Jobtech Alliance

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Leveraging Digital Platforms for Urban Refugee Employment

A summary of research in Kampala, Uganda

Definitions

Term	Definition	
Jobtech	Digital platforms that offer opportunity to work	
Platforms for offline work	Platforms where the work is mediated online but delivered offline. The World Bank calls this 'location-based platforms	
Platforms for digitally delivered work	Platforms where the work is mediated and delivered online. Some people call this 'cloud work'.	
Digital services for micro-enterprises	Platforms that improve access to market, business performance, or productivity of self-employed individuals or microenterprises	
Tech-enabled Skilling	Edtech platforms which equip people for the world of work	
Digital tools for worker enablement	Digital platforms which provide workers with tools that enhance their rights, benefits and protections	
Gig	A job, especially one that is temporary or freelance and performed on an informal or on-demand basis	
RLO	Refugee-Led Organisation	

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What is the Jobtech Alliance?

An <u>ecosystem-building initiative</u> to propel inclusive jobtech in Africa. We're interested in digital platforms that connect people to work opportunities to build livelihoods.

We help jobtech platforms grow so that they can create more jobs. Currently we focus on 10 countries in Sub-Saharan Africa.





Two workstreams:

- Create an enabling environment for entrepreneurs to build platforms which deliver quality livelihoods
- Deliver a range of acceleration activities with jobtech platforms which enable entrepreneurs to build greater scale, impact, and inclusivity in their solutions



The Uganda Focus:

 In Uganda the Alliance has a deliberate focus on forcibly displaced people (refugees)

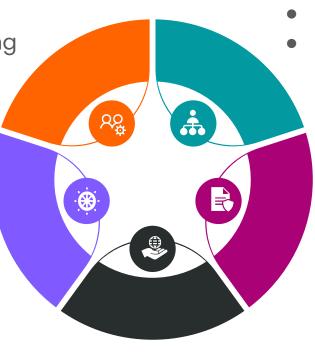
What is Jobtech?

Platforms for offline work

- Job Matching platforms
- Gigmatching
- Distributed Manufacturing

Digital Services for Microenterprises

- E-commerce marketplaces
- Business management & growth tools
- Logistics & finance



Platforms for Digitally- Delivered work

- Online Freelancing
- Microwork
- X-to-earn

Tech-Enabled Skilling

- Testing & Credentialing
- Technical & Professional skill-building

Digital Tools for worker Enablement

- Professional Identity
- Insurance & social benefits
- Representation & collective action



Funded by the Hilton Foundation, the goal of <u>Jobtech for</u> <u>Refugees</u> is to create and/or improve jobs for refugee and host communities by...



Connecting 4,000 participants **(2,800 refugees) to platform work opportunities** in partnership with Refugee Led Organizations (RLOs).



Facilitating the dissemination of **tech-enabled**, **educational content** to 8,000 participants **(5,600 refugees)**



Building a community and knowledge base around Jobtech for Refugees We are working with 9 jobtech platforms in Uganda.

