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ARTICLE



An assessment of economic and environmental impacts of refugees in Nakivale, Uganda

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ABSTRACT

Uganda is one of the leading host countries for refugees in the East and Horn of Africa. Uganda's location among instable neighbouring countries and its open door policy to refugees has seen a big number of refugees flowing into the country from Southern Sudan, Rwanda, Somalia, Burundi, Eritrea, Kenya, Ethiopia and Democratic Republic of Congo. Some of the refugees are hosted in Nakivale one of the biggest refugee camps in the country located in South Western Uganda. This paper documents the economic and environmental impacts of refugees in Nakivale refugee camp. Data were generated through Focus Group Discussion and interviewing camp leaders, government officials, local leaders, the refugees and community members. This paper contends that the establishment and dense occupancy of Nakivale refugee camp have exerted pressure on the environment as the refugees' endeavor to revitalize their livelihoods. The increasing numbers of refugees and their active involvement in the production systems has had an impact on the economy. The government should harmonize the interpretation of the 2006 Refugee Act on the right of refugees to employment so that they can increasingly be engaged in production systems, sizes of land allocations should be increased to facilitate expansion in economic activities; and scale up the environment management aspects that has been rolled out in new Uganda Development Response to Displacement Project.

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Introduction

The increasing refugee population is one of the most pressing challenges globally. A record number of people have been displaced fueled by forced displacement driven by ethnic persecution, civil conflict, wars, natural disasters and famine (Ahimbisibwe, 2013; Helman, 2015). The forced displaced population has grown at an unprecedented rate since 2000, increasing by 1.6 million people a year on average particularly due to civil wars in Sudan, Syria, South Sudan, Iraq, Palestine, Columbia, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and violence and insecurity in Rwanda and Burundi to mention all but a few (Helman, 2015). Other categories of refugees are fleeing from oppressive regimes and seek asylum outside their countries. The vast majority of refugees are hosted in developing countries (Ruadel & Morrison-Métrois, 2017a). Indeed, Helman (2015) observes that most refugees have been displaced from and exiled to less developed

countries in terms of protection, governance and human rights. African countries lie in the upper realm of those characteristics. Africa is the region with the highest refugee population (Ruadel & Morrison-Métois, 2017a). The large refugee population in Africa is a result of food insecurity, conflict and violence in a number of countries of Horn of Africa and the Great Lakes region, Yemen, Southern Sudan, Burundi, DRC, to mention all but a few.

Uganda is the largest refugee hosting nation in Africa (See Table 1) with over one million registered refugees and asylum seekers as of February 2017 (United Nations High Commission for Refugees [UNHCR], 2018). This is the largest refugee caseload in Uganda's history. Uganda has a long history of hosting refugees fleeing conflict and persecution in East Africa, Great lakes region and Horn of Africa (Ruadel & Morrison-Métois, 2017a). The generous asylum policies and traditional Uganda hospitality have made the country a key destination for refugees (British Broadcasting Corporation [BBC], 2016; Helman, 2015; Ruadel & Morrison-Métois, 2017a). Additionally, Uganda itself has a history of civil wars and its accommodation of refugees is met with popular support (Kreibaum, 2014). Uganda's records of hosting refugees are traced back to after World War II when it hosted over 4,000 Polish refugees at Mpunge in Mukono District well before the UN Refugee Convention of July 1951 and its protocol of January 1967 (Ahimbisibwe, 2013; Sharpe & Namusobya, 2012).

The recent increase in number of refugees in Uganda is similarly a result of geopolitical and governance dynamics in the region, especially in DRC, South Sudan and Kenya which was one of the largest recipients of displaced persons from Somalia. Uganda's refugee population remained stable with new arrivals keeping pace with voluntary repatriations and refugee resettlement until 2010 (Mathys, 2016). However, from 2010 onwards, the Great Lakes region witnessed renewed conflict in DRC, renewed violence in South Sudan in 2013 and instability in Burundi in 2015 led to more influx of refugees to Uganda (Ruadel & Morrison-Métois, 2017a). As a result, refugee population reached 500,000 by 2015 and the number doubled by the second half of 2016 (UNHCR, 2017). Iazzolino and Hersi (2017) observe that deterioration of the security situation in Kenya in 2013 was blamed on *Al Shabaab* terrorist group who were believed to have connections with Somalis. Subsequently, a directive by the Kenya government ordering the cessation of all urban refugees in December 2012 and the relocation of Somali refugees to Dabaab refugee camp partly forced many Somali refugees residing in Kenya and displaced persons in Somalia to head to Uganda which they considered to be safer. According

Table 1. Top 10 host countries of UNHCR registered refugees in 2007 and mid-2016.

| Country | 2007 | Mid-2016 |
|------------|---------|----------------------------------|
| Turkey | 6,956 | 2,869,421 |
| Pakistan | 887,293 | 1,352,560 |
| Lebanon | 50,266 | 1,012,969 |
| Iran | 963,546 | 979,435 |
| Bangladesh | 27,573 | 950,000 |
| Uganda* | 228,959 | 940,835 (1,154,352 October 2018) |
| Ethiopia* | 85,183 | 791,631 (905,831 August 2018) |
| Jordan | 500,281 | 685,197 |
| Germany | 578,879 | 669,482 |
| DR Congo | 117,390 | 451,956 |

*Countries in Horn of Africa and East Africa.

