



AHEAD

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AAHEAD.ORG

REPORT

Back to school initiative: Advance education among congolese refugees in Uganda



1. Background

AHEAD: The for Health and Employment's Access Development aahead.org¹ is a non – profit organization committed to ensure effective community engagement in various sectors leading to life improvement and economic growth. AHEAD holds the **501 (C) (3)** and serves community members particularly immigrants located in the state of Maine. AHEAD in partnership with the Nazarene church in Bangor ME committed to help community members access social services².

2. **Why Refugees:** Uganda hosts 1.6 million refugees and asylum seekers as of 2024, the most of any country in Africa, and has a progressive policy framework that provides for free access to education and training for refugees.

(a) Challenges Refugee Students Face

- Disrupted Education: Many refugee children miss years of schooling due to displacement, with significantly lower enrollment rates compared to their non-refugee peers.
- Trauma: Forced displacement can have serious impacts on mental health, requiring sensitive approaches in the classroom.
- Language Barriers: Lessons may be in a language that refugee children are still learning, hindering their academic progress.
- Cultural Differences: Adjusting to a new culture and school environment can be difficult, especially when trying to "fit in".
- Lack of Resources: Access to materials like books and technology, as well as adequate support staff, can be limited in host countries.

¹ [AHEAD WE CARE – ahead we care organization \(aahead.org\)](http://aahead.org)

² [Bangor church helps refugees adjust through education | News | foxbangor.com](http://foxbangor.com)

(b) Support and Solutions

- Welcoming Environments: Establishing a positive and inclusive classroom atmosphere helps refugee students feel secure and welcome.
- Buddy Systems: Partnering new refugee students with empathetic "buddy" students can provide support and help with integration.
- Social economic learning schools can focus on social -emotional support to help students process trauma and build resilience.
- Adaptive Teaching: Teachers may need to adapt their teaching approaches to accommodate different learning paces and language needs.
- Community Involvement: Efforts by host communities, government, and non-profit organizations are crucial for providing necessary support and ensuring access to quality education for refugee children

3. Activities implemented:

With the support from Discover church of Bangor ME, AHEAD provided technical and financial support to refugee community members living in Cyaka refugee camp of Uganda to organize and bring back to school 100 children.



With this initiative, AHEAD under the framework of missionary work, has developed great working experience to advance education through the support provided to vulnerable populations especially refugee groups. 70% of the supported children are females. These refugees are from the Democratic Republic of the Congo currently located in Uganda. This initiative will be implemented during a year period. At the end of the academic year we plan to conduct an

evaluation of impact to inform extension of the program to more in need population groups in different refugee camps. Thus, specific activities included:

- Identification of beneficiaries
- Community and one-on-one dialogue with parents and/or guardians
- Dialogue with schools on the back to school approach to ensure inclusion of newcomers
- Provision of school learning materials including bagues, uniforms and various school materials
- Follow - up and monitoring of home work performance
- Documentation of lesson learnt

4. **Key results include:**

- 100 of droop out children identified among congolese refuges in Uganda
- 4 community dialogue sessions with an average of 20 attendees
- 100 of children provided with school learning materials
- The initiative has increased awareness among community members on the importance of education. The back to school program is appreciated by community members and community leaders.



5. Conclusion

As a non profit organization, AHEAD sees the importance of education for refugees and the immigrant population as a vital tool for stability, protection, and long-term integration, providing both essential life skills and specialized trauma support in new environments.

AHEAD has the initiative of literacy and English learning (ESL) for adult population groups in different states of the USA including OHIO and the state of Maine. Through this initiative community members expressed the need to serve refugees in Uganda and Rwanda. We take this opportunity to express gratitude to all partners who are providing support to such a great initiative that prepares future generations towards a successful life, reiterated My Dieudonne Ruturwa, Executive Director of AHEAD. In the period of difficulties and uncertainties, people are in need of such encouraging initiatives that bring back hope among refugees and immigrant populations. Effective programs prioritizing education and skills development have potential to lead towards self-sufficiency, by closing gaps and elevating hopes for a bright future reiterated Mr Ruturwa

Talking about love and giving to vulnerable populations, Past Yves mentioned love not just as an action but the core, eternal, and holy nature of God. We really thank Discover church for the significant contribution provided to these refugee population groups.

This initiative of missionary work is getting tangible results towards the improvement of quality of life especially for the future generations. AHEAD plans to:

- Continue the program of Literacy and ESL in Bangor ME
- Develop vocational skills development for widows and vulnerable population through sewing skills development and provision of sewing machines
- Follow up on back to school program in Uganda
- Expand support to more children in need of back to school
- Strengthen partnership with Discover church and plan joint field missionary trip in the near future,
- Document best practices to inform further evidence informed programming of the missionary work
- Continue exploring resources for grants making to expand access to social services to immigrant and refugee populations in the targeted countries.

Further details: https://youtu.be/NtBXwylOc_I?si=L1c9gLeKJ4uS_Gzt

Dieudonne Rutorwa
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