

A woman with a large, spiky bundle of sticks balanced on her head is smiling. She is wearing a bright pink long-sleeved shirt and dark pants. The background shows a clear sky and some greenery.

Gender and displacement **South Sudanese refugees in northern Uganda**

March 2020

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Saferworld, Conciliation Resources and International Alert are collaborating on a three-year research programme, the Peace Research Partnership, which generates evidence and lessons for policymakers and practitioners on how to support peaceful, inclusive change in conflict-affected areas. Funded by UK aid from the UK government, the research focuses on economic development, peace processes, institutions and gender drivers of conflict.

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Cover photo: A South Sudanese refugee carrying dry grass stems to be used as fuel for cooking.

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Refugee homes in Boroli settlement.

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Executive summary

At the start of 2019 there were almost 26 million refugees globally, with Uganda hosting the third highest number after Pakistan and Turkey. Fifty-seven per cent of these refugees came from just three countries, one of them being South Sudan. Displacement and the resulting changes in living circumstances – whether in a refugee camp, refugee settlement or host community – leave men and women seeking ways to survive and make a living in a new environment where previous social structures have broken down.

This has an inevitable impact on gender roles and power dynamics. Host communities may have different expectations of how men and women should behave, while refugees may need to take on different roles depending on livelihood opportunities. These changing gender roles can in turn affect people's security, both within the domestic sphere and between refugee and host communities.

Uganda provides an important case study for understanding how displacement affects gender roles and the implications for refugees' security. The country hosts more than 1.3 million refugees – the third highest number after Pakistan and Turkey – and over 850,000 of those seeking refuge in Uganda come from South Sudan.¹ Uganda's prominent role as a long-term refugee hosting country, and its perceived generous approach to hosting refugees, has garnered much positive attention from the international community.²

Under the Ugandan government's approach, refugees are located not in camps but in settlements, which are usually smaller, with more permanent dwellings and more freedom of movement than camps.³ Refugee settlements have no fences or guards and it can be hard to distinguish where a host community village ends and a refugee settlement begins. The Ugandan government allocates plots of land within settlements where refugees can build a home and cultivate a small amount of vegetables. Each household receives cash, food rations or, in some settlements, a combination of both, which are distributed by the World Food Programme. These can only be collected by the registered household head, which is often a woman as many women arrive in Uganda ahead of their husbands and they are more likely to be present in the settlements at distribution time. However, this also reflects an unofficial humanitarian agency policy of positive discrimination to support women and give them greater decision-making power at the household level.

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In theory, refugees are entitled to access the same public services as Ugandan nationals. They are entitled to work – including in the formal sector⁴ – and have relative freedom of movement. However, while Uganda’s refugee policy has been heralded as progressive and a role model for other countries, in practice implementation has not been as successful as initially expected, and promises of integration and, in the longer term, citizenship are not yet forthcoming.

The location of the Uganda-South Sudan border means that the majority of South Sudanese refugees have settled in districts in northern Uganda that are themselves recovering from over two decades of violent conflict between the Lord’s Resistance Army

and the Ugandan government, which contributed to lower levels of development compared to the rest of the country. As a result, the settlement of such a high number of South Sudanese refugees, in some cases in numbers almost equal to the local Ugandan population, has had a considerable impact on the lives of people from host communities as well as on the refugees. While most refugees

have remained in settlements – where they are potentially able to access benefits, such as training provided by development organisations – a substantial minority have self-settled in local towns and villages, citing better access to schooling and healthcare, among other factors.

This report is based on research carried out by Saferworld in Boroli I and Boroli II refugee settlements and in surrounding host communities in Adjumani District in northern Uganda between April and August 2019. Adjumani hosts the second largest population of refugees in Uganda after Yumbe District, and the number of refugees (almost 210,000) is nearly equal to that of the host community (approximately 234,000). Saferworld’s research looked at how gender roles and women’s decision-making power have been affected by displacement, and considered this in the context of access to land, natural resources and relations within and between refugee and host communities. We interviewed men and women refugees living in settlements, those who had self-settled and host community members, as well as government officials and staff working for development and humanitarian agencies.

Both refugee and host communities in Adjumani are heavily reliant on being able to access land. Adjumani is a rural district and, as with many areas in Uganda, cultivating crops for household consumption and for sale at markets is the main way people make a living. The size of plots allocated to

refugees has reduced considerably (to 30x30 metres), as a result of major influxes of refugees in 2013 and again in 2016, when civil war broke out in South Sudan and violence escalated. Refugees are allowed to buy leasehold land but this is normally too expensive, so the majority rely on negotiating with the host community to rent additional land for cultivation. However, not all refugees can afford this rent and most agreements between host community landlords and refugees are informal; they are neither written down nor witnessed, so they have no legal standing. As a result, many South Sudanese men and women reported that they had been chased off the land once they had cleared and ploughed it. Our research indicated that host community men were more likely to reach an agreement on renting land with a South Sudanese woman than with a man, possibly because it was seen to be easier to evict a woman, but also because women were vulnerable to sexual exploitation.