Source: UNCHR Statistical Year Book 2016.

to Teff and Yarnell (2012), the Kenya security forces were accused of profiling and targeting Somali refugees and even its own Somali citizens in addition to harassment and extortion. Yet Uganda has been described as one of the best places in the world to be a refugee (BBC, 2016). In fact, Somali refugees are attracted to settle in Uganda to pursue higher education instead of Kenya because of the lower tuition fees since they pay the same tuition as nationals in Uganda. Furthermore, Uganda is considered to be safe, the cost of living is lower and the likelihood of harassment is less than in Kenya (Iazzolino & Hersi, 2017). In the wake of terrorism security threats, Kenya which has been the largest recipient of displaced Somalis is increasingly securitizing its humanitarian policy which fueled anti-Somali feelings across the country. This led to arrest and restriction of movement of refugees to camps and began the refoulment of many more back to Somalia (BBC, 2016; Iazzolino & Hersi, 2017). Meanwhile, Uganda is pursuing synergies with the local Somali community up to the highest level of Ugandan presidency, thus affirming Uganda as a safe-haven for Somalis (Iazzolino & Hersi, 2017).

While the impression that forced migrants are responding to antagonistic circumstances counter to a volatile situation has gained prominence in literature, there is a thin line unravelling migrant and refugee flows (Iazzolino & Hersi, 2017; Linde, 2011; Martín & Bonfanti, 2015). The refugees are pulled to destination countries like Uganda by their aspiration of upward social mobility through business and study (Iazzolino & Hersi, 2017). For example, the Somali community in Uganda provide information and connections to young Somalis back home in Somalia ahead of relocation to Uganda. They also establish connections with wealthier Somali business people who offer scholarships for students in need, employment for trustworthy Somalis by the Somali business community as well as employment by International Non-Government Organisations that work with Somalis (Iazzolino & Hersi, 2017). Refugees marshal resources through social networks, and form clusters of ethnic economies in destination countries in which shared cultural bonds are used for economic survival and advancement (Portes & Stepick, 1985). The migrant networks between destination countries such as Uganda and countries of origin are location-specific for social capital which stimulates the development of migration industry and remittance corridors (Bakewell et al., 2011; Haug, 2008). Migrant networks are important in coordinating travels of new refugees, resettlements and access to labour. In addition, the government of Uganda had allowed UNHCR to settle arriving refugees from Somalia and other nationalities especially Rwandese, Burundians and Congolese in Nakivale refugee settlement excluding urban centers (Bagenda et al., 2003).

Uganda opted to establish a settlement for the refugees rather than refugee camps in order to give the refugees an opportunity to reestablish their livelihoods and become self-sustaining in the short run instead of interning the refugees in camps and provide humanitarian assistance. This was premised on the fact that refugee situations are protracted rather than temporary and departures were not expected soon. The government of Uganda realized that attaining peace in the countries of origin of migrants to repatriate them would indeed take time. Indeed, about 74% of the refugees in Uganda have established settlements (Mathys, 2016). Therefore, refugee settlements in Uganda were established in rural areas under vast acreage but in close proximity with the local population. The placement of refugee settlements in rural areas is premised on the assumption that the majority of the refugees are of a rural background and can support

themselves through agriculture (Jacobsen, 2001; UNHCR, 2000). The government observed that settling refugees in rural settlements would provide the refugees a familiar environment and they would easily transition into the new status and consequently easily rebuild their livelihoods. The refugees would engage in food production for feeding their families and selling the surplus, earn income to cater for the basic needs for their families and in turn reduce the burden on the government.

Equally, however, the assurance of security of the refugees by giving them the option to voluntarily return home or continue their protracted stay would have a toll on the national budget. As a result, the government adopted a double-edged approach; providing emergency aid and long-term support to help refugees transition from a humanitarian situation to self-reliance (Kreibaum, 2014). The government and its major partner UNHCR gives arriving refugees basic goods and services, and encourages refugees to work. In addition, the government allocates land to the refugees to carry out agriculture on top of deploying teachers, health workers and civil servants in the designated settlements and households (Helman, 2015). This is in conformity with the Refugees Act 2006 that reflects international protection principles that recognize the right of immigrants to work and move around freely. In effect, the refugees are encouraged to engage in employment to contribute to their own sustenance, improve and support their livelihoods as well as contribute to the social and economic development of Uganda.

