

EP07

0:00:06

(Elikem Kwadzokpo Head Admin. & Programmes | Ghana Refugee Board)

Refugees! cannot be refugees forever. Refugees should be given more scholarship opportunities. Refugees should not be left behind.

0:00:14

(Isaac Kwaku Fokuo, Jr. Curator | Amahoro Coalition)

Millions of refugee and displaced youth face a very big, difficult challenge. Over half of young people who are supposed to be in school are not in school right now. And the number gets acutely, acutely smaller as you go to the tertiary level.

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(Esther Kyei Operations Manager | Resigha Limited - GHANA)

We look at getting these people involved as a way for them to know that it's something that can build you up for the future.

0:00:32

(Patrick Okello Commissioner for Refugees | Office of Prime Minister Uganda)

We've learned that the open door policy works. Inclusion in education is one way of developing human capacity.

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(Ariane Umuhoza Co-Founder | The Oasis Inclusive Centre)

What kept me going was knowing the value of education and wanting to inspire my children.

0:00:47

(Nancy Aburi Chief, Private Sector Partnerships, Africa | UNHCR)

It's not different for refugee youth as it is for the rest, for everybody else. Every family does their best to educate their children because we think that's how to get out of poverty. It's the same for refugees.

0:00:58

(Joseph Munyambanza Mastercard Foundation Scholars Program Partner | Eastern & Southern Africa)

Know your story. It's a hard story, but actually your strength and your potential is much bigger than the problems you have. And once you believe in what you're doing, nothing will stop you.

0:01:27

(Esther Kyei Operations Manager | Resigha Limited - GHANA)

Across Africa, millions of young people are growing up far from home, with their childhoods disrupted and their futures unclear.

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(VO)

Across Africa, millions of young people are growing up far from home, with their childhoods disrupted and their futures unclear. Yet, even in the midst of displacement, one belief remains constant, the belief that learning can rebuild what conflict has broken.

0:01:46

(Reeta Roy Outgoing President & CEO | Mastercard Foundation)

There are many stories, many faces, many voices which exemplify this impact, this transformation that education has had in the lives of young people. One which has stayed with me for many years, even up to very recently, is a young man by the name of Joseph Munyambanza. And when he was six years old, he had a flea conflict with his family, and they found themselves through a lot of difficulty in Uganda in a settlement called Changwale.

0:02:24

(Joseph Munyambanza Mastercard Foundation Scholars Program Partner | Eastern & Southern Africa)

In the first few months of being in the refugee camp, you know, the idea of getting food, because there are so many people living in temporary places without clear support systems, you know, so no toilets, no clear place to shower, no clear place to get food.

In those years, we lost a lot of people. I have a lot of memories of losses and suffering in such a congested place. But even in those first few months, even the first few years of being in a refugee camp, there was still hope that things are going to get better in our home country. So we expected to see that we're going to go back.

0:03:09

(VO)

From the weight of survival to the will to begin again, this is the turning point for so many who've had to start over. And for others on that same path, that decision becomes their story of hope.

0:03:23

(Ariane Umuhoza Co-Founder | The Oasis Inclusive Centre)

I grew up in Rwanda, but South Africa has been my second home since 2010. What I remember most about my journey is feeling both hopeless and hopeful at the same time. Leaving behind everything and everyone I knew and loved and having to start life from scratch. It was not easy. I was in a new country. I was very young. Yeah, but I knew the only option I had was to be resilient and push forward. And that mindset is what kept me going.

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(Joseph Munyambanza Mastercard Foundation Scholars Program Partner | Eastern & Southern Africa)

So two years, three years later, we still found ourselves in the refugee camp. And that's when I realized that, you know, it did not happen for quite some time, the idea of going back to school was really not clear because, you know, after leaving the home, the biggest focus was around surviving, access to food, access to healthcare.

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(Isaac Kwaku Fokuo, Jr. Curator | Amahoro Coalition)

But with the time, you know, with the UNHCR establishing kind of temporary structures for education, I was able to go back to school.

0:04:51

(Ariane Umuhoza Co-Founder | The Oasis Inclusive Centre)

My journey through education has been full of challenges, but my why was way stronger than my obstacles. So balancing work, studies, and raising an autistic child at the same time was not easy.

