UNDERSTANDING THE EDUCATIONAL ACCESS AND SUPPORT NEEDS OF CHILDREN WHO EXPERIENCE COMMUNICATION DISABILITY (CD), IN RWANDA'S REFUGEE COMMUNITIES: AN INTERPRETIVE DESCRIPTION

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BACKGROUND

- -Only 0.01% of refugees in Rwanda registered as having 'speech disability/impairment'
- -Only 10 children in 55,000 age 2-12 registered as having special educational needs
- -CD misunderstood and highly stigmatised in East/Central Africa.
- -Exclusion from services appears rife

RESEARCH AIMS

- -To understand the reasons why CD is under-identified in refugee communities in Rwanda
- -To understand the needs and wishes of refugee children who experience CD, and their families, relating to
- a) identification and registration of support needs and
- b) appropriate, accessible ECD/ education services

- 1. Refugees with communication impairments experience disabling exclusion from registration and education services as a result of -legal/ policy -structural/institutional -human barriers.
- 2. A cycle of exclusion places them at increased protection risk and infringes upon their human, refugee, child and disability rights.
- 3. 'Systems thinking' can be used to analyse the root causes of problems and address each one in a holistic way, to achieve inclusion and realisation of rights.
- 4. It is critical to consider the experiences and needs of service users, service providers and service planners, to achieve meaningful change.

FINDINGS Phase 1 findings REGISTRATION DATA ANALYSIS Quantitative analysis Inaccurate registration of CI, CD, and support needs **DOCUMENTARY ANALYSIS** Refugees with CI at risk of exclusion from accurate registration of their specific FGDs SGT1 Qualitative analysis The systemic disablement of refugees with CI FGDs SGT2 A holistic approach to achieving inclusive registration systems, tools and processes Phase 2 findings DOCUMENT ANALYSIS (n=19) The right to accessible, appropriate, education enshrined in policy from global to local levels FGDs & INTERVIEWS (n=15) Policy-capacity discrepancy Qualitative analysis Rights-realisation gap OBSERVATIONS (n=3) Teachers try their best but lack knowledge, skills and resources to include children with CI effectively

IMPACT & IMPLICATIONS

- -Evidence has already been used to improve UNHCR identification/registration systems and understanding of CD amongst service providers
- -Voices of service users and service providers have been heard -> responsive service design and improved realisation of rights
- -Data can be used as pilot for wider research and change in UNHCR/partner services across the region/globe.



Rwandan classroom, 2018

METHODOLOGY & METHODS

Interpretive description (Thorne, 1997)

- -Mixed method (quant-QUAL)
- -UNHCR database data (QUANT) –analysis using descriptive stats
- -Documentary analysis of policy environment (QUAL) thematic analysis using framework method
- -Focus-group discussions & individual interviews (QUAL) analysis using thematic network analysis

WITH THANKS TO:

- -Government of Rwanda
- -UNHCR Rwanda
- -Implementing partner organisations
- -The refugee community in Rwanda

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

Link to Barrett, H., Marshall, J., & Goldbart, J (2019). Forced Migration Review.

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