Uganda's refugee legal framework

Uganda is a party to the 1951 Convention relating to the status of refugees and its 1977 protocol. It is also a signatory of the 1969 OAU Convention Governing the Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa. In 2006 the parliament of Uganda enacted a new Refugees Act 2006 (Act 21) which came into commencement on 4 August 2006, to repeal Chapter 62 of the Control of Alien Refugees Act (CARA) which came into effect on 30 June 1960. The CARA was much criticized for restricting refugees to live in settlements outside of urban areas. As the title of the Act suggests, the CARA was a law that was meant to 'control' alien refugees in Uganda rather than to ensure their protection. The CARA contradicted certain refugee rights provided under the international instruments. The right to freedom of movement and choice of place of abode for refugees, as granted under the 1951 Convention on the Status of Refugees was violated by the requirement that refugees must live in settlements. In addition, property rights were brutally abused. The CARA did not consider the international rights of refugees that are indicated in the international conventions to which Uganda ratified. These include the general right of protection, the right to public relief, the right to property, the right to protection from arbitrary expulsion, the right to identity papers, the right of access to courts of law, the right to gainful employment, the right to education, the right to Convention Travel Documents, the right to protection against non-refoulement and freedom of movement.

The Refugee Act 2006 (Act 21) embraced a development-based approach promoting the 'self-reliance' of refugees. In addition, the Refugee Act 2006 recognized rights regarding public education above the elementary level, liberal professions, movable and immovable property, the transfer of assets, right of association regarding non-political and non-profit-making associations and trade unions, and wage-earning

employment as well as self-employment. In addition, the Refugee Act 2006 grants rights to freedom of movement, to access the courts, to non-discrimination, to freedom of association, to freedom of religion, to an identity card or travel document, and to administrative assistance.

Refugees and Uganda's economy

Although the Refugees Act 2006 recognize the rights of immigrants to work and move around freely as well as to choose where to live in rural settlements or be relocated to urban centers, the Ugandan government has favored a policy of internment of refugees to rural settlements. This is exemplified by the government's allocation of land for farming and construction of houses that provide a foundation for sustainable livelihoods for the majority of the refugee population. However, the refugees only have rights to land and they cannot sell it or use it as collateral for credit. There is a significant volume of economic transactions between refugees and the Ugandan nationals. The refugee settlements are closely embedded in the local Uganda economies attracting people, capital and goods from outside of the country to the internal local markets (Betts et al., 2014).

The involvement of refugees in economic activities has contributed to the creation of employment for Ugandans by the refugees (Vemuru et al., 2016). A study by Clements et al. (2016) revealed that in Kampala, Uganda's capital city, an estimated one in five refugees employs non-family members and about 40% of the people employed by refugees are Ugandans. In addition, only 1% of the refugees living in rural settlements in Uganda entirely depend on humanitarian assistance (Betts et al., 2014; Helman, 2015). This creates an impression that overall, refugees are self-reliant and therefore not a burden to the national economy. Although the refugees have the right to establish their own businesses and work as provided for in the Refugees Act 2006 and 2010 Refugee Regulations, there is disagreement in various sections of the Ugandan government whether refugees are exempted from obtaining a work permit to be allowed to work (Betts et al., 2017). In this particular case, Uganda's Immigration Department under the Ministry of Internal Affairs interprets the 2010 Regulations that refugees require work permits like any other non-citizens, while the Office of the Prime Minister (OPM) which is directly responsible for the refugees interprets the same regulation that once a refugee is in the country, he or she is granted defacto rights to work. While the terms of the Refugees Act 2006 and 2010 Refugees regulation give refugees access to land, they cannot legally own land which was allocated to them which they use to cultivate or constructed houses they live in (Ruauadel & Morrison-Métois, 2017a). Besides, the size of land allocated to the refugees is comparatively small and with the increasing number of refugees, there is more need for land which has resulted into land conflicts between the refugees themselves and among refugees and the host communities. Land tenure has a bearing on the extent to which the refugees can participate in economic activities and environmental management. Despite the enactment and existence of pro-refugee Laws and policies, not all refugees were afforded the same opportunities to improve their living conditions (Iazzolino & Hersi, 2017). There are some barriers to formal sector economic activity in Uganda including some restrictions on the right to leave the settlements but the Refugees Act 2006 is generally interpreted to imply that refugees can work without a permit.