But step by step, I graduated from Southern New Hampshire University, and I'm now continuing with my master's degree. Yes, there were times I felt like giving up, but what kept me going was knowing the value of education and wanting to inspire my children and other women to keep pushing no matter the obstacles.

0:05:35

(VO)

Ariane and Joseph found their path through perseverance. But for many others, progress depends on the systems built to support them.

0:05:39

(Nancy Aburi Chief, Private Sector Partnerships, Africa | UNHCR)

Education is a basic fundamental human rights, as outlined in the 1950s. Geneva Convention, the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and other human rights instruments. UNHCR works with various partners, like government, like NGOs, private sector, and also business coalitions, like at the Amahoro Coalition, to help build opportunities for refugees, integrate refugees in national education systems, but also build infrastructure that enables education activities in different countries.

(VO)

Turning those rights into reality takes teamwork, organizations, governments and communities working side by side so no learner is left behind. And that's exactly where the Amahora Coalition comes in.

0:06:34

(Isaac Kwaku Fokuo, Jr. Curator | Amahoro Coalition)

At the Amahoro Coalition, our work is rooted in the belief that solutions for refugees and displaced persons must be inclusive. What that means is that governments, civil society, humanitarian organizations, private sector, and everyone must work together for solutions.

The challenge we have now in the world is that all of these organizations work in silos. Governments work by themselves, UN organizations work by themselves, civil society work by themselves, and private enterprise work by themselves. Our role as the Mohoro is actually to bridge the divide.

0:07:06

(VO)

And that kind of collaboration only matters when it reaches people, when the work of inclusion becomes something people can feel. In Uganda, those ideas come alive through organizations working with families and young people every day.

0:07:23

(Dorothy Nabwire Project Director | War Child Canada)

Since 1999, Watch Out Canada in Uganda has been providing access to education, protection, legal services, and access to economic opportunities for the children at risk the women and their families, those who are displaced. And this empowers them to build a better future for themselves. their families, and the community where they belong.

0:07:55

**Patrick Okello Commissioner for Refugees | Office of Prime Minister
Uganda**

Our constitution speaks profoundly and in detail about inclusion for everybody, including the marginalized group. This is further strengthened by the legal regimes we have in place, including the Refugee Act and Equal Opportunities Act and other enabling laws.

0:08:13

(Elikem Kwadzokpo Head Admin. & Programmes | Ghana Refugee Board)

Ghana, in the past, the refugees were treated differently from the Ghanaian nationals. We had basic schools in the camps, and we had hospitals and clinics and chips compound in the camps, so they were run separately. But with the reduction in funding, government found the need to integrate them, to absolve the refugees in the camps.

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(VO)

Policies can build the framework. But behind every policy are real lives, the ones who remind us what inclusion looks like when it's lived, not written.

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(Joseph Munyambanza Mastercard Foundation Scholars Program Partner | Eastern & Southern Africa)

When you are a refugee and you find yourself in a place of safety after running, you know you still have a sense of despair but actually by that time, you have more of a sense of security, the problem is not as urgent as you thought, but few years down in the refugee camp, I lost my sister. That's when my mind woke up that the problem is not finished.

So, what happened, like I said, you know, I'm going to take education seriously and solve problems my community was facing. From the time I was in grade three, I started like I was preparing for the national exams. So, by the time I reached in the primary seven in Uganda, we did not have proper teachers.

I taught myself and I was one of the best students in the national exams. So I got a scholarship to leave the refugee camp. And that's when I felt like now I'm on a journey to being my best at solving the problem. And I knew that education was something which was going to take me there. There was nothing else.

0:10:21

(VO)

Out of loss came a reason to keep going. For Joseph, learning became his way forward. And his story isn't isolated. It echoes the journeys of many who are choosing to rebuild in their own way.

0:10:36

(Reeta Roy Outgoing President & CEO | Mastercard Foundation)

What holds many of them is this deep, deep desire, this hunger, this aspiration to make something of their lives, most certainly, but to really give of themselves to their communities and to improve the lives of others. I hear from young people who say, with this opportunity, I'm not taking it for granted, I'm going to do something and help another young person like myself.

0:11:06

(VO)

It's a spirit you hear across so many of their stories, a determination to learn, to give back and to keep moving forward.

