

Rwanda: Alternative Education Program Leveling the Playing Field for Children in Crisis

Implementing Agency: Plan International Rwanda

Managing Agency: Plan International Sweden

Donor: Swedish Broadcasting Agency

Location: Mahama Refugee Camp (Camp opened in 2015)

Target Population: Burundian youth refugees

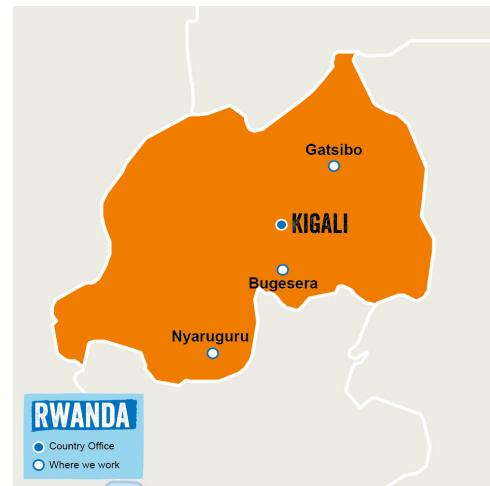
Implementation Period: June 2016 – December 2016

Number of Beneficiaries: 400 youth (204 females and 196 males)

Background

Plan International Rwanda currently hosts over 75,000 Burundian refugees across refugee camps and urban areas of Kigali.

Mahama Refugee Camp is home to over 54,000 of these refugees – more than half of them children. Plan International Rwanda has been providing Child Protection and Sexual and Gender Based Violence in Emergencies programming since the camp's opening in April 2015.



History of the Alternative Education Program

Prior to program implementation, a needs assessment indicated a large gap in Mahama Refugee Camp when it came to responding to the needs of children who were out of school. In many cases, these were children who had never been to school in Burundi and were therefore unable to integrate into the formal school system in Rwanda. While being of school-age, they were unable to read and write and could not join normal classes and complete normal coursework. In addition, education programs for developmentally delayed children and children with disabilities were not available in Mahama Camp at the time of program inception. Because of the lack of engagement in education, many of these children demonstrated negative behaviors that exposed them to child protection concerns such as stealing, working in or outside of the camp, and drug/alcohol use. They are more vulnerable to risks of exploitation.

Plan International Rwanda partnered with the Swedish Broadcast Foundation to work with these vulnerable children through the provision of alternative education which included literacy and numeracy courses, and instruction in basic life skills. This program was facilitated by a team of hired volunteers who worked with the project staff on daily basis.

Implementation Specifics

Alternative Education Program activities included:

- Developing a curriculum for basic literacy and numeracy sessions incorporating key messages on child protection. The literacy and numeracy curriculum were received from Rwanda Education Board. A local consultant was hired to support its implementation and ensure it was done successfully.
- Identify out of school children interested in literacy/numeracy courses. 400 (204 females and 196 males) out of school children were enrolled as of December 2016.

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- Training staff and volunteers in delivery of the curriculum for basic literacy and numeracy and conduct courses.
- Constructing a recreational room to run alternative education, recreational, and protection activities.
- Constructing four classroom with school desks, and eight sex-segregated toilets for used by the alternative education program.
- Providing psycho-social support through individual counseling sessions and home visits.
- Receiving and managing child protection cases were received through the case management system and following referal system.
- Training of female and male stakeholders (camp leaders, partners, and host-community police), community mobilizers, and children on child labor, trafficking, and exploitation.
- Reviewing, improving, and testing a monitoring system of UASC to better analyze trafficking and child protection trend analysis.

Goal of the Alternative Education Program

The Alternative Education project's goal was:

Unaccompanied and separated children (UASC) and other vulnerable children are protected from child labor and other forms of exploitation through increased access to quality alternative education.

Implementing Staff

The Plan International Rwanda Project Coordinator and the Project Officer were in charge of ongoing support for the alternative education program as well as regular planning, monitoring and reporting on the program interventions. Volunteers played a significant role in the delivery of the curriculum and day to day support of the learners in the program.