From the inception of refugee settlements, Uganda government has emphasized self-reliance implying participation in economic activities. As a result, the government with its partners have devised a raft of measures to empower the refugees to become self-reliant. The government initiated the Self-Reliance Strategy (SRS), established with donor support in 1999. Initially, SRS aimed at Sudanese refugees in West Nile but has been extended to the whole country. The focus of the SRS was to transition from relief to development. Consequently, refugees were given logistical and technical support in agriculture for two to four seasons. In 2004, SRS was replaced by Development Assistance for Refugee Hosting Areas (DAR) but kept the initial focus of SRS. The Refugee and Host Population Empowerment (ReHoPE) strategic framework updated the SRS model in 2016. Besides, support for Uganda's self-reliance model is a focus of UNHCR's Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (CRRF). In 2018, World Bank supported Uganda Development Response to Displacement Project (DRDIP). In addition to the initial SRS focus, sustainable environment management is one of the concentration of DRDIP with two sub-components; (i) environmental management including technical advisory services for implementation of environmental management activities through a labour-intensive public works mode; and (ii) access to energy sources for cooking and lighting including potential public-private-community partnerships. However, being a new project in the inception phase, not much has been achieved.

Study area

The study was carried out in Nakivale, located in Isingiro district, South western Uganda, a semi-arid zone with limited arable land. Isingiro district is one of the twelve (12) refugee hosting districts in Uganda. Nakivale is the second oldest and second largest refugee settlement in Uganda. Nakivale settlement is bigger than most Ugandans cities. It occupies an area of 185 km² with three administrative zones (Rubondo, Base Camp and Juru) and 79 villages, which are often organized according to nationality or cultural similarities (Ilcan et al., 2015). Nakivale was founded in early 1958 to accommodate Rwandese Tutsi refugees fleeing persecution from the Hutu regime (Ahimbisibwe, 2013; Kreibaum, 2014; Lahn & Grafham, 2015). For a long time, the Rwandese Tutsi refugees solely occupied Nakivale settlement until the arrival of Kenyan and Somali refugees in the early 1990s that settled around the camp. Kenyans fled from ethnic clashes between the Bantu people in parts of western Kenya and the Kalenjin (Ahimbisibwe, 2013). As at May, 1, 2017, Nakivale hosted 124,842 refugees and it was the 5th populated settlement after Yumbe, Adjumani, Arua and Moyo all located in Northern Uganda (United Nations Development Programme [UNDP], 2017). Presently, Nakivale hosts refugees from Democratic Republic of Congo, Kenya, Burundi, Ethiopia, Somalia, Sudan, Southern Sudan and Eritrea.

Nakivale is formally administered by the Office of the Prime Minister (OPM) represented by a settlement Commandant who is responsible for administration and management of the settlement regarding security, coordination of service delivery, receiving, registering and settling refugees including allocating land. In practice, however, this is carried out in close collaboration with UNHCR, which provides assistance through a number of implementing partners. The geographical scope of economic activity in Nakivale is limited for most refugees in the settlement. The main economic activities in Nakivale are animal rearing, petty trade, crop farming and fishing in Lake Nakivale by the refugees and host

communities. Competition for land with the natives has led to land conflicts (Ruaudel & Morrison-Métois, 2017b). However, the economic life of some refugees is embedded in much wider trade networks that transcend communities, settlements, and often national borders. Nakivale refugee settlement lies on a vast piece of land located in a remote area that one refugee described “a very isolated and lonely place (Ilcan et al., 2015). Like any other refugee settlement in Uganda, Nakivale is not fenced, contains organized villages, churches, phone charging stations, has access to computers, hair salons and small markets. Apparently, refugees live in a normal village setting and enjoy a rural community life. The settlement is surrounded by a population of 35,000 people who directly benefit from the education, water, nutrition and health programmes provided for refugees (UNHCR, 2014).

The settlement is connected to the national grid and it additionally uses diesel as a source of energy for its operation. Although access to electricity is not restricted for refugees, connection is a challenge because of the high user costs. However, wealthier refugees are connected to the electricity. A senior official in the OPM was explicit;

They are free to access and use electricity if they so wish but no one else can pick their bills.

Nevertheless, most refugees use charcoal, firewood and Kerosene (Lahn & Grafham, 2015). This trend is representative of the energy consumption patterns at the national level. The recent National Population and Census 2014 report revealed that 95.9%, 3.6% and 0.2% of the population in rural areas use firewood, charcoal and electricity, respectively, for cooking (Uganda Bureau of Statistics [UBOS], 2016). During interviews a refugee from DRC observed that charges for connecting and using electricity are prohibitive;

Refugees are constructing buildings every day, they need electricity because it makes life better but connecting charges and user fees are exorbitant, majority of them cannot afford it. The government of Uganda should understand our situation, we are not here by choice, we are deprived, the dark nights are frightening and torturing. Electricity should be affordable for refugees ...