Tensions have also arisen between host community women and refugee women because the latter are accused of “taking” Ugandan women’s husbands. The reality is that many refugee women do enter into relationships with host community men. While some do so for love or for sexual reasons, for many these relationships are a necessity – the economic benefits that come with these relationships mean that refugee women are better able to provide for their families. These practices are often a survival tool and one of the negative coping mechanisms that South Sudanese refugee women and girls are forced to undertake to ensure their and their families’ survival.

Refugees in settlements are provided with basic materials to construct a home, but they are responsible for sourcing the materials they need to maintain it. This brings them into conflict with host communities over accessing resources, such as grass for thatching, poles for construction and firewood. Because collecting grass and firewood are seen as women’s jobs, conflicts over access disproportionately affect women. Ugandan and South Sudanese women reported tensions, including incidents where an individual or small group from one community had been waylaid by a larger group of women from the other community and attacked – usually verbally but sometimes physically – until they ran off, leaving behind the materials they had collected. It is clear that it is a struggle for both communities to access the natural resources they need on a daily basis. What is not clear is whether these resources have become scarcer due to the increased population in Adjumani or due to climate change – or if it is a combination of both factors.

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While refugees do receive rations (in Boroli I and II settlements), they have to choose between food or cash rations), the food that is distributed does not provide them with a sufficiently varied diet and they are generally forced to sell some of it in order to buy other food items, as well as necessities such as soap or sanitary products. Those who receive cash are given UGX31,000 per month (just over USD\$8), which barely covers their needs. Alternative livelihood opportunities for refugees in Adjumani are limited because they generally do not have a source of income to invest in a business. Where possible, women refugees engage in small-scale operations such as selling chapattis, braiding hair or brewing alcohol,⁵ and in doing so take on the double burden of looking after the household and bringing in some extra money.

While having the opportunity to earn money helps refugee women to a certain degree, it also results in refugee men feeling emasculated and frustrated. Refugee men report that they have nothing to do, possibly because they see the only available employment options as “women’s jobs”. They also believe that they are not offered any opportunities by development organisations, which they perceive as only providing training, scholarships and other support to refugee women. As a result, many of the men sit around, drink and gamble. They become frustrated by their inability to fulfil their expected masculine role and to provide for their families. This also leads to an increase in levels of gender-based violence (GBV)⁶ as men exert power in the domestic sphere. Alternatively men may take the risky decision to return to South Sudan which remains highly unstable and volatile. The fact that most international agencies and policymakers appear not to recognise or take action to mitigate the potential harmful impacts of refugee programmes that support women – such as higher rates of GBV – suggests a lack of conflict and gender sensitivity.

Based on the research in Adjumani and analysis of the evidence, Saferworld makes the following recommendations.

For humanitarian and development agencies, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and international non-governmental organisations (INGOs):

- **Increase understanding of existing gender norms and conflict dynamics.** Humanitarian and development agencies and INGOs working in Adjumani and other refugee-hosting districts should carry out a gender-sensitive conflict analysis to ensure any existing or planned policy or programme is based on a sound analysis of how gender norms are driving conflict, gender inequality, and GBV in both the refugee and host contexts.
- **Make refugee-targeted policies and programmes conflict and gender sensitive.** By adopting a conflict- and gender-sensitive approach, humanitarian and development agencies and INGO actors can ensure that programmes are based on an understanding of gender roles and norms and support gender transformation, leading to gender equality and women’s meaningful participation. This approach can also help prevent the negative impacts that arise from thwarted masculinities, which include an increased risk of GBV and greater insecurity for women.
- **Support work on masculinities.** Build on a gender-sensitive conflict analysis and support men and women to challenge existing negative and/or violent masculinities which focus on power and control. Identify and challenge notions of masculinity that men feel pressured to conform to and that result in negative consequences if they are unable to. Support the development of alternative views which focus on non-violence and gender equality.
- **Ensure that women’s meaningful participation is central to the design and implementation of all programmes and policies.** Refugee and host community women and women-led organisations should participate in shaping decisions and driving interventions in all phases of programming and policy development and implementation carried out by local and international organisations, as well as local, regional and national authorities.
- **Increase the number of gender specialists in teams, train more people in gender-sensitive conflict resolution and design, and allocate specific budget to implement gender-sensitive conflict resolution programmes.** This would help prevent conflict escalation and distrust within and between refugee and host communities, including gender drivers of conflict.
- **Strengthen GBV and protection programming, including access to justice.** Agencies with relevant expertise should provide training to local council and Refuge Welfare Committee officials to ensure that reported cases of GBV are dealt with appropriately. GBV prevention programming should address abuses perpetrated by intimate partners from a protection and justice perspective, ensuring accountability to prevent repetition of violence.

