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# **Refugee Law Project**

*Faculty of Law, Makerere University*



## **Implementing the Right to Education for Refugees in Uganda**

*Seminar held at Refugee Law Project  
27 October 2005*

Speakers: Mr. Yosa Wawa, Windle Trust Uganda  
Professor Mwale, Makerere University

Chair: Mr. Zachary Lomo, Director of the Refugee Law Project

Mr. Wawa informed the audience that education was a right for everyone to enjoy, and therefore everyone should be able to access this right no matter who they are. He described Uganda's refugee policy as liberal, with refugees benefiting from free Universal Primary Education, funded by the Government of Uganda and UNHCR. Similar curricula allow for a level playing field in selecting and awarding scholarships among refugees.

The organization started working with refugee education in 1996, and it currently supports the following programs:

- Secondary / Vocational Scholarship Program – Currently, the program has 417 students in 'O' levels; 116 taking 'A' levels; 100 doing post-primary vocational education; and 110 doing post-secondary diplomas. This program is open to all refugees comprising Sudanese, Somali, Rwandese, Congolese, Burundians, and a few Kenyans in Kyaka, Rhino and Nakivale camps.
- Houphouet Boigny Peace Prize Programme – Specific program for education for girls with 85 students from DRC, Rwanda, and Sudan.
- DAFI Programme (Albert Einstein German Academic Refugee Initiative) – Provides access to university education for 98 students from 7 countries.
- DFID Undergraduate Programme - Funded by DFID in the British government, this program enables 7 Sudanese refugees to study at the undergraduate level at Uganda universities.
- DFID Postgraduate Programme – Enables 8 students to study at UK universities, mostly in 1-year Masters courses.
- CARITAS Spain Undergraduate Programme – Since 1999, 28 students have been able to study at the undergraduate level through this programme.
- ERD Agriculture Programme – Aimed at the rehabilitation of Southern Sudan, this is a new programme to support 13 students in diploma courses in agriculture.

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- St Michael's College Programme – A new grant that aims to train Southern Sudanese lower secondary teachers. Ten students have been selected.
- Training of Teacher Trainers (ToT) Project – This program aims to train 20 Southern Sudanese teachers to become teacher trainers. Funding is in place but the students have not yet been selected.

Mr. Wawa also informed the audience that the organization was planning to train Southern Sudanese teachers at Kyambogo University.

He also explained that most programs benefited Sudanese refugees because donors are aware of the very difficult conditions that Southern Sudan had experienced due to the war, and they are currently focusing on reconstruction and rehabilitation in that region.

He also highlighted the fact that the organization helps various schools by donating books, and that it also offers counselling to individuals, especially girls. They organise seminars to explain to parents why they should send their daughters to school.

He explained that scholarships are granted basing on the number of refugees in the settlements with regards to their countries of origin. A selection committee comprising of representatives from the OPM, UNHCR, leaders of the settlement, and the refugee leaders then carefully selects the eligible and successful applicants.

### Achievements

- The organization boasts of having over a thousand students from the 12 it started with in 1996.
- The level of provision of education to refugees has improved and more donors have been approaching WTU to manage their scholarship programmes.
- There has been an increased number of girls completing their education with more balanced gender ratios.
- Increased employment for refugees because of the good career guidance given to the students.
- Relatively cheap university education (through extensive lobbying, refugees were allowed to pay the same tuition fee as nationals in Makerere University).
- Commitment of beneficiaries to their home countries has been high, with most returning to their countries instead of resettling in other countries.

### Problems

- Several cases of forged certificates being used by some refugees to attain scholarships. UNEB informed them that they were sending officials to those countries to try and get to the bottom of the issue.
- UNHCR budget cuts in anticipation of repatriation, even though refugees continue to enter Uganda from Sudan.
- Large, diverse spread of institutions where beneficiaries go makes it difficult to monitor them.

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- Early pregnancy or marriage and other cultural practices among girls may lead to girls dropping out of school early. Also they often fare worse than boys in their studies.

### Questions

An issue was raised about the provision of education for urban refugees.

- Urban refugees were perceived as not being in need of any assistance by virtue of their choice to live in urban areas and not the camps.
- However, the organization has a quota for urban refugees for university education, though there is none for secondary education.

### Conclusion by Mr. Lomo

Issues affecting education to refugees include:-

- Funding constraints
- Cultural issues
- Stringent policies from government and UNHCR
- Language barriers especially for the Francophone refugees

The Seminar was reported by The New Vision, October 29 2005, with the headline, “Refugees entitled to equal opportunities, says official.” It reported that Mr. Lomo cited Article 26 of the Refugee Convention on Freedom of Movement, urging the Government of Uganda to view refugees as a resource who should be given opportunities.