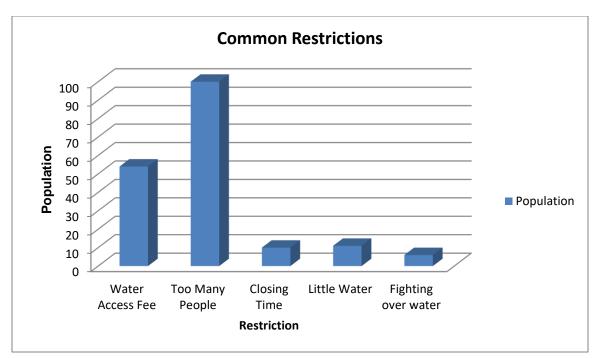


Figure 7: Common Water Restrictions

Large Water Bodies near the Settlement

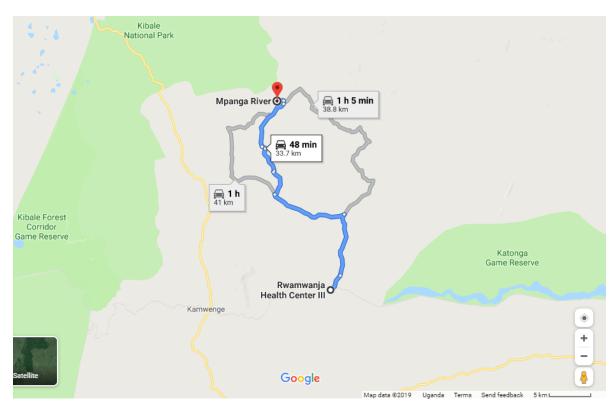


Figure 8: Location of large water bodies near Rwamwanja Refugee Settlement – Mpanga River

Rwamwanja Refugee Settlement is about 1km away from the end of River Katonga. Availability of an access road to the river from that distance is unknown yet. The settlement is located about 40km away from River Mpanga.

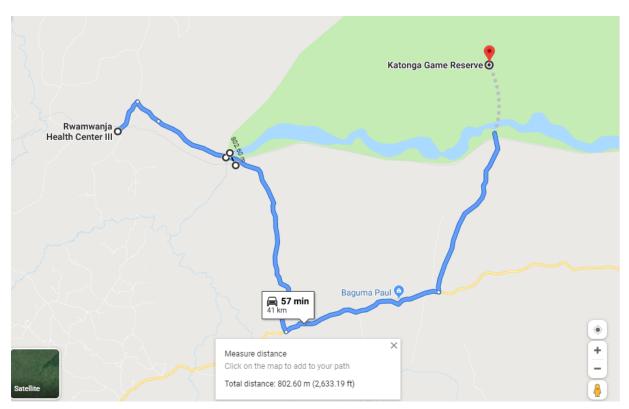


Figure 9: Location of large water bodies near Rwamwanja Refugee Settlement - Mpanga River with main Road Access

#### National Water & Sewerage Corporation

According to the Assistant Settlement Commandant Rwamwanja Refugee Settlement, Mr. Mugabe Leo Asiimwe, National Water has already gaz8etted Rwamwanja Refugee Settlement for Water Supply. "The Office of the Prime Minister will no longer authorize organizations to drill boreholes. Instead there's a gap in hygiene and sanitation and organizations helping in that area would be welcome." Mr. Mugabe said.

# **Access to Post-Primary Education**

There are 6 primary schools and 1 secondary school within Rwamwanja Refugee Settlement;

- i) Rwamwanja Primary School
- ii) Kyempango Primary School
- iii) Ntezilyayo Primary School
- iv) Mahani Primary School
- v) Mahega Primary School
- vi) Nkoma Primary School

There's only one secondary school, Rwamwanja Secondary School at the edge of the settlement.

Challenges Parents face supporting their children through Primary Education

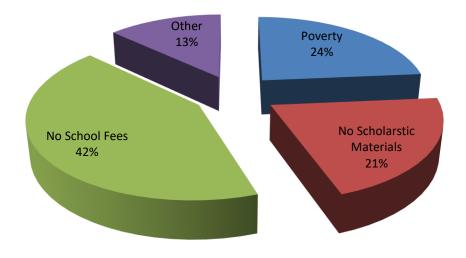


Figure 10: Challenges Parents face supporting their children through Primary Education

Poverty is the leading cause for lack of school fees and scholastic materials. This indicates over 87% are having difficulties raising money required to take their children to school.