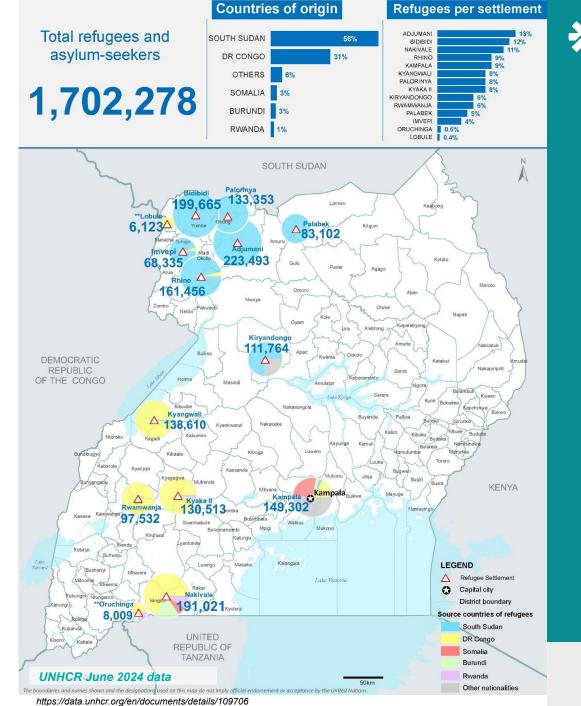




02 Context

Refugees in Uganda

- Uganda is Africa's largest refugee-hosting country, hosting about 1.7 million refugees
- Refugees come from South Sudan (56%), Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) (31%) with a smaller percentage coming from Burundi, Somalia, Rwanda, and Eritrea
- With the war in Sudan, there has been a huge influx with almost 20,000 arrivals in between Jan 24 Feb 24.
- The capital Kampala hosts over 149,000 refugees
- A large portion of households rely on humanitarian assistance to meet their needs*
- The nation maintains an open-door policy to displaced persons, provides plots of land for farming and the construction of housing, guarantees freedom of movement, and a number of rights such as employment, health, and education



Employment statistics among refugees in Uganda





Refugees in Uganda are actively working

Less likely than Ugandan nationals to be employed



Earn less than host communities with similar skill levels

1.75 times

More likely than host community members to fall below the poverty line

29% Working refugees are in self-employment

*************** 80%

Young people in refugee communities are in self-employment

25%

Refugees in Kampala are self-employed

*



Executive Summary

Research overview

As part of the Jobtech Alliance partnership with <u>BrighterMonday Uganda</u>, research was conducted with refugees in Kampala through a combination of approaches described below. The aim of this research was to: a) improve the sector's understanding of the skills, capacities, and job desires of refugees, and the challenges they face in obtaining employment; and b) inform BrighterMonday's strategy and products to best fit these needs. This deck provides a summary of insights from this research.

Focus group	Key informant	Refugee skills	Desk research
discussions	interviews	database	
 Primary data collection via focus group discussions with a total of 44 refugees in Kampala including: 9 Somalis 8 Congolese 6 Burundians 6 S. Sudanese 7 Ethiopian, Eritrean 8 N. Sudanese 	 The Jobtech Alliance team also interviewed stakeholders involved in the refugee ecosystem in Uganda including: 5 Refugee-led organizations and NGOs 4 Private sector 2 Skilling hubs 2 Jobtech Platforms 	To better understand the skills, capacities, and work experiences of refugees in Uganda, we also analysed data on 450+ refugees collected by Mercy Corps in 2023.	This included a review of existing studies, reports, and articles related to refugee employment, skills mapping, and barriers to employment.

Skills and job preferences of refugees



Refugees possess diverse skill sets but lack accreditation: Refugees possess a wide range of skills, including technical skills like computer programming, graphic design, phone repair, and solar installation; educational and social work skills such as teaching and child protection; business administration and office management; and translation services. Despite these diverse skills, acquiring formal documentation for those who can no longer access home institutions for original transcripts and certificates, and validating and accrediting their qualifications can be difficult, making it hard for employers to recognize and trust these skills.

They seek employment in diverse sectors where they were previously employed: In general refugees are seeking jobs in sectors aligned with their previous work experience and education, such as Education, Health Care, Sales and Marketing, IT & Telecoms, Humanitarian/NGO, and Social Work. Limited awareness and understanding of jobtech platforms, along with language barriers and low proficiency in English, make it challenging for refugees to access job opportunities in these areas.



Report a preference for entrepreneurship and gig work: Many refugees lean towards entrepreneurship and gig work due to flexibility and high national unemployment rates, with women particularly favoring home-based and flexible job options. High costs and unreliability of internet and electricity, combined with limited access to digital devices and common workspaces, also hinder their ability to pursue entrepreneurial and gig work opportunities effectively.



Difficult to integrate into Ugandan labor market: Refugees often have experience in sectors like Education, Health care, Humanitarian/NGO work, and technical fields that are in demand in Uganda. However, cultural differences, lack of local work experience, and misconceptions by employers about refugees' stability and work permits further complicate their integration into the Ugandan job market.



