

FUNCTIONAL LIMITATIONS AMONG CHILD REFUGEES WITH DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES AND BARRIERS TO EARLY CHILDHOOD INTERVENTION IN A UGANDAN REFUGEE SETTLEMENT

A pilot study on Children with Developmental Delay and Disability

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Introduction

- Globally, approx 52.9 million children under 5 years have developmental disabilities.
- The majority of these children live in Africa, with the largest proportion (73%) in Sub-Saharan Africa.
- Immigrant children from LICs have a 4-5 higher risk of neurodevelopmental disabilities.
- In Ugandan refugee settlements, physical/motor disabilities (37%) are most common, visual (19.4%) & hearing impairments (19.4%).
- Uganda Functional Difficulties Survey (2017), 7% of children 5 to 17 years and 4% of (2 to 4 yrs) had a disability.

Early Intervention and Barriers to Access

- Family factors
- Physical factors (including nature and severity of the impairment)
- Caregivers factors (education, awareness)
- Contextual factors
- Service-related factors

Methods

- Study Design
- A cross-sectional mixed methods study with a sequential explanatory approach.
- Study Setting:
- Kyaka II refugee settlement camp in western Uganda. It is in Kyegegwa district with an estimated population of 136,900 refugees 26% (35,578) of these are children living in 42,099 households. Over 90% of the refugees are from DRC.
- Study Population
- For this pilot study, we included 51 children (n=51) aged 1 month to 6 years, with developmental delays & disabilities along with their caregivers.

Study Purpose and Aims

- To evaluate the functional status of child refugees with developmental disabilities and the barriers to intervention services in refugee settings among children aged less than 6 years.

Specific Objectives:

- To describe the functional limitations among children less than 6 years with developmental disabilities.
- To describe the early intervention services available for children with developmental disabilities living in refugee camps.
- To describe the barriers to access to early intervention services for children with developmental disabilities.

Learning and Applying Knowledge

- 41% of the children had difficulty with attention and an even higher percentage (58.8%) had difficulty with undertaking simple tasks which include self-care like dressing and undressing.
- Attention and comprehension of language; are key important factors in participation in early childhood education may also cumulatively lead to low school enrolment observed.
- Adequate nutrition and stimulation are important factors in cognitive development however in our population, more than half had severe acute malnutrition or were at risk and even fewer homes had stimulation activities or tools.
- Home interventions should include the provision of items for stimulation e.g. books, toys and management of malnutrition.

Conclusion

- Overall, we see that children with developmental disabilities in refugee contexts have multiple medical challenges, and functional limitations occurring across multiple domains with few opportunities for stimulation to enhance development.