# Challenges Parents face supporting their children through Secondary Education

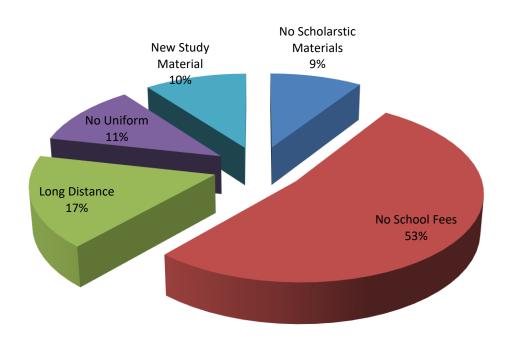


Figure 11: Challenges Parents face supporting their children through Secondary Education

Vocational Schools in Rwamwanja Refugee Settlement

A vocational school supported by Finn Church Aid seems to be making good impact. This institute provides courses in tailoring, hair dressing, mechanics and

others. There seems to be other initiatives helping refugees attain skills in child care (Early Childhood Education), shoe making, carpentry and computer.

Causes of School Drop-out in Rwamwanja Refugee Settlement

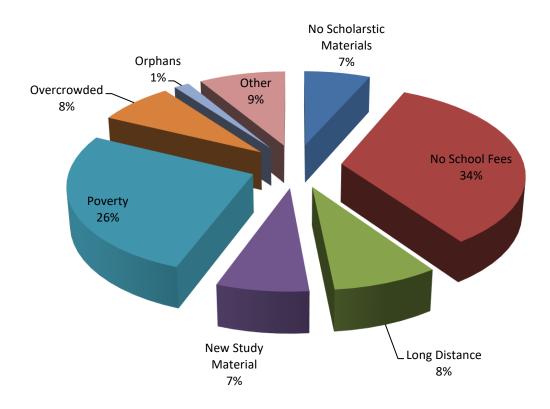


Figure 12: Causes of School Drop-out in Rwamwanja Refugee Settlement

67% of residents indicated poverty was the leading cause for school drop-outs. Other causes were lack of nearby schools (long distance), lack of space (overcrowding) and new study material (from Congolese to Ugandan syllabus). Case of orphans failing to go to school was indicated at 1%.

# Motivation required for Parents to take Children through Primary Education

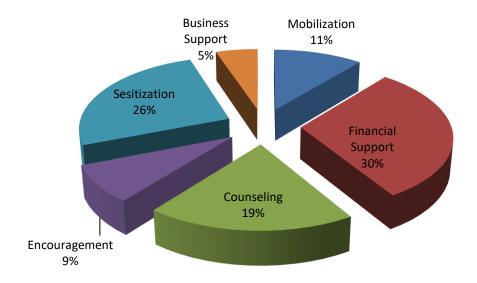


Figure 13: Motivation required for Parents to take their Children through Primary Education

# Motivation required for Parents to take Children through Secondary Education

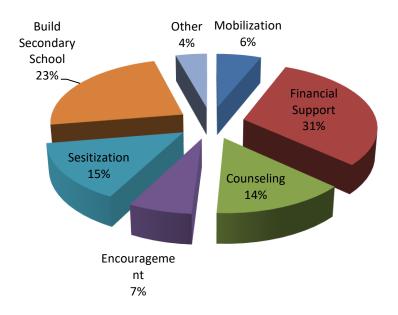


Figure 14: How we can motivate parents to take their children through Secondary Education

#### **DISCUSSION**

## Access to Safe Water

According to a UNHCR report of June 2018, there were 88 operational water pumps available in Rwamwanja Refugee Settlement, out of the 165 required. This is 53%, indicating there was a gap of 47%. Based on our 2019 survey involving 190 adults from four separate areas selected at random; Base Camp, Nkoma, Mahani and Kyempango, 67% of the population were able to access more than half of the water they needed per household.