0:11:14

(Joseph Munyambanza Mastercard Foundation Scholars Program Partner | Eastern & Southern Africa)

After getting a scholarship, I went to a secondary school in Hoima town. Now I studied with kids who are not refugees, kids, you know, coming from well-off families. So it was a different environment where people had dreams and they were sure that they're going to achieve their dreams.

0:11:32

(Ariane Umuhoza Co-Founder | The Oasis Inclusive Centre)

What I wish people understood about displaced people, just like everyone else, are capable and ready to create change, like meaningful change, if given opportunities. Yes, sometimes people see me and treat me differently, but I don't let the assumptions define me. I focus on the difference God sent me to make.

0:11:58

(Nancy Aburi Chief, Private Sector Partnerships, Africa | UNHCR)

Across the continent, from Nigeria to Ghana to Kenya, we have good examples of how refugees are being integrated in national education plans. In Ghana, for example, refugees have access to free education all the way to secondary level. And in Kenya, we've also worked with the government to make sure that refugees are included in the new CBC learning program.

And the same is happening in other national education systems as well in Nigeria and other countries. So that's how we work as UNHCR and we see that it's really enabling improved educational access in general for refugees across the continent.

0:12:40

(Elikem Kwadzokpo Head Admin. & Programmes | Ghana Refugee Board)

The sole mandate of the Ghana Refugee Board is to grant refugee status for all refugees that come to Ghana. When we talk about education, they have access to the free primary and secondary, and even tertiary. So Ghana's approach to include the internally displaced people is to put them on the same level of social services as Ghanians.

0:13:11

**Patrick Okello Commissioner for Refugees | Office of Prime Minister
Uganda**

In the case of Uganda, across from primary to universities, we have enrolled over 50,000 refugees. The number of students attaining good grades speaks to the quality of the education we are providing. And the improvement in livelihoods is true testimony, a nearness for measurement of the livelihood interventions.

You go to settlements like Kiriadongo, Ramwanja, Nachivari, Bidibidi, Rainokam, among others, the livelihoods have greatly improved the quality of life. People are able to put to earn some money and to invest in various kinds of businesses. Go to Bweyali, a town council which is neighbouring Kiriadongo. It's a mini-city of its own.

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(vo)

And across the continent, other countries are finding their own ways, each defining what inclusion means in their own context.

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(Isaac Kwaku Fokuo, Jr. Curator | Amahoro Coalition)

I think Uganda is a good model for inclusivity when it comes to refugee populations. I think Kenya, through the Sharika plan, is also trying to get there. Kenya is trying to; the Kenyan government is doing a good job of trying to convert the refugee settlements into municipalities where we can go from an encampment policy.

I think some countries, even though they have small refugee populations like Ghana, refugees are able to get work permits, able to get ID cards a bit easier. Rwanda is another one. I think Rwanda has really, Rwanda is very welcoming to refugees.

Rwanda has a very inclusive policy when it comes to refugees. are doing this, it's a question of getting more and more to join in to make their countries more inclusive and also to make sure that they're integrating refugees into the local fabric of the countries.

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(VO)

That kind of inclusion only works when everyone's involved, when partnerships bring together business, communities and foundations to keep it moving.

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Esther Kyei

Operations Manager | Resigha Limited - GHANA

We had to fall on our partnership with It's more becoming like a continuous activity with involving these people because we see them as people who are vibrant and are willing to work.

So therefore, there's no need looking elsewhere, but then bringing them on board and also helping them build on their career path. Some people come in with zero experiences, but then through the projects that we have, we are able to also teach them. We give them the opportunity to work with us, assist us, and let them know the line in which we want their work to be.

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(VO)

It's through partnerships like these that inclusion becomes real, creating space for young people like Joseph to grow and give back.

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(Joseph Munyambanza Mastercard Foundation Scholars Program Partner | Eastern & Southern Africa)

Becoming a Mastercard Foundation Scholar, it was one of those parts of my journey where I feel I'm being empowered, I'm being kind of armed, in a more powerful way to not just address my personal problems or my family problems, but actually the problems of the community.

0:16:45

(VO)

Education gave him more than opportunity. It gave him purpose. And that same sense of purpose is something Ariane knows well.

0:16:54

(Ariane Umuhoza Co-Founder | The Oasis Inclusive Centre)

A moment in my learning journey that gave me hope was when I was accepted to continue my studies at Southern New Hampshire University. After all the challenges, I felt like that acceptance made me feel like I belonged again and that my hard work and determination were paying off.