Opportunities for employers and jobtech platforms

Recognize diverse qualifications: Many refugees possess significant academic and professional qualifications. Simplify the hiring process and accept diverse forms of documentation.	Allow flexible work arrangements: Offer flexible work hours and remote work options to accommodate refugees' childcare responsibilities and mobility constraints.	Address misconceptions: Educate HR teams about the legal rights of refugees to work in Uganda and correct myths about work permits and frequent relocations.	Support skills development: Provide on-the-job training for language proficiency and essential soft skills to help refugees integrate into the workplace.
Promote inclusivity and safety: Create a supportive work environment that addresses concerns about sexual harassment and ensures the safety and well-being of refugee employees.	Simplify onboarding: Streamline the profile creation and application process to make it less intimidating and more accessible for refugees. This could include enabling multiple languages in onboarding and integrating automation technologies to support applicants through	Leverage trusted channels: Utilize refugee-led organizations and trusted community networks for outreach and awareness campaigns about employers and/or jobtech platform's benefits.	Ensure cybersecurity: Implement robust security measures to protect refugees' personal information and build trust in the platform.

initial onboarding steps





Opportunities for donors and the refugee sector

Invest in community workspaces: Develop and maintain common workspaces equipped with necessary tools and reliable internet to support skilled refugees, particularly women.

Enhance device accessibility and digital education: Foster partnerships to provide affordable digital devices – i.e. via innovative channels and financing models – and internet access, as well as digital skills and tools, enabling refugees to participate in digital work and jobtech platforms.

Raise awareness and facilitate employer training programs: Conduct campaigns to educate employers on the benefits and legalities of hiring refugees, dispelling common myths and misconceptions, and helping platforms recognize government issued refugee IDs and valid KYC processes. Fund training sessions for employers on the benefits of hiring refugees, legal considerations, and best practices for inclusive hiring.

Streamline qualification validation: Support services that assist refugees in getting their academic and professional qualifications recognized and accredited. Invest in the creation of reliable, cost-effective tools and services for employers to easily verify refugee qualifications and credentials.

Create partnership programs: Encourage and facilitate partnerships between jobtech platforms, employers, and refugee support organizations to streamline the hiring process and enhance trust.

Develop cybersecurity resources: Offer funding and expertise to jobtech platforms to implement advanced cybersecurity measures, ensuring the protection of refugee data and building user trust.

By addressing these additional considerations, donors can help address challenges refugees face and bridge the gaps faced by employers and jobtech platforms, fostering a more inclusive and efficient employment ecosystem for refugees.



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Qualitative Research Insights

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Skills, Experiences, Qualifications, Employment

The following is a summary of the previous and current education, work experience, and qualifications; their employment aspirations; experiences with jobtech platforms; and challenges securing meaningful employment. Please note that this is from research that is qualitative in nature, and as such may not be statistically representative of the full refugee population in Uganda.

Education - Many refugees have accomplished significant levels of academic and professional qualifications in their home countries. 11 of 24 respondents have at least a bachelor's degree.

Certifications – Many respondents have a short course certificate in English as a second language, information and communication technologies (ICT), or business / marketing.

Work experience - 8 of 24 respondents were not able to find formal employment after graduation and before fleeing their home country. Over half (14) have 1-4 years of experience and 2 have 10+ years of experience.

Type of prior jobs – Respondents held positions in a diverse set of sectors: Humanitarian / NGO, Sales and Marketing, Business / Entrepreneurship, Translation, Information and Communication technologies, and Teaching

Skills – This is also a diverse area for respondents: Technical (computer programming, graphic design, phone repair, solar installation), Education / social work (child protection, teaching, NGO leadership and governance), business administration and office management, and translation services

Current Employment – Most respondents are actively involved in some kind of part-time or gig employment, but can be considered under-employed across a work week. People are predominantly involved in sectors or areas where they have an existing technical capacity.

Refugee demand for employment

Lean toward entrepreneurship – Given the high national unemployment rate, to address immediate financial needs, **refugees often first look to create jobs for themselves**, typically something in retail based on the sector they were previously involved in.

Prioritising education – Those who can afford to immediately join local universities to get locally acceptable qualifications in order to pursue permanent full-time roles in the future. This as an option is highly influenced by their family's remittance / support level.

Men tend to participate more in cross border trade, remittance services, forex trade, and activities that require ownership of productive assets.