The housing types of the refugees include plastic sheet roof, mud walls, some iron sheets and reasonable light inside. In Nakivale settlement, refugees receive free social services, especially education and health. Additionally, the refugees receive food rations and are able to work and do business.

Methodology

This study is grounded in qualitative inquiry integral in case studies to obtain data. Qualitative methods allow the researcher to uncover and understand what lies behind the phenomenon under investigation, of which little is known (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). The use of qualitative methods provided new insights into current conceptions and debates on refugees precisely economic and environment management within a particular context. The research was carried out in a natural setting, sought participants' perspectives without manipulation, interrogated the wholeness and complexity of meaning and reality of the participants' experiences and allowed inductive data analysis. The research explicitly aimed to capture the experiences of refugees in Nakivale refugees as well as the host communities. Data collection was carried out in the various villages

located in the three administrative zones of Nakivale refugee settlement (Juru, Base Camp and Rubondo) in order to reach a variety of refugees as settlement in these camps is based on nationalities with varying ways of life. Data collection was also conducted in the host community. Two external research assistants (brought by the researcher) while four internal research assistants (locals living in the settlement and host community to curtail language barriers) collected data. Extensive documentary review was done together with interviews and Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) were carried out among the immigrants and host communities specifically leaders in the settlement, government officials, local leaders, members of Civil Society Organisations (CSOs), the refugees and community members. A total of 83 respondents comprising of women and men in the settlement and host communities were reached through purposive sampling and snowball sampling.

Data were analyzed using the inductive approach of thematic analysis where themes were developed from within a data set (Braun & Clarke, 2006). A thorough examination of the perspectives of different research participants was done, highlighting similarities and differences and generating unanticipated insights of the refugees and host communities in Nakivale (Braun & Clarke, 2006; King, 2004). The identified themes from the raw data were linked to the data themselves without trying to fit it into a researcher's analytic preconceptions (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Economic and environmental impact of refugees in Nakivale settlement

The refugees in Nakivale degrade the environment through persistent deforestation. The environmental destruction is unconsciously driven by the ever-increasing demand for fuel wood needed for home use. A refugee in an interview remarked;

We have planted trees but they take long to mature. We need firewood everyday so we cut the available trees to cook and sustain life

Cutting down of trees has exposed the soils to erosion. The dwindling of fuelwood sources has forced refugees and host communities to use crop residues for energy which consequently has reduced the organic matter and therefore reduced soil fertility. Growing crops are an official policy in Nakivale; however, the agricultural system is entirely rain-fed and therefore the environment is important to ensure agricultural productivity. As a mitigation strategy, agroforestry is being promoted as an energy source for fuelwood and more importantly to reduce soil erosion from the rain-fed agricultural systems especially in the sloping farmlands where the runoff risks cause sedimentation of Lake Nakivale (Adam-Bradford, 2016).

Enterprises such as agroforestry are possible in Nakivale because refugees are permitted to work, this reduces stress on the local environment from energy use, and increases refugees' potential ability to pay for energy services. Agroforestry has received massive support from a host of Non-government organizations (NGOs) that are involved in environment management. A refugee observed;

I develop tree nurseries to supply seedlings. NGOs buy the seedlings and distribute to refugees for planting

In Nakivale refugee settlement, agroforestry is in its infancy but has enhanced soil protection, enabled crop diversification and enhanced improved nutrient and water

retention (Adam-Bradford, 2016). A wider selection of tree based crops for example, avocado, mangoes, passion fruits and pawpaw are being planted to improve biodiversity of home gardens. Agroforestry practiced by refugees in Nakivale has played a central role in protecting water resources as agroforestry-based buffer zones around Lake Nakivale. The buffer zones prevent sedimentation of Lake Nakivale through the use of contour planting on bands to capture runoff, infiltration and retention as well as enhancing productivity of the land water interface (Adam-Bradford, 2016). In the short time, agroforestry has not yet improved the availability of fuelwood and the increasing demand for firewood is a key driver to environmental degradation. Ahimbisibwe (2013, p. 25) observe that refugees were being accused of cutting trees in large numbers, for home use, selling it to the nationals, or burning charcoal and if the destruction of the environment is not checked, it can further fuel conflict in Nakivale.