Education has given me knowledge, confidence, and the tools to make a difference. I feel like I've been able to express myself who I really am in South Africa, especially through my work in the community, helping others, advocating for inclusion and creating supportive spaces for parents raising children on the autism spectrum.

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(VO)

Belonging, that's what education restores, the space to see yourself, to serve others, and to build something lasting.

0:17:49

Up sound

We have one, we have two, we have three. You see she likes them, it's fine.

0:17:53

(Joseph Munyambanza Mastercard Foundation Scholars Program Partner | Eastern & Southern Africa)

Before becoming a Mastercard Foundation scholar, I had walked a long journey of becoming a scholar.

0:18:01

(Reeta Roy Outgoing President & CEO | Mastercard Foundation Africa)

In this camp, as it was at that time, where there were young people, young refugees and those displaced from across the region, He and his friends, who were from DRC, from Rwanda, from Burundi, from South Sudan, came together and they said they had to do something for the little ones in the camp. And that's how they started a primary school. And they started an organization devoted to education of kids, even when they were just kids.

0:18:37

(Joseph Munyambanza Mastercard Foundation Scholars Program Partner | Eastern & Southern Africa)

So we built tutoring programs to help as many kids as possible to finish the national exam so that they can also go to the secondary school. So what we did from 2005, every year we helped

a lot of kids to go to secondary school. We created the partnerships. We convinced some of the schools who were attending, the headmasters, the teachers, to allow refugees to come to school. And by the year 2010, we had the first refugee students from the refugee camp had grown in to complete secondary school so there were 15 students including the first 5 girls ever in that refugee camp to complete secondary school.

0:19:22

(VO)

What started as a few students helping others soon grew into a community built on learning and on care.

0:19:31

(Isaac Kwaku Fokuo, Jr. Curator | Amahoro Coalition)

No one wants to leave their country of birth just because of nothing. People leave for reasons. And I think it's important to understand the humanity of that. So if you've been displaced and you're a refugee in another country, the idea that you're burdened is actually quite insulting. Having said that, it's important to shine the light on the work these amazing people are doing. I think, by and large, there tends to be a thing of shunning refugees or thinking they're the other.

But really, our job, especially at Mahoro, what we do is that we want to shine the light on the work amazing people are doing. We don't empower anybody. We're not trying to empower refugees. That's not our job. But what we want to do is we want to be the people who walk side by side someone's journey and shine a light on them.

0:20:10

(Joseph Munyambanza Mastercard Foundation Scholars Program Partner | Eastern & Southern Africa)

So, it starts small, but then like we're seeing, like now we have many young people. By that time, when we have a primary school, we still have the tutoring program for those students who are about to finish. So that like, it's an idea of like, let's leave no one behind. Because our program actually, Avia, now helped a lot of young people to finish high school. But universal access, you know, in Africa is really hard. It's even harder for refugees. So what happened in 2013, Through the African Leadership Academy, I got to have a partnership with the MasterCard Foundation, whereby now some of my students now could be able to go to university.

0:20:54

(Reeta Roy Outgoing President & CEO | Mastercard Foundation)

And so by the time I met Joseph, he was a MasterCard Foundation scholar. And while he was still a scholar, still a student at university, there was an instance when we encountered each other and I was asking him, hey, how's school going? And he said, I'm doing really well, I think, in my classes. I think I'm thriving. But I'm also working for the organization that I created with my friends, which is back home in Changwale

0:21:25

(Reeta Roy Outgoing President & CEO | Mastercard Foundation)

And, you know, we're having some hot trouble raising money and I'm doing things at night. I'm doing things during the daytime. I'm doing things in between classes, in between doing homework and submitting my papers. So I'm trying to keep it together. And he did. And there were others who came to support him through that time.

0:21:46

(Joseph Munyambanza Mastercard Foundation Scholars Program Partner | Eastern & Southern Africa)

And what is happening is, as my students are becoming scholars, now it's not just me who is working to support the organization. It's now a group of us, 10, became 10, 20, 30 students from the refugee camp who are going to universities around the world, talking about the organization. And during the holidays, we all went back to do more work. So kids now think that it's possible. I can also go to school. I can achieve my dreams. So it became a movement.