It's important to note that only 24% of the population indicated they were accessing safe water. The remaining three-quarters had a list of issues they had with the water sources they were accessing.

Nearly a third of the population (29%) was still depending on swamp water! During the survey one parent, a mother of seven, said, "We are going to die", in a voice so compelling that it has been very hard ignoring that statement. We must recognize the effort of UNHCR, AIRD, Feed the Hungry and LWF in providing water to the refugees. But there seems to be an urgent need for intervention to save the lives of the population depending on swamp water for sustenance.

Most of the water problems mentioned seemed related to challenges associated with stagnant or swamp water: frogs, visible warms, bad smell, dust, changed color (yellow, green) and mud. Although only 29% indicated they were dependent on swamp water, 45% of all respondents mentioned water problems related to those common with stagnant water or swamps. This only raises the alarm, that the people depending on swamp water could be much more than just 29%.

National Water and Sewerage Corporation plan to deliver piped water to the settlement will make a great difference. But will the water be affordable? Will all the refugees access the water? Even as we are yet to answer these questions, agencies providing water aid may have to work together and supplement

National water effort by ensuring that unlimited piped water reaches deep areas within the settlement. This will make a huge difference and water can be available both in rainy and hot seasons.

Whereas it may be ineffective to try and stop cattle farmers taking their cattle to the same water sources people fetch water from, the provision of piped water will significantly limit this problem.

Even after piped water has been provided, there remains a great need for filtered water for all schools; kindergarten, primary schools and the only available secondary school. Whereas it may be hard to provide this support to every household, it would yield double effect if clean drinking water was provided for institutions critical for personal and community health. Families can be assisted with knowledge on how to treat water to improve hygiene at home.

Two main restrictions to accessing water were the monthly fee and failure to access water due to large numbers accessing one water source. The amount currently charged per household seems reasonable (2,000 Uganda shillings, approximately \$0.53), although many refugees were still crying this was limiting their access to water. There may be families that can afford to pay and those that can't. If some refugees are engaging in business and others working, the cost of water may be reasonable. But charging a jobless refugee for water may need to be reviewed. Would there be a way of identifying and supporting such households while there are ongoing interventions to improve their life skills and employability, since they seem to be going to stay in the settlement for a long time.

Refugees working or running business could be allowed to access water using temporary pipes they purchase on their own, and pay regularly for the water they privately access. This should decongest public water points.

It might be more reasonable to maintain a small affordable charge per household per month and ensure water supply is unlimited. To ensure equitable access, the contributions could be community based rather than per individual or household.

## Access to Post-Primary Education

Rwamwanja is about 127.2 square kilometers and has 6 primary schools within Rwamwanja Refugee Settlement and 4 within 1km of the settlement. There's reasonable progress at primary level. A big challenge remains at Secondary level. There's only one secondary school available for such a great population.

#### Challenges Parents Face at Children's Primary Education Level

Access to primary Education is expected to be free. There may be reasonably small charges implied by a school administration and private schools may be expensive. If a refugee family has no access to a regular income, educating their children may still be unattainable, in an environment where parents must pay to access primary education for their children.

Even when primary education may be free, parents still need to buy scholastic materials, uniform and provide lunch. These too appear to be a challenge to obtain.

The survey indicated there were charges for school fees both for primary and secondary, and secondary school was a lot more expensive. The scope of our research did not involve discussions with head teachers of some schools. That will be done at a later stage.

The survey also indicated that parents' ignorance of the significance of education remains an impediment and requires to be addressed.

#### Challenges Parents Face at Children's Secondary Education Level

The situation worsens at Secondary level. Most children drop out at this stage. Parents who have been struggling at primary level are not going to manage at the secondary level on their own.

In a discussion with 10 volunteers, it was noted that some schools ask for a significant amount of food items as part of school fees. Refugees have little space in the settlement where they can grow corn or beans, to supplement what UNHCR provides. This indicates that the cost of secondary education in the settlement may be costly beyond imagination, since one's education may mean that those who stay at home have nothing to eat.

With one secondary school available at the settlement, obviously there are so many students walking a long distance to school daily, about 20km to and from school on a risky, dusty or muddy road depending on season.