Gig work – Younger refugees are much more inclined towards gig work that can be done online, or obtained through digital platforms. For females, there is a preference for business opportunities that can be operated from home – such as hair salons, foods and beverages, crafts, and child daycare services.

Sectors and job type – Respondents are looking for employment in sectors that roughly match the areas where they have prior work experience or an education degree or diploma / certification. These include: Education, Health Care, Sales and Marketing, IT & Telecoms, Humanitarian / NGO, Social Work

Flexibility is a priority – For women it's largely influenced by household and childcare responsibilities, particularly if there is a need for a physical presence in the home, transporting family members to and from school, etc.

Challenges faced by urban refugees in seeking employment

In-person Jobs

- Limited social networks
- Language barrier and soft skills
- Employer misperceptions
- Low awareness of employee rights
- Misinterpretation of
 government labor laws
- Sexual Harassment and GBV

- Awareness and Communication skills
- Low digital Literacy
- Quality & validity of professional and technical qualifications & certifications.
- Social and religious mores.
- Identification
 Challenges

- Access to digital devices
- Unreliable and costly internet

Digital Jobs

- Limited access to and awareness of digital payment channels.
- Cyber security threats

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Awareness and access to jobtech are very low



Awareness of jobtech is low. Many refugees reported never having heard of jobtech platforms like Brighter Monday, Rwazi, Upwork , LinkedIn, Flip, Facebook marketplace, Soko etc. Those that had heard of them did not use them because they did not understand their value proposition.

- A few respondents indicated having some experience with the following platforms, each with mixed results: <u>Fuzu</u>, <u>Hiring Cafe</u>, <u>Soko Uganda</u>, <u>OnlineBookClub</u>, <u>SimplyJobs</u>



Trusted channels are critical. Refugees are more likely to respond to a new organization or job source if it's via a trusted source such as RLOs, NGOs, friends and family. Additionally local community radio and TV programmes, and social media personalities are options.



Lack of access to digital infrastructure is a key constraint. This includes access to computers and smartphones, reliable and affordable internet and electricity. These are particularly pronounced for female refugees who struggle to work from home due to competing demands for attention in the homestead.



"When we work from home, our families do not take us seriously and keep interrupting us, they think we are playing on the computer"

Female Ethiopian refugee

Once a refugee becomes aware of a jobtech platform, there are major barriers to registration



Frictions in the profile generation and application process – Many refugees reported feeling overwhelmed and intimidated with the length/ level of personal details and documentation required to complete individual profiles. Many reported abandoning the process midway.



Personal Identification documentation challenges – Some individuals do not have the refugee ID and even when they do, they report some platforms rejecting the refugee ID as sufficient KYC.



Education equivalencies and certifications – Many refugees reported having challenges obtaining academic and professional documentation accreditation and equivalencies in formats that would be acceptable in Uganda for their profiles / jobtech platform registration.



Limited access to and knowledge of digital payment channels – When refugees do not have the necessary documentation to open formal bank accounts, they are unable to receive digital payments for services rendered \rightarrow especially to cross –border and international clients.



Cyber security threats and fraud – Refugees limit their interaction with digital job platforms out of fear of identity theft, email and financial account hacking.



"My friend lost all her money after putting her details online"

Sudanese refugee



Once registered, many barriers make it difficult to find and obtain employment via jobtech



Non-traditional work hours – Online jobs often do not operate around traditional daytime office hours. For many refugees, especially women, this makes it difficult to work with clients in different time zones given domestic responsibility demands.



Language barrier and soft skills: Low proficiency in the English language (Uganda's official business language) and lack of soft skills like time management, organization, conflict resolution that make individuals thrive in a work environment tend to limit opportunities.



Mobility challenges: Due to concerns around cost and safety away from known communities, refugees, especially female refugees, are reluctant to take on job opportunities that are beyond a radius they consider near to their homes. This drastically limits their pool of jobs to apply for.



Childcare challenges: The proportion of female refugees is high with high incidences of single motherhood. This creates a heavy dependency on women for childcare provision and restricts refugee women mobility for employment purposes.

