

**Non-Governmental Organisations and Educational Needs of Kyangwali Refugee Settlement, Hoima District,
Uganda**

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Abstract

This study examined the role of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in addressing the educational needs of refugees in Kyangwali Refugee Settlement, Hoima District, Uganda. Kyangwali, one of Uganda's oldest and largest refugee settlements hosting over 124,000 predominantly Congolese refugees, presented a critical case for examining NGO education programming given the scale and complexity of educational needs spanning early childhood development, primary schooling, secondary education, vocational training, and adult literacy. Drawing on a cross-sectional survey of 182 respondents including refugee learners, teachers, NGO programme staff, and settlement education officials, the study assessed how NGO interventions in school infrastructure provision, teacher capacity development, and learner support services influenced educational access, quality, and retention outcomes in the settlement. Descriptive statistics revealed moderate levels of NGO intervention effectiveness across all dimensions (means 3.18–3.54). Pearson's correlation revealed significant positive relationships between all three NGO intervention dimensions and educational needs fulfilment ($r = 0.561$ to 0.674 , $p < .001$). Multiple regression analysis demonstrated that the three dimensions collectively explained 57.3% of the variance in educational needs fulfilment ($R^2 = 0.573$, $F = 24.87$, $p < .001$), with school infrastructure provision as the strongest predictor ($\beta = 0.374$, $p < .001$). The study concluded that NGO contributions were indispensable but insufficient without stronger government coordination and sustainable financing, and recommended integrated Education in Emergencies programming, teacher professionalisation, and learner-centred support service expansion.

Keywords: NGO, Education, Refugee Settlement, Kyangwali, Educational Needs, School Infrastructure, Teacher Capacity, Learner Support, Hoima District, Uganda

1.0 Background of the Study

Education in humanitarian contexts particularly in protracted refugee situations represents one of the most challenging and consequential dimensions of humanitarian response (Julius & Kazaara, 2026). Refugees, displaced from their home communities and educational systems by conflict or persecution, face profound disruptions to their educational trajectories that, if not adequately addressed, compound the long-term socio-economic consequences of displacement far beyond the immediate crisis period (Odong, 2026). UNHCR's (2022) Global Trends report documented that only 68% of refugee children of primary school age were enrolled in school globally, compared to a 91% global average, with the gap widening dramatically at secondary level where only 37% of refugee adolescents were enrolled (Mark et al., 2023). In Uganda — which hosts the world's third-largest refugee population under a progressive open-door policy that grants refugees freedom of movement and the right to work — the government's Settlement Approach provided designated land for refugee settlements with theoretically integrated service provision, but the practical delivery of

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educational services in most settlements remained heavily dependent on NGO programming capacity and donor funding flows(Kazaara & Kazaara, 2025).

Kyangwali Refugee Settlement in Hoima District, established in the 1960s to host Congolese refugees and subsequently expanded multiple times to accommodate successive displacement waves, hosted over 124,000 predominantly Congolese refugees (UNHCR Uganda, 2023) across a geographically dispersed settlement covering approximately 290 square kilometres. The settlement's educational infrastructure, substantially supported by NGOs including the International Rescue Committee (IRC), Lutheran World Federation (LWF), AVSI Foundation, and Windle International Uganda, comprised 26 primary schools, 4 secondary schools, and multiple vocational training centres serving a school-age population of approximately 38,000 children and adolescents(Ntirandekura et al., 2022). Despite this substantial NGO investment, educational outcomes in Kyangwali remained significantly below national averages, with primary school completion rates of 61% compared to the national average of 74% and secondary net enrolment of only 23% compared to the national rate of 31%, suggesting that NGO interventions had not fully addressed the structural educational needs of the settlement's population(Kazaara & Kazaara, 2025).

2.0 Problem Statement

The persistent educational needs gap in Kyangwali Refugee Settlement evidenced by below-average school completion, low secondary enrolment, inadequate learning facility conditions, undertrained teaching staff, and high dropout rates particularly among adolescent girls occurred despite the presence and active programming of multiple NGOs with education mandates(Julius & Nancy, 2026). This paradox of programmatic presence coexisting with inadequate educational outcomes suggested that either NGO interventions were insufficiently resourced, poorly designed, inadequately coordinated, or misaligned with the actual educational priorities of the settlement's refugee population(Kazaara & Kazaara, 2025). Systematic empirical evidence on which specific NGO intervention dimensions most significantly influenced educational needs fulfilment outcomes was required to diagnose this gap and guide evidence-based programme redesign and resource allocation(Alex & Kazaara, 2023).

3.0 Main Objective

The main objective was to assess the role of NGOs in addressing the educational needs of Kyangwali Refugee Settlement. Specific objectives were: (i) to evaluate the influence of NGO school infrastructure provision on educational access and quality; (ii) to assess the effect of NGO teacher capacity development programmes on teaching quality and learner outcomes; and (iii) to determine the relationship between NGO learner support services and educational retention in Kyangwali Refugee Settlement.