During a Focus Group Discussion one refugee noted:

We have to continue cutting trees. It is a fact. Yes, it is dangerous but how can we cook food?
We don't have any other option. It is complicated

In the same breadth, refugees are adopting wood fuel-efficient technologies. The civil society organisations have extensively rolled out programmes and trained the refugees in making and using wood fuel-efficient stoves and this has to a small extent reduced the pressure on trees and the environment. This energy saving stoves technology has been extended to host communities and the fuelwood consumption habits have marginally reduced but unsurprisingly, the pressure on trees and the threat to environment remains. Environmental degradation as a result of deforestation and the snowballing need for firewood is a serious challenge posed by refugees in Nakivale. The demand for firewood is also a source of conflict between the refugees and host communities as refugees wander into the private lands of the members of the host communities who also have unmet needs for firewood. Some stove and fuel interventions such as Save80 stove and charcoal briquettes though efficient and popular but are not sustainable long-term option because they are not locally made, assembled or repaired (Women's Refugee Commission, 2014). In the end, they do not fully meet household needs leaving refugees struggling with access to fuel. Indeed, one refugee noted;

Some fuel saving technologies are efficient but not affordable. Some energy saving stoves are expensive and we cannot get them without support. As refugees we need technologies that can be made locally. We need training on making those technologies but when they decide to only trade their innovations then that is not for us

Majority of the refugee households in Nakivale settlement are industriously engaged in income generating activities specifically crop production which has enhanced the country's food security. The refugee farmers face challenges of quality inputs and limited extension services to help them increase their farm productivity and dependency on seasonal rainfall for crop productivity. Several refugees have engaged in value addition through agro-processing through establishing maize milling plants which is critical in post-harvest handling and avoiding food wastage and loss. The maize milling plants also provide employment to refugees and host communities who are engaged in the trade of grains (Betts et al., 2014). A native of Nakivale observed that;

A Rwandese refugee has a maize milling plant in the settlement and is giving us first class services. No travelling long distances to grind our maize anymore. The quality is good and the prices are fair

Besides, the refugees in Nakivale sustain the local markets with food supplies. The immigrants grow maize and *matooke* (banana plantain) and these food stuffs in addition to maize flour are produced in excess of what refugee households need and therefore the surplus is sold to generate income for the refugees, which is utilized to acquire other basic needs. In addition, the refugees have taken advantage of the 2006 Refugee Act, which allows them to work and they have started up small-scale businesses which are creating new jobs where they employ fellow refugees and the natives as well. Job creation is among the key poverty reduction as well as economic development strategies by the government of Uganda and therefore the refugees endeavor is a landmark contribution to Uganda's economy. A native resident observed

Refugees produce a lot of maize and sell to us. They feed us, we buy food from them, we are their market.

Another native resident remarked

During the time for food distribution in the settlement, the refugees sell to us their rations like cooking oil, maize/soya flour, beans. That food is sold cheaply and yet it is very nutritious

Some refugees have exhibited business acumen accumulating capital which has been invested in their businesses. In this regard, some refugees' businesses have comparatively grown and bigger than for the native businessmen. A native trader observed that;

Some refugees run from their countries because of persecution but when they are rich. When they get asylum they receive funds from their relatives in their countries of origin while other refugees get remittances from the diaspora community and startup businesses which the local traders don't own

In fact, some refugees have sufficient capital and are involved in trading industrial and agricultural goods reaching the national, regional and international markets. A number of refugees have overcome the middle men and established contacts with the regional markets for purchase and supply of goods and services (Betts et al., 2014). For example, maize grown in Nakivale is sold by the traders in the capital city Kampala and beyond and at the same time across the border to the neighboring Tanzania, Rwanda and DRC while rice, tuna fish, wheat, jewelry and fabrics are imported from Pakistan, Thailand, Tanzania and DRC (Betts et al., 2017). The refugee businessmen supply large-scale companies, strengthening market linkages and growing the customer base contributing to local prosperity of Uganda (Helman, 2015).

The growth of the various migrant communities in Uganda has increased demand for goods catering for specific ethnic-clientele especially the Somalis and Congolese. Goods for the migrant population has persisted through improvements in transport, telecommunication and financial infrastructures (Iazzolino & Hersi, 2017). A case in point is the efficiency and flexibility of placing orders for goods from the countries of origin using mobile phones and later payments via the mobile money transfer service. This kind of trade is based on trust and money is transmitted using M-Pesa (especially by Somalis ordering goods from relatives in Kenya), MTN mobile money and Airtel Money services for

Congolese, Burundi and Rwandese refugees. The daily bus connections between Nairobi and Kampala have boosted the Somali refugee community earning a living by trading a wide range of goods such as camel milk and clothes. Refugee entrepreneurs, entrenched in their social networks have been able to penetrate Ugandan markets and beyond because of its economic policies of liberalization which allow everybody to engage in business and trade. Imperative to note is the influence of diaspora involvement that is scaling up the transfer of capital, trade and knowledge to the refugees in Nakivale. Refugees are linked to the supply lines in their countries of origin with low-end consumer goods have created a legal and very effective brokerage service sector. A refugee from Burundi was explicit;

Somali refugees are rich because they receive money from their relatives abroad. They do not cultivate crops like us but their life is better than us, they are not struggling

Refugees qualified in different fields and with special skills, business and industrial expertise have boosted the labour market which has led to innovations. For example, a combined group of artists built their studio from cement and empty soda bottles, cleaning the environment of plastic waste, creating a fascinating piece of art as well as functional building. Other people in the settlement and the host community have adopted the innovation and more structures have been built. Plastics disposal is one of the major threats to environment management in the country and this innovation helps to improve environment management.