Additional considerations that can constrain employment options



Social religious mores: Social and religious mores that limit women's mobility, participation in male dominated sectors, agency over income etc limit women's willingness and ability to seek traditional jobs.



Sexual harassment and GBV: Some refugee females cite actual experiences as well as fear of being subjected to sexual harrasment as a barrier to seeking employment in spaces occupied by men. There are also concerns around employment triggering intimate partner violence as female agency over income pose a threat to household gendered authority dynamics.



Mindset obstacles: Several refugees and sector stakeholders mentioned that some refugees are not highly motivated to find permanent full-time work, lack self organization and self-learning skills. Additionally, there are some refugees who may view their stay in Uganda as short-term, and as such might feel it makes more sense to pursue temporary or gig work

There are also constraints beyond their control, at the employer or enabling environment levels



Identification Challenges: The refugee ID and attestation letters are not a readily recognized legal identity documentation from private entities. In addition to these forms of IDs, many private sector entities require applicants to secure a "letter of good conduct" from interpol, which has cost implications and can expose refugees to bureaucratic biases and potential for discrimination.



Employer misperceptions: Many private sector companies believe that refugees like other migrant workers need to have a work permit which come with additional administrative effort on the part of employers and thus they are disincentivized from hiring refugees. In addition, there is the misconception that refugees are constantly relocating and cannot be traced or reprimanded in the event of malpractice.



Quality & validity of professional and technical qualifications & certifications: Professional and academic qualifications (certifications, licenses etc.) accreditation for equivalency in the host country is a challenge. The process is unclear, lengthy and expensive.



Prevalence of fake academic documents in the market: Incidences of fake academic certificates have dampened trust in refugee documentations. Validating these documents is time consuming and costly for the employers.



Office of the Prime Minister (OPM) refugee status and asylum seeking administrative hurdles: Many refugees especially those desiring third country resettlement are at the beck and call of their case file managers at OPM and International Organization for Migration (IOM).

There are some support services available through RLOs, NGOs, and other stakeholders



Type of support available:

- Small business set up grants, basic entrepreneurship & financial literacy training
- Craft / cottage industries, largely targeting women who want to work from home
- Basic ICT Digital literacy, computer skills and some advanced programs
- Soft skills Goal setting, time management, leadership, communications
- Language English language competency
- Job preparation CV writing, interview prep



What refugees find most useful:

- CV writing and interview preparation
- English language competency and skilling

Areas of the job search process where they need more assistance:

- Support to navigate the jobtech platforms safely, getting through lengthy and complicated processes
- Assistance in the registration and setup of digital payment solutions that are essential to securing on- and off-line employment



Quantitative Data

Supplemental quantitative data on refugee skills and work experiences

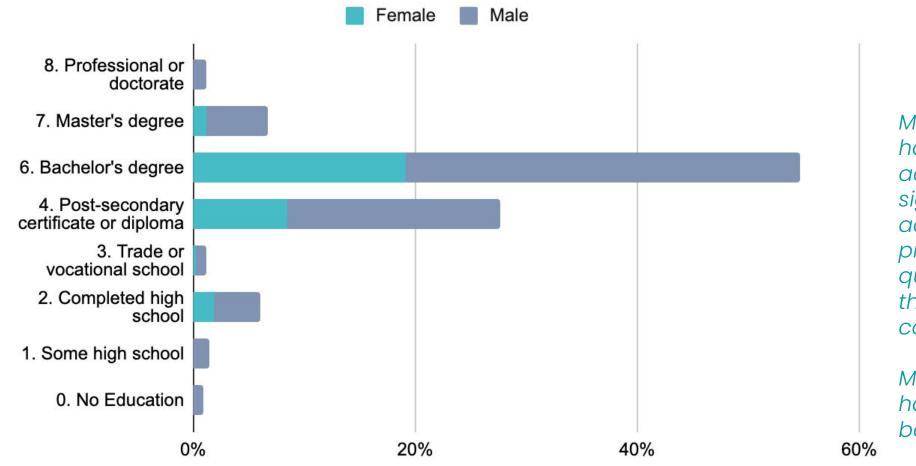
Jobtech Alliance and Brighter Monday were able to leverage a database of refugee skills, work experiences, and other relevant data from a 2023 Mercy Corps project.