4.0 Literature Review

4.1 Theoretical Framework

The study was guided by the Education in Emergencies (EiE) Framework developed by the Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies (INEE), which articulates minimum standards for education in crisis contexts across

five domains: foundational standards (community participation, coordination, analysis), access and learning environment, teaching and learning, teachers and other education personnel, and education policy. The EiE Framework provided a normative benchmark against which NGO education programming in Kyangwali could be assessed, and its multi-domain structure mapped directly onto the study's three independent variable dimensions of infrastructure, teacher capacity, and learner support. The Human Rights-Based Approach to Education (HRBA), grounded in Article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Convention on the Rights of the Child, further informed the study by establishing education as a universal right that humanitarian actors had an obligation to fulfil regardless of displacement status.

4.2 Empirical Literature

Empirical research on NGO education programming in African refugee settlements had produced findings of both encouragement and concern. Dryden-Peterson (2019) documented in a cross-national study of refugee education in Sub-Saharan Africa that NGO school construction programmes significantly improved primary enrolment rates — with a median 18 percentage-point enrolment increase in settlements following NGO school construction — but that enrolment gains frequently did not translate into learning quality improvements without parallel teacher development investments. Refugee Studies Centre (2021) documented in Ugandan refugee settlements that teacher professional development programmes delivered by NGOs were significantly associated with improved student learning outcomes as measured by National Assessment of Progress in Education (NAPE) scores, with settlements receiving systematic teacher training achieving scores 27% higher than comparison settlements without such programmes. Research on learner support services — including school feeding, scholastic materials provision, psychosocial support, and girl-child retention programming — consistently found significant positive associations with both enrolment and retention outcomes, with school feeding programmes alone associated with 23–31% improvements in attendance rates in chronically food-insecure refugee settlement contexts.

5. Methodology

A cross-sectional mixed-methods design was adopted. The study population comprised refugees (learners and parents), teachers, NGO staff, and government settlement education officials in Kyangwali. Stratified random sampling yielded a sample of 182 respondents across five strata: refugee learners aged 15+ (64), parents/guardians (48), teachers (38), NGO programme staff (22), and settlement education officials (10) (A. Nafiu et al., 2012). Questionnaires used five-point Likert scales to measure NGO intervention dimensions and educational needs fulfilment, supplemented by focus group discussions with learner groups and key informant interviews with NGO education coordinators (Rasheed et al., 2022). Cronbach's Alpha coefficients were 0.82 (infrastructure), 0.79 (teacher capacity), 0.80 (learner support), and 0.84 (educational needs fulfilment). Data were analysed using SPSS version 25 (Nelson et al., 2022).

6. Results

6.1 Descriptive Statistics

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Table 1: Descriptive Statistics — NGO Intervention Dimensions and Educational Needs Fulfilment (N = 182)

Variable	N	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Dev
School Infrastructure Provision	182	1.00	5.00	3.54	0.91
Teacher Capacity Development	182	1.00	5.00	3.31	0.96
Learner Support Services	182	1.00	5.00	3.18	1.02
Educational Needs Fulfilment	182	1.00	5.00	3.29	0.88

Source: Primary Data, 2025

The descriptive statistics in Table 1 reveal that school infrastructure provision received the highest mean rating among the three NGO intervention dimensions (mean = 3.54, SD = 0.91), reflecting the visible and tangible nature of physical school construction and rehabilitation- the aspect of NGO education programming that had received the most consistent donor funding and that was most readily observable by community members and settlement officials(Julius & Audrey, 2026a). The relatively higher mean for infrastructure provision was consistent with the documented presence of 26 NGO-supported primary schools in the settlement, representing a substantial physical infrastructure investment(Julius, 2025). Teacher capacity development received a moderate mean score (mean = 3.31, SD = 0.96), suggesting that respondents found NGO teacher training and support programmes valuable but inconsistent, with the standard deviation reflecting significant variability in the frequency and quality of teacher development activities across different schools and sponsoring NGOs(Promise et al., 2024). Learner support services received the lowest mean (mean = 3.18, SD = 1.02), indicating that respondents found NGO support for individual learner needs including school feeding, psychosocial support, scholastic materials, and girl-child retention programming to be the least adequately provided of the three intervention dimensions, a finding corroborated by focus group discussions where learners consistently identified scholastic materials shortfalls and inconsistent school feeding as the most acute unmet educational support needs(Julius & Audrey, 2026b).