In addition, the refugees have contributed to cultural diversity through music, dance and drama and development of language capabilities. The immigrants come with different cultures and languages some of which have an international outlook. The Congolese and Burundi refugees living in Nakivale are fluent in French and through their interactions, the refugees and the members of the host community have learnt French and a variety of other languages like Kirundi, Kinyarwanda, Lingala which are benefiting communities since they can transact business with a wider audience with a global character and they have been able to penetrate the local and regional market accruing economic benefits to the refugees, the local community and the national economy of Uganda.

Just like any other Ugandan, refugees in Nakivale pay taxes on purchase of various items. Although the taxes paid by refugees are hard to determine, refugees make a contribution to the growth of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) leading to economic growth of Uganda. A number of refugees have diversified their livelihoods and have moved on from relying on agriculture and land resources only and are now involved in the informal sector as well. The immigrants in the category are involved in petty trade, operate kiosks that sell basic necessities like salt, sugar, soap while others operate restaurants and saloons (Betts et al., 2014, 2017). These immigrants help the smooth flow of goods and services as well as to avoid the scarcity of basic needs. This supports the growth and prosperity of local industries that are involved in the manufacturing of the basic commodities.

Refugees with some level of formal education seek employment in and outside the settlements although the ambiguity in interpreting the Refugee Act 2006 on whether refugees are allowed to work remains a barrier for possible recruitment by various entities. Employment opportunities in the formal sector are limited but some refugees

have special skills that are unmatched by the locals and many times employers have wished to employ them without much success. For example, public secondary schools have wished and made attempts to employ Congolese and Burundian refugee teachers to teach French with no success because of the barriers associated with employing non-Ugandans. The labour laws requires for a non-native to work in Uganda to obtain a work permit. Acquiring a work permit from the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the employer braces a long bureaucratic process and money to pay the mandatory fees. Government entities are constrained to pursue such a process without budget allocations. However, private schools, organization and companies have tapped such refugees with special skills and this has helped to reduce the skills gap in the country. The private entities hardly pursue the work permits for the refugee workers since they are expensive but offer them employment opportunities anyway. A number of refugees with special skills work as community volunteers and social workers on the various projects in the settlement. The high demand for employment by refugees has brought the wages down and for that reason labour is cheap and affordable. Refugees from Rwanda and Burundi have formed self-help groups through which they offer group labour at relatively cheaper rates. In the end, the cost of labour in Nakivale is low which has encouraged more agricultural activity, as well as agricultural productivity.

Nakivale is a key target of a variety of Ugandan firms for it has market potential. Indeed, telecommunication companies started several initiatives in Nakivale targeting refugees using SMS banking and funds transfer services (Betts et al., 2014). The use of mobile phones in Nakivale is above the national average, and refugees buy credit (scratch cards) to ensure internet connectivity as well as to make voice calls (Hounsell & Owuor, 2018). This has contributed to the growth of the telecommunication companies which are also among the top tax payers in the country. Likewise, firms started projects such as the solar power loan. These initiatives help refugees' mobile phones powered which make it easier for refugees to receive remittances from friends and relatives outside or within the country which helps them to offset expenses, including attaining basic needs and services as well as paying school fees for their children (Vemuru et al., 2016). A refugee noted that Nakivale is a business magnet;

Nakivale settlement has a lot of potential for business. Industries lack information, otherwise this is the place to be. A microfinance UGAFODE established a branch here and we share equally the workforce. 50% are their staff and the refugees occupy an equal number. Equity Banks' "Equity Duuka" has reached here so banking services have gotten closer

While the refugees are enjoying a relative degree of freedom of movement, it is still necessary for them to obtain permission from the Uganda government to travel which hinders access to markets and the formal economic sectors in the nearby commercial centers (Betts & Omata, 2015).

Challenges to refugees in economic and environment management

- The conflicting interpretation of the 2006 Refugee Act and 2010 regulation on work rights by some key government agencies is a barrier to refugee's access to formal employment. The OPM responsible for the refugees interprets the act that refugees

have a right to work while Ministry of Internal affairs argue that they need a work permit. The Ministry of Internal Affairs has often asked refugees to have work permits scaring away potential employers from recruiting them for fear of the exorbitant fees to attain work permits. In the end, employment opportunities for refugees are limited.