The following slides contain a summary of this data analysis as it relates to the focus of this project. This database contains information on ~450 refugees collected through a phone survey.



Education vs Gender

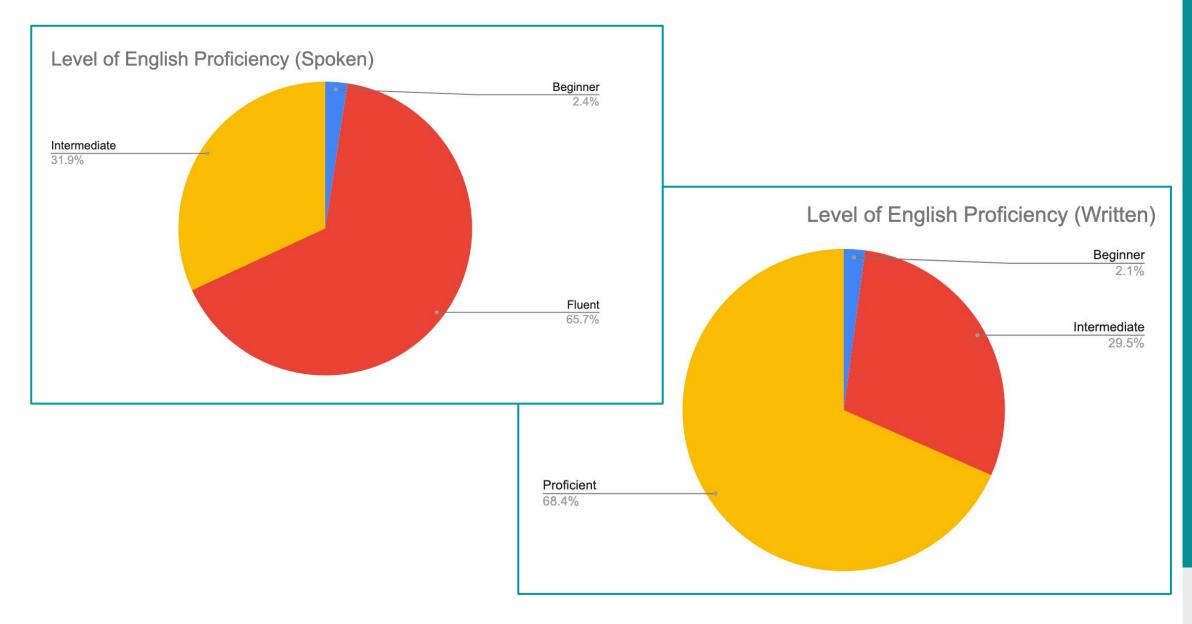
Education vs. Gender



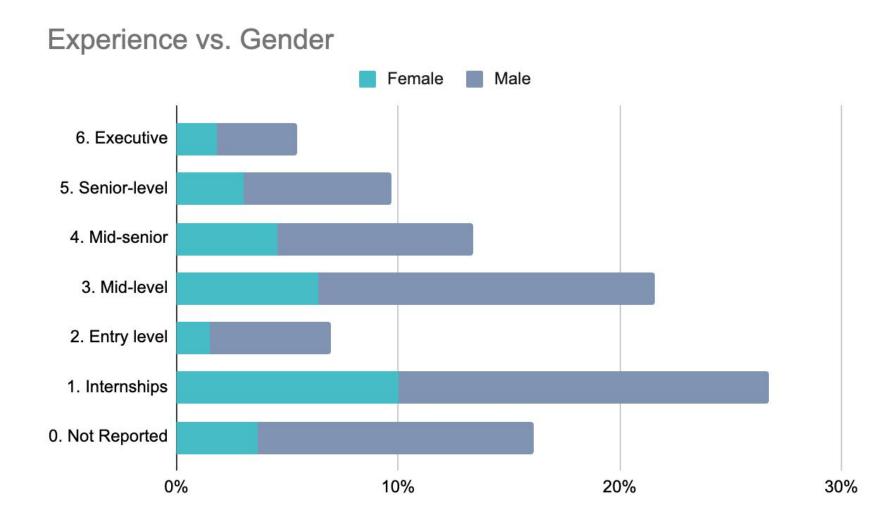
Many refugees have accomplished significant levels of academic and professional qualifications in their home countries.