Other challenges included change in language and courses. Children who were learning in French in DRC now have to learn in English. The challenge is worsened when a teacher explains in a local language of the host community instead of sticking to the official media of communication which is English.

#### Vocational Schools in Rwamwanja Refugee Settlement

A vocational school supported by Finn Church Aid seems to be making good impact. This institute provides courses in tailoring, hair dressing, mechanics and others. There seems to be other initiatives helping refugees attain skills in child care (Early Childhood Education), shoe making, carpentry and computer.

# Causes of School Drop-out

There were notable challenges influencing school dropout. These included long distance and overcrowding in class – the increase in refugees have led to schools being overwhelmed. A case of orphans was also noted.

Another rare incidence is where a child fell ill and when he returned he had turned blind. He now stays at home and his sister now attends to him. She dropped out of school as well to attend to her brother!

#### Motivation for Parents

Responses from 190 interviewees provided great ideas on what could be done to motivate parents to remain focused on supporting their children through primary and secondary education. 26% indicated a need for sensitization, 19% counseling, 9% Encouragement. 11% mobilization, 5% business support and 30% Financial support (Direct sponsorship).

When it came to secondary level, 23% of respondents couldn't let the interview end without mentioning they would need a secondary school built near them.

#### **CONCLUSION**

## Limited Access to Safe Water

There is very limited water supply in Rwamwanja Refugee Settlement. With National Water and Sewerage Corporation coming in to supply piped water, there's hope that the water crisis in the settlement is going to be addressed to some extent. There are still questions as to whether National water will reach all areas of the camp. Our research did not cover that scope of knowing the extent National Water plans to extend water in the settlement.

HCA next study area is how the National Water and Sewerage Corporation intervention will address the water gaps identified in Rwamwanja Refugee Settlement to save the lives of refugees depending on swamp water, while running a feasibility study on provision of filtered, clean drinking water to all children going to the five primary schools in and around the settlement.

#### Limited Access to Education

There seems reasonable progress in helping refugee children access primary education. The greatest challenge remains on access to secondary education.

There's only one secondary school available for such a great population, both for refugees and the local community hosting them.

Obtaining secondary education is very costly for parents in Rwamwanja Refugee Settlement. Even with such financial difficulty, students need School fees, scholastic materials and food items as non-monitory contributions. Refugees have little space in the settlement where they can grow crops to supplement what UNHCR provides. When this is collected as well that may mean those left behind may not have enough to eat. This indicates that the cost of secondary education in the settlement may be costly beyond imagination.

For some areas, children who find support for secondary education have to walking a long distance to school daily, about 20km to and from school on a risky, dusty or muddy road depending on season.

No wonder parents will be found doing massive personal mobilization, sometimes beyond what can be generally acceptable as noble. They are stressed and it seems there's no other way other than wait for help from elsewhere.

#### Can Vocational Schools Provide an Alternative?

The answer is 'YES!'. Clearly the Finn Church Aid is doing great in this area and there might be other institutions helping in that aspect though they did not feature as much during the research. Vocational courses however should be aligned to market demand. There needs to be an link between resource development and demand, to ensure that individuals supported can get jobs right away or start valuable projects.

Research integration may be needed, to help individuals who choose to start entrepreneurial initiatives know which areas are profitable and which ones are not.

# Is Education Limited to Concrete Buildings?

Truly schools are overcrowded in Rwamanja Refugee Settlement. Some children drop out thinking they are not expected, after all, when they go to school and the environment is so tense –no space, no chairs! The question remains, does education have to be in a class with concrete walls? Can more schools be initiated without permanent structures? Obviously there comes more challenges; the need for more teachers, scholastic materials, lunch for children and required essentials like mobile seats and conducive learning environment.

# Objective Leadership

Local leaders will need to be involved in community education if any progress is to be made

#### Support for Parents

Clearly, there's need for sensitization for parents and community leaders on the significance of education for all – both refugees and residents. Counseling and advisory can target special cases and done by appointed leaders known by the community. There needs to be more collaborative research and advocacy to find more ways of supporting refugees to develop skills, find jobs or engage in feasible entrepreneurial projects.

