

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

Helen Barrett^{1,2}, Julie Marshall¹, Juliet Goldbart¹, Evariste Karangwa² and Amy Hughes³

1. Manchester Metropolitan University, 2. University of Rwanda, 3. University of Manchester

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
 - identification and registration of support needs and
 - appropriate, accessible ECD/ education services

METHODOLOGY & METHODS

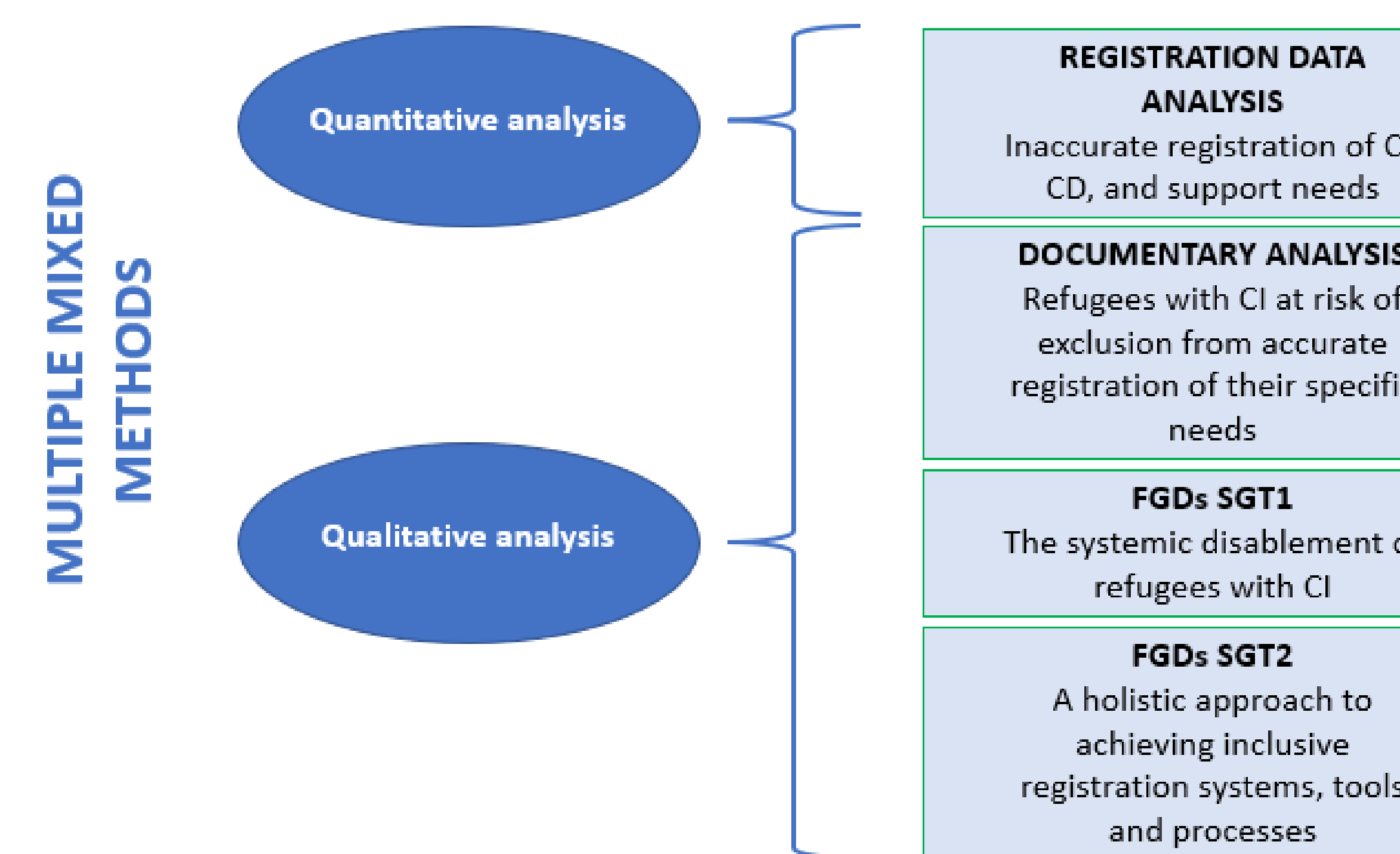
Interpretive description (Thorne, 1997)