More than 50% have at least a bachelor's degree.

Level of English Proficiency (Self-assessed)

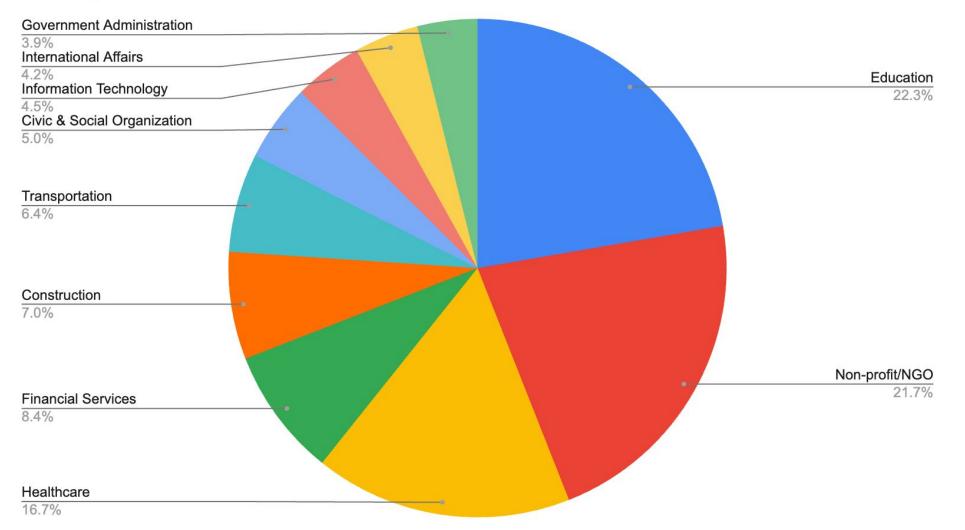


General work experience (prior to settling in host country) level vs gender



Refugee industry experience

Industry of Experience





06 Appendix

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Research Partners

BrighterMonday Uganda

This research was conducted in partnership with **BrighterMonday Uganda**, a company under The African Talent Company.

BrighterMonday was established in 2014 and has grown to become Uganda's leading recruitment and HR services platform. We have over 182,000+ candidates and 8300+ employers, successfully using the platform to get access to the right opportunities.

Brighter Monday is part of The African Talent Company (TATC). TATC is a group of pan-African businesses working together to solve the talent gap in Africa with unique, home-grown solutions. We develop and connect great African talent to work opportunities.



BrighterMonday leverages technology and data-driven recruitment solutions to work with employers to ensure that the right person is placed in the right job in the most efficient manner. Thus, resulting in increased workplace productivity.

BrighterMonday provides:

- Access to a large pool of candidates
- Excellent data on candidates to aid decision making
- An experienced team of professionals serving you
- Access to both local & international talent

Research participants

Jobtech Alliance would like to thank all individuals and organizations who participated in the qualitative research, and contributed to this publication. The Brighter Monday and Jobtech Alliance teams gathered feedback on the initial research insights from refugees, RLOs, NGOs, and other stakeholders in a Kampala workshop that took place in May 2024. Feedback from these sessions has been incorporated into this final deck. Organizations consulted in this research include:



Acknowledgements

We extend our heartfelt thanks to the many researchers, experts, and organizations whose invaluable contributions made this research possible: Nuba Elamin, Delia Dean, Brenda Nambatya, and Jacob Winiecki.

A special acknowledgment to our partner organizations, The Brighter Monday and The Africa Talent Company teams, with particular appreciation to Hilda Kabushenga, Sylvia Mbaabu, Xenia Wachira, and Rhoda Njeri.



User Personas



John Kabeya

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Demographics: Male / 47 years old

Cultural Background: Originally from the Democratic Republic of Congo, Jean has been in Uganda for 4 years.