The tendency to depend on one-off handouts may not be as effective as thinking of long-term solutions to the crisis.

#### RECOMMENDATIONS

#### **General**

- i) There's need for an immediate intervention between now and when the refugees can access piped water. This intervention should aim at providing emergency water to the refugee population at a high risk due to dependence on swamp water.
- ii) Even after piped water has been provided, there remains a great need for filtered water for all schools; kindergarten, primary and secondary schools. Whereas it may be hard to provide this support to every household, it would yield a double effect if clean drinking water was provided for institutions critical for personal, community health and development. Families should be assisted with knowledge on how to treat water to improve hygiene at home.
- iii) Consider including sensitization of parents on the importance continuing education to the end.

## Government of Uganda

- i) There seems to be excessive levels of contamination and, reportedly, some unknown substances in water from boreholes. The ministry of Health may need to check such substances and advise on whether such water should be consumed, before any adverse effects can be reported.
- ii) Uphold the exemplary provision free primary education both for local residents and refugees.
- iii) Consider alternative forms of education that are affordable and tailored to the standard of the settlement.

# National Water and Sewerage Corporation

i) The only sustainable solution to the water crisis in Rwamwanja Refugee Settlement is the provision of piped water delivered by National Water and Sewerage Corporation.

# Local Government - Kamwenge District

i) Consider introducing a commuter system to make transport affordable between home and school.

# **International Agencies**

- i) Agencies with focus on water interventions can supplement the effort of the NWSC to ensure water reaches all corners of the settlement.
- ii) Include sensitization of parents as appropriate, on the importance continuing education to the end.
- iii) Consider alternative forms of education that are affordable and tailored to the standard of the settlement.
- iv) Consider supporting a commuter system to make transport affordable between home and school.
- v) Enhance and widen programs that develop refugee potential to obtain regular income so they can pay for education and other essential needs as appropriate.

# Refugees in the Settlement

i) Consider viable saving schemes for scholastic materials, uniform and school fees when children reach secondary level.

#### Local Leaders

- i) There's need to sensitize all refugees on the importance of contributing an affordable amount of money towards the sustainability of existing water wells. This should be combined with capacity building to enable them find jobs or income generating projects to enable them find the money to pay.
- ii) Ensuring that all people enjoy equal rights and that the impact of the existence of laws and order can be felt at water wells as well. Leaders ought not to tolerate fighting at water wells.
- iii) Ensure that charges refugees face when bringing their children to primary school are both legally justifiable and affordable.
- iv) Improve on monitoring and reporting overarching issues to higher authorities. Include ensuring children go to school. Education is critical for healthy development both for refugees and residents.

# Religious Leaders

i) Consider a counseling initiative for parents or guardians of children who are not in school.

#### **ABBREVIATIONS**

AIRD - African Initiatives for Relief and Development

LWF - Lutheran World Federation

DRC - Democratic Republic of Congo

ERPRHC - Education Response Plan for Refugees and Host Communities

HCA - Hope Community Action (HCA) Africa

CBT - Community Based Teams

UNHCR - United Nations High Commission for Refugees

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# **LIST OF FIGURES**

Figure 1:	Access to safe water in Rwamwanja Refugee Settlement
Figure 2:	Sources of Water in the Settlement
Figure 3:	Water Usage in the Settlement
Figure 4:	Water Availability
Figure 5:	Factors Affecting Water Safety
Figure 6:	Water Restrictions
Figure 7:	Common Water Restrictions
Figure 8:	Location of large water bodies near Rwamwanja Refugee Settlement
	– Mpanga River
Figure 9:	Location of large water bodies near Rwamwanja Refugee Settlement
	<ul> <li>Mpanga River with main Road Access</li> </ul>
Figure 10:	Challenges Parents face supporting their children through Primary
	Education
Figure 11:	Challenges Parents face supporting their children through Secondary
	Education
Figure 12:	Causes of School Drop-out in Rwamwanja Refugee Settlement
Figure 13:	Motivation required for parents to take their children through
	Primary Education
Figure 14:	Motivation required for parents to take their children through
	Secondary Education

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