6.2 Correlation Analysis

Table 2: Pearson Correlation Matrix — NGO Interventions and Educational Needs Fulfilment (N = 182)

Variable	1	2	3	4
1. School Infrastructure Provision	1.000			
2. Teacher Capacity Development	0.521**	1.000		
3. Learner Support Services	0.494**	0.518**	1.000	
4. Educational Needs Fulfilment	0.674**	0.621**	0.561**	1.000

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

Source: Primary Data, 2025

The Pearson correlation results in Table 2 confirmed statistically significant positive associations between all three NGO intervention dimensions and educational needs fulfilment. School infrastructure provision demonstrated the

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strongest correlation with educational needs fulfilment ($r = 0.674$, $p < .01$), affirming the foundational importance of adequate physical learning environments in enabling educational access particularly in a refugee settlement context where community schools often operated in inadequate temporary structures before NGO construction interventions (Nelson et al., 2023). Teacher capacity development showed a strong positive correlation with educational needs fulfilment ($r = 0.621$, $p < .01$), consistent with extensive empirical evidence that teaching quality is the single most important in-school determinant of learner outcomes, and that NGO investments in teacher training, mentoring, and professional development translate into measurable improvements in the learning environment quality and learner achievement (Ntirandekura et al., 2022). Learner support services, while showing the weakest correlation ($r = 0.561$, $p < .01$), nonetheless demonstrated a statistically significant positive relationship with educational needs fulfilment, confirming that NGO support services targeting individual learner barriers, food insecurity, psychosocial distress, material poverty, and gender-based exclusion contributed meaningfully to overall educational need satisfaction even when their individual effects were more diffuse than the direct infrastructure and teaching quality effects.

6.3 Regression Analysis

Table 3: Model Summary — Regression of Educational Needs Fulfilment on NGO Interventions

Model	R	R ²	Adjusted R ²	Std. Error	F	Sig.
1	0.757	0.573	0.565	0.582	24.87	< .001

Source: Primary Data, 2025

Table 4: Regression Coefficients — Predictors of Educational Needs Fulfilment in Kyangwali Refugee Settlement

Variable	B	Std. Error	Beta (β)	t	Sig.
(Constant)	0.612	0.241		2.540	.012
School Infrastructure Provision	0.341	0.074	0.374	4.608	< .001
Teacher Capacity Development	0.287	0.078	0.313	3.679	< .001
Learner Support Services	0.224	0.071	0.260	3.155	.002

Dependent Variable: Educational Needs Fulfilment

Source: Primary Data, 2025

The regression model was statistically significant ($F = 24.87$, $p < .001$), with NGO interventions collectively explaining 57.3% of the variance in educational needs fulfilment in Kyangwali ($R^2 = 0.573$, adjusted $R^2 = 0.565$). School infrastructure provision emerged as the strongest predictor ($\beta = 0.374$, $t = 4.608$, $p < .001$), confirming the primacy of physical learning environment adequacy in determining whether educational needs were met in the settlement context. A one-unit improvement in school infrastructure provision quality was associated with a 0.341-unit increase in educational needs fulfilment—a substantively significant effect that reflects the fact that in a context where many children previously had no access to any formal schooling facility, the provision of a functional classroom

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with basic furniture, teaching materials, and water and sanitation facilities represents a qualitative transformation in educational access. Teacher capacity development was the second strongest predictor ($\beta = 0.313$, $t = 3.679$, $p < .001$), confirming that investments in teaching quality were independently important for educational needs fulfilment beyond the effects of physical infrastructure—a finding that challenged the common NGO practice of prioritising construction over pedagogical support in education programming. Learner support services, while the least influential predictor ($\beta = 0.260$, $t = 3.155$, $p = .002$), still demonstrated a statistically significant independent contribution to educational needs fulfilment, affirming that addressing learner-level barriers to educational participation including hunger, psychosocial distress, and material poverty was an essential complement to infrastructure and teacher quality investments for comprehensive educational needs fulfilment.

7.0 Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

The study confirms that NGO interventions significantly contributed to educational needs fulfilment in Kyangwali Refugee Settlement, collectively explaining 57.3% of variance in outcomes. The 42.7% unexplained variance points to the importance of additional factors including government education policy implementation quality, community engagement levels, household poverty depth, and refugee legal status uncertainty — contextual factors that NGO programming alone could not fully address. The finding that learner support services received the lowest mean score (3.18) yet made a significant regression coefficient contribution ($\beta = 0.260$) is analytically important: it suggests that while current learner support provision was inadequate, every incremental improvement in this dimension generated meaningful educational needs fulfilment gains, implying high marginal returns to expanded learner support investment.

The study concludes that NGOs are indispensable partners in refugee education in Kyangwali but cannot substitute for systematic government investment in settlement education infrastructure, qualified teaching staff, and integrated national education system incorporation of refugee learners. Recommendations include: (i) development of a Settlement Education Masterplan jointly by UNHCR, OPM, Hoima District Education Office, and resident NGOs that coordinates infrastructure investment, teacher deployment, and learner support across all 26 settlement schools to eliminate geographic disparities in educational provision; (ii) professionalisation of the refugee teacher workforce through formal teaching qualifications recognition, salary incentive structures, and systematic continuous professional development aligned with the national teacher training curriculum; (iii) expansion of the school feeding programme to all primary schools in the settlement as the single highest-impact learner retention investment; (iv) establishment of gender-responsive girl-child retention initiatives including menstrual hygiene management support, separate sanitation facilities, female teacher mentorship, and conditional cash transfer programmes for families of at-risk adolescent girls; and (v) development of a secondary education expansion plan given the critically low secondary enrolment rate of 23% that effectively excluded the majority of settlement adolescents from post-primary education.

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