- 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

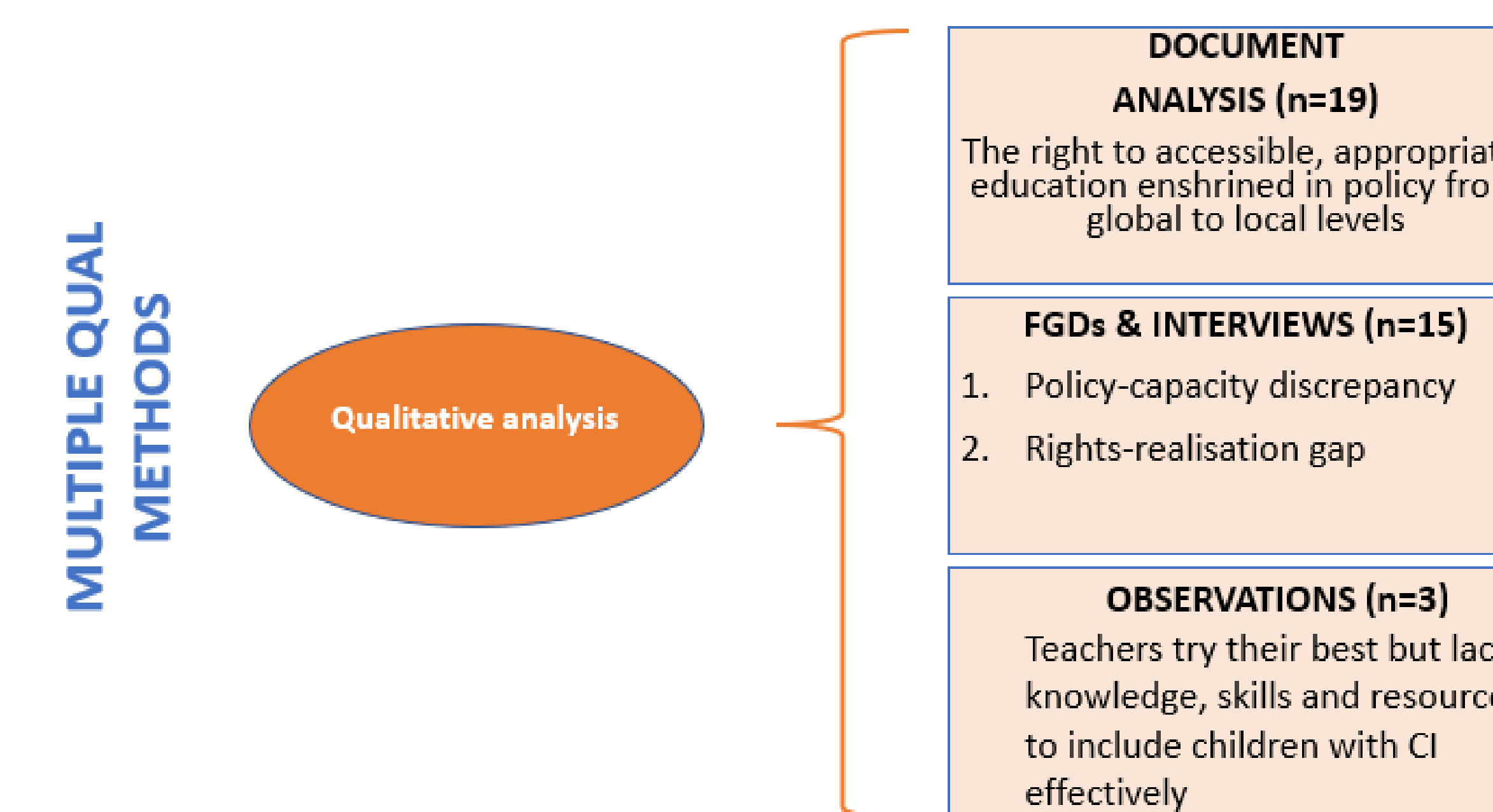
FINDINGS

- Refugees with communication impairments experience disabling exclusion from registration and education services as a result of
 - legal/ policy
 - structural/institutional
 - human barriers.
- A cycle of exclusion places them at increased protection risk and infringes upon their human, refugee, child and disability rights.
- '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.
- It is critical to consider the experiences and needs of service users, service providers and service planners, to achieve meaningful change.

Phase 1 findings



Phase 2 findings



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

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*. 60: 36-38

All authors have declared no conflict of interest