Occupation/Education:

- Jean has 6 years of work experience in social work and the NGO sector.
- He holds a Bachelor's degree in Education and has obtained additional professional certification in Social Work.
- He acquired his qualifications from educational institutions in the Democratic Republic of Congo. He is currently taking an ICT course.

Family Situation: Jean is married and has two children (14 and 16 yrs) that he supports.

Employment Needs: Jean's main objective is to secure full-time, permanent employment within the NGO sector in Uganda. If required, Jean would be willing to take on part-time or temporary work if it's within his primary field of specialty.

Information Sources: Jean primarily seeks information and resources related to employment opportunities, language learning resources, and professional development through NGO networks and notice boards, online platforms, newspapers, and community organizations.

Technology Access and Capabilities: Jean has his own laptop and is able to access wifi through cafes and co-working spaces. He's comfortable with digital tools for data collection and reporting from his previous roles.

Pain Points: Jean's main challenge is his English language proficiency, which poses a barrier to passing job interviews in Uganda's competitive job market. Despite his skills and qualifications, this language barrier has hindered his employment prospects.

Functional Needs: Jean requires help in creating a compelling CV in English, and in converting his credentials into an equivalent in Uganda.

Mobility: Owns a motorbike, enhancing his mobility and enabling him to commute to and from work efficiently.

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Sarah Niyonkuru

Demographics: Female / 23 years old

Cultural Background: Originally from Burundi, Sarah has been living in Uganda for one year.

Occupation/Education: Sarah holds a Bachelor's degree in Computer Science, obtained from an educational institution in Burundi. She has completed one six-month internship.

Family Situation: Sarah is single and currently lives with her parents, but she aspires to move out and live independently in the future.

Information Sources: Sarah regularly seeks information and resources related to employment opportunities, language learning, and professional development through online platforms and free courses available on the internet. She is also an avid user of social media platforms including Instagram and TikTok. **Employment Needs:** Sarah's main objective is to secure her first proper full-time employment in Kampala, preferably in an IT role.

Technology Access and Capabilities: Sarah is very comfortable with computers, modern software programs, and multiple computer programming languages. While Sarah does own a smartphone, she doesn't own her own laptop. For job searching activities that require a computer she has to use common computer facilities.

Pain Points: Sarah faces two main challenges:

- Documentation: Sarah faces difficulty obtaining the original diploma from her university in Burundi.
 Obtaining a new physical copy is not easily feasible, adding complexity to her job application process.
- **Degree Equivalency:** Sarah's Bachelor's degree in Computer Science from Burundi encounters challenges in being recognized and understood by employers in Uganda. Transferring her education degree into an equivalency that aligns with local standards is difficult.

Functional Needs: Sarah requires support and resources to improve her English language proficiency further, particularly for effective communication in the workplace.

Mobility: Sarah does not own a vehicle, but has no problem moving around with public transportation to different communities for job opportunities.











Aya Hassan

Demographics: Female / 25 years old

Cultural Background: Originally from Somalia, Ayan has adapted to life in Uganda while maintaining connections to her Somali community. She has been here for 4 years.



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Occupation/Education: Ayan holds a diploma in Marketing, obtained before her relocation to Uganda. She has 3 years of full-time work experience in sales and marketing roles in Somalia.

Family Situation: Ayan takes care of her younger siblings during the morning and late afternoon, which limits her ability to travel to an in-person job site. Her parents prefer that she works from home or very close to her community. *Employment Needs:* Ayan's main objective is to **secure remote work** opportunities with flexible work hours.

Information Sources: Sarah regularly seeks information and resources related to employment opportunities, language learning, and professional development through her family and cultural community, as well as RLOs active in Kampala.

Technology Access and Capabilities: Ayan spends a significant amount of time on social media platforms, follows key Somali social media influencers. She owns a smartphone, and has the ability to use a computer lab in her community once a week.

Pain Points: Ayan's primary challenges include limited mobility due to her caregiving responsibilities and the need for remote work options that align with her schedule.

Functional Needs: Ayan does not have her own bank account, would need support to onboard a digital payment channel if she successfully secures remote work.

Mobility: Ayan prefers remote work options that enable her to work from home or within her community, aligning with the cultural norms and expectations of her Somali community in Kampala.

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