- The discriminatory property laws/rights. The Refugee Act 2006 recognizes the right to own property but has limitations on some properties, especially land. Refugees in Nakivale are allocated land with only user rights but cannot sell it or use it as collateral for credit. Given the protracted nature of refugees in Uganda, some refugees have relied on Ugandan nationals to acquire property in their names only to be cheated out later. This has denied the refugees to improve their economic situation.
- The government has fixedly prioritized agriculture as the enterprise to self-reliance of refugees. However, not all refugees are farmers. In fact, the policy is unsuitable for refugees of some nationalities such as the Somalis. Ruauadel and Morrison-Métrois (2017a) observe that expectations that refugees can achieve agricultural subsistence do not match reality. Agriculture is not a model enterprise to all the refugee nationalities. For example, the Somali refugees are not participating in farming because it is not part of their way of living, but their interest is in trade and business. Sensitivity to cultural diversity is important if comprehensive interventions are to be developed. Unfortunately, cultural diversity has been precariously ignored which is restraining the participation of some refugees in economic development.
- Despite the contribution of the refugees in various aspects of building the economy, the local communities do not recognize their input in economic and environmental development. The local people continue to look at refugees as people infringing on the resources meant for them. In reality, tensions exist between the local people and the refugees in Nakivale arising from resource allocation and utilization. A number of locals believe that refugees are privileged over them. A senior official in the OPM acknowledged that the local people harbour the feeling that their situation is worse because of the presence of refugees. He noted that: *'The general impression is that people feel that they are badly off because of the existence of refugees'*. During data collection, some members of the local community were intrigued; *'They give them land, free food, free blankets, yet me a Ugandan has never received anything, totally nothing ... I pay taxes and others benefit! It is unfair, very unfair!'*
- Lack of alternative sources of energy for cooking. There are no alternative sources of energy for cooking in sight in the near future. Firewood is the only available source of energy for cooking. The energy-saving technologies seem not to be viable as they hardly disrupt the destruction of the environment. Energy saving technologies are expensive and not affordable without support. It is certain that there is no turning back on cutting trees in search of fuelwood and certainly Nakivale is increasingly becoming more vulnerable to environmental degradation, desertification and the adverse effects of climate change. A member of the horst community was explicit:

Our area is becoming a desert because the migrants are cutting down every tree for firewood and charcoal. Our trees have lived for times but the refugees don't care. They are destroying our natural environment, now it is rare to receive rain, growing seasons have become unpredictable, we are living dangerously ...

Policy options

- The government of Uganda should recast its approach of focusing on agriculture for refugees in Nakivale and support market-based interventions for refugees.
- The government should support cultural diversity as it tailors the self-reliance strategies and interventions for refugees. In this case the government should identify various enterprises to support that are inured to various refugee nationalities. This will offer more opportunities for the participation of refugees in economic development.
- The government should harmonize and get a universal interpretation of the Refugee Act 2006 and 2010 Refugees regulation in regard to the right of the refugees to work.
- The government and donor agencies should introduce alternative sources of energy for cooking such as solar, Liquefied Petroleum Gas(LPG) and biogas in order to curtail environmental degradation for fuelwood.
- The government and CSOs should adopt contextualized technologies and innovations for refugees. The technologies should be developed using resources available in communities such that once refugees are empowered, there is sustainable adoption of the technologies.
- The size of land allocated to refugees should be increased to facilitate the expansion of economic activities and production.
- The government, UNCHR and donor agencies should scale-up the environment management aspects that have been rolled up in DRDIP, namely, environmental management and access to energy sources for cooking and lighting.
- Robust sensitization of refugees and host communities on the dangers of environmental degradation. Suitable agricultural and environment management practices such as agroforestry should be emphasized as they help maintain the environment conditions and nutrition. This should be continuous and planned to be done over a long period because changing attitudes takes time.

Conclusion

Nakivale is a typical refugees' settlement because of its protracted refugee situation. The settlement though provides humanitarian assistance particularly food rations, it emphasizes self-reliance and unlike the situation in other areas, the majority of the refugees in Nakivale are self-sustaining and not entirely depending on humanitarian assistance. In other words, the refugees in Nakivale are not as such a burden on the host state. Refugees are economically diverse and involved in a variety of economic activities. The departure from the conventional approaches to refugee assistance in protracted refugee situations is a critical landmark of Nakivale refugee settlement. Refugees just like the host communities have aspirations and skills and contribute positively to economic growth and environment management whenever a window of opportunity is availed. The

government and refugee agencies initiatives to empower refugee economy are limited and insensitive to cultural diversity. The governments' strategy to self-reliance has been programmed around agriculture but the refugees engage in various economic activities which are a source of revenue to the local governments and taxes to the national government which contribute to Gross Domestic Product. In a nutshell, the refugee issue in Uganda is a logistical problem which needs behavioural change on the side of government and citizens but not an issue of incompatibility.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.

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