Successes of Alternative Education Program

- Psychological problems such as discipline and behavioral problems faced by learners were addressed through the program.
- The number of illiterate youth in Mahama refugee camp was reduced. 253 students completed the program, able to read and write.
- Learners were engaged through courses that allowed them to acquire minimum knowledge and skills, enabling them to procure jobs and carry out everyday activities.
- Learners became more empowered and prepared for formal education or TVET programs
- The project activities helped address anxiety and depress among children.
- An adult literacy curriculum was developed by the Rwanda Education Board under the Ministry of Education and was implemented and adapted to the refugee camp context not only for volunteers but also for learners.
- 10 people (four females and six males) were trained as trainers on the delivery of numeracy and literacy. This includes five volunteers and five staff. The same number of staff and volunteers received refresher training on curriculum and on counseling sessions.

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- 112 community mobilizers, (41 women and 71 Men) were trained to increase their knowledge on prevention of child labor, trafficking, and exploitation. The participants were also trained on child protection in emergencies, introduction to child rights, roles of foster families, and positive discipline.

Challenges of Alternative Education Program

The literacy and numeracy program at Mahama Refugee Camp encountered technical and logistical challenges including:

- Inadequate teaching and learning facilities with regards to the classrooms and equipment (chairs, secured cupboards to keep notebooks and other instructional aids)
- Insufficient books and support materials to implement the curriculum the literacy, numeracy, and life skills curriculum to its full extent
- Irregular attendance of learners particularly for afternoon courses

Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) of the Alternative Education Program²

The Alternative Education program was regularly monitored by the Plan International Rwanda field team responsible for the implementation of activities under the supervision of Field Protection Manager in Mahama camp.

The Monitoring and Evaluation Officer supported regular monitoring of the activities and the Plan International Rwanda Child Protection Technical Team and Child Protection Specialist.



¹ Radiohjelpen. (February 2017). Final Report – International Projects

² Radiohjelpen. (February 2017). Final Report – International Projects

All reported protection cases were entered into child protection and UASC databases developed by Plan in collaboration UNICEF and Plan specialists. During this process, the confidentiality of information was maintained throughout collection, recording, and storing.

The Emergency Response Manager, CP, and School Gender Based Violence Manager and Child Protection Specialist monitored daily activities in the camps by means of reports, verification of data through field visits, and regular monitoring and management of databases on a weekly and monthly basis. Progress reports were shared with all stakeholders including clusters and sectors groups to ensure coordination and broader reporting.

Weekly, monthly, quarterly progress reports, along with a final report, were used to monitor the project activities. The project Raci Matix was designed to ensure the roles and responsibility of each individual and it was regularly monitored through project meetings and weekly Emergency Taskforce meetings.

The project specific M&E plan was followed for the project goal, project outcomes, and outputs. served as a reference point for managing results and its effective implementation calls for commitment, effort, time and resources. Participatory M&E was conducted which supported M&E activities and ensured that the project was monitored well, benefited the refugee community and other implementing partners.

For more voice and accountability purpose with regards to the literacy and numeracy program



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interventions, Plan International Rwanda put in place suggestion boxes, an annual desk review program and feedback forms for the project beneficiaries with the objectives of:

- Helping Plan International Rwanda in the process of improving its quality services provision in literacy and numeracy in Mahama Refugee camp; and
- Enabling the project managers to discover areas of success and also areas of improvement so as to respond to the real needs of learners in literacy program.

Improving the Alternative Education Program

A final independent reflection and lessons learned evaluation made the following recommendations based on a comprehensive review of the program's successes and challenges¹:

- Mobilize resources and put in place adequate infrastructures and facilities to support the program activities in refugee camp.
- Plan International Rwanda and other key stakeholders in the education sector need to provide enough teaching and learning materials for both learners and volunteers. The support material should also include supplementary various story books in various subjects so as to promote the reading culture and enhancing life skills.
- Mobilize resources for TVET programs for learners who graduate from literacy and numeracy classes. In collaboration with Workforce Development Authority (WDA), the TVET program should be applied in a participatory way by considering the needs of youth with respect to the specific field they want to follow.
- Conduct an in-depth assessment about the root causes of irregularity and absenteeism or delays of learners for appropriate solutions

¹ Educational Consulting Success. (December 2016). Alternative Education Program – Mahama Refugee Camp. Lessons Learned and Reflection Document