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(VO)

The movement Joseph talks about isn't just about schools. It's about families finding hope again and parents dreaming for their children.

0:22:27

Nancy Aburi Chief, Private Sector Partnerships, Africa | UNHCR

It's not different for refugee youth as it is for everybody else. Like everyone else, parents want the best for their kids. We, especially in Africa, every family does their best to educate their children because we think that's how to get out of poverty.

0:22:41

(Ariane Umuhoza Co-Founder | The Oasis Inclusive Centre)

It's the same for refugees. They want the best for their children. They want the best for the next generation. And so when they are excluded, we're taking away that opportunity to have better chances for themselves, for their children, for the future.

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VO

These dreams for a better future are shared by millions. But across the continent, more people are being displaced each year a reminder of how urgent the challenge has become.

0:23:11

(Isaac Kwaku Fokuo, Jr. Curator | Amahoro Coalition)

In the last five years or so, the number of displaced people in Africa has gone from 36 million to close to 50 million. If the trend continues, and we do nothing about it, imagine what that looks

like for the continent. It's extremely important that if Africa is going to harness this youth dividend, if Africa is going to be the youngest population in the world by 2050, which, by the way, is only 25 years from now. It's less than a generation. It's extremely important that all of the young people in Africa, displaced or not, have the requisite skills, because if not, this dividend becomes a bomb.

0:23:46

(Joseph Munyambanza Mastercard Foundation Scholars Program Partner | Eastern & Southern Africa)

The successful transition for refugees should not be different from any other young person. You know, we are all in Africa. It's our continent, it's our homeland.

0:23:58

Nancy Aburi Chief, Private Sector Partnerships, Africa | UNHCR

There are some invisible and quite critical barriers to education as well when we are talking about refugee youth and education. And these are some of the things that we work towards as UNHCR and also with our partners.

0:23:14

Elikem Kwadzokpo Head Admin. & Programmes | Ghana Refugee Board

Funding for tertiary education. access to scholarships have reduced. So we need everybody around the table. We need more UN organizations aside UNHCR. We need the NGOs. We need other private partners. We need everybody around the table to support.

0:24:37

The influx of refugees in Uganda is continuous, and this creates real pressure on already constrained resources.

0:24:46

(Isaac Kwaku Fokuo, Jr. Curator | Amahoro Coalition)

In 2025, there's no reason why you should have one teacher in front of a classroom with 50, 60 kids, right? Technology allows us to learn differently. Technology allows us to leapfrog and learn using MOOCs or using other forms of software that allows us to learn in a more independent way, that allows us to also learn in a more practical sense, that also caters for different types of learning. In today's Africa, most kids have to learn the same way. You have to memorize, you take an exam, but not everyone learns that way. And I think with the world in which we live today, there are ways that technology allows us to learn differently.

0:25:18

Elikem Kwadzokpo Head Admin. & Programmes | Ghana Refugee Board

So, the missing link for inclusion to be sustainable is more collaboration. more advocacy and more engagement, bringing everybody on board and funding.

0:25:34

Nancy Aburi Chief, Private Sector Partnerships, Africa | UNHCR

International actors can ensure that education remains a priority by continuing to encourage and support the implementation of inclusion policies and inclusion practices. And that education in times of emergencies is not treated as a good to have, as an option, but instead is really seen as a protection imperative.

0:26:00

(Patrick Okello Commissioner for Refugees | Office of Prime Minister Uganda)

All of us have a role to play in education inclusion. It is a role that involves everybody and therefore, in this process, let's all adopt the whole of society approach, ensuring that nobody is left behind.

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(VO)

And for young people like Ariane, that call to action is personal.

0:26:24

(Ariane Umuhzo Co-Founder | The Oasis Inclusive Centre)

If decision makers really want to support displaced youth, I want them to understand that we know the value of opportunities. So when given one, we treat it like it's our last, and we make the most out of it.

0:26:39

(Joseph Munyambanza Mastercard Foundation Scholars Program Partner | Eastern & Southern Africa)

I'm optimistic for Africa. We really have a lot, especially the foundation. If we can address the problem in a refugee camp, when we're a small number, what will happen if we have 1 ,000, 2 ,000, 20 ,000 young people with that drive, with that commitment, and confidence. And this is what we needed for a long time, to believe in ourselves and to use whatever resources we have to make the change.