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For the Government of Uganda, the Ugandan Office of the Prime Minister and international agencies:

■ **Increase refugees' and host community members' access to income-providing opportunities.**

International agencies, in collaboration with the government, should carry out a labour market analysis in Adjumani to identify potential income-generating opportunities which may then require investment. Joint opportunities for host and refugee communities would also help build trust between the two.

■ **Increase refugees' access to land.**

The Ugandan government and international agencies should work with all relevant stakeholders, including host communities, to enable refugees to access sufficient land to meet their livelihood needs and formalise land rental agreements. This would expand and secure refugees' livelihood opportunities and reduce the pressure on women to resort to harmful coping mechanisms.

■ **Ensure women are involved in all phases of decision-making and implementation processes in refugee settlements.**

The Ugandan government, Uganda's Office of the Prime Minister, international agencies and INGOs should promote the meaningful participation of refugee women in all decision-making processes in settlements and not just in those that focus on 'women's issues'.

■ **Diversify refugees' rations.** The Ugandan government, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the World Food Programme should provide refugees with more diverse food rations so they do not feel forced to sell part of their rations in order to buy other food and non-food items. Grains should either be provided pre-ground or affordable/free grinding options made available. Basic sanitary products, including menstrual pads, should be provided. Aid agencies providing food should incorporate GBV risk-reduction measures according to the Inter-Agency Standing Committee GBV guidelines.

■ **Raise awareness about the situation of South Sudanese refugees and Uganda's role in hosting them to maintain funding.** The Ugandan government and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees should continue to receive economic aid to carry on providing rations to refugees, in line with Sphere standards,⁷ as well as adequate support to host communities to ensure they are not negatively affected by this situation.

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Joint [income-generating] opportunities for host and refugee communities would also help build trust between the two.

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Notes

- 1 UNHCR (2019), 'Global Trends: Forced Displacement in 2018', June (<https://www.unhcr.org/5d08d7ee7.pdf>)
- 2 Goldstein J (2018), 'As Rich Nations Close the Door on Refugees, Uganda Welcomes Them', *The New York Times*, 28 October (<https://www.nytimes.com/2018/10/28/world/africa/uganda-refugees.html>)
- 3 Schmidt A (2003), 'FMO Thematic Guide: Camps Versus Settlements', Forced Migration Online (<https://www.alnap.org/system/files/content/resource/files/main/fmoo21.pdf>)
- 4 Under the same terms as any non-Ugandan citizen.
- 5 Under the Enguli (Manufacture and Licensing) Act 1966, it is illegal to brew alcohol without a licence. However the Act has never been enforced and it is estimated that over 60 per cent of alcohol in Uganda comes from illicit sources. Straight Talk Foundation (2016), 'Impact of illicit alcohol consumption. "A Community's perspective"', October.
- 6 'Gender-based violence (GBV) is an umbrella term for any harmful act that is perpetrated against a person's will and that is based on socially ascribed (i.e. gender) differences between males and females. It includes acts that inflict physical, sexual or mental harm or suffering, threats of such acts, coercion, and other deprivations of liberty. These acts can occur in public or in private'. In Inter-Agency Standing Committee (2015), 'Guidelines for Integrating Gender-Based Violence Interventions in Humanitarian Action: Reducing risk, promoting resilience and aiding recovery' (https://gbvguidelines.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/2015_IASC_Gender-based_Violence_Guidelines_full-res.pdf)
- 7 The Sphere standards are a set of principles and minimum humanitarian standards in four technical areas of humanitarian response, to ensure basic conditions for life with dignity to people affected by disaster or conflict. Sphere Standards (2018), 'Humanitarian Standards' (<https://spherestandards.org/humanitarian-standards/>)



Collecting water in Palanyua village.

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Introduction

This report examines if and how displacement has impacted on gender roles within South Sudanese refugee communities in northern Uganda, how this has affected gender power relations both in refugee and host communities,⁸ and the implications for conflict- and gender-sensitive refugee programming. It analyses this in the context of access to land and other livelihood opportunities and also looks at the related conflicts and conflict resolution processes in and between refugee and host communities. The report examines how changes in gender roles have affected the decision-making power that refugee men and women have at home and also in the community where they live.

The report is based on research carried out in Adjumani District in northern Uganda between April and August 2019. Adjumani is a largely rural district bordering South Sudan and has a long history of refugee flows in both directions across the border. There are currently almost 210,000 refugees in Adjumani, which has a host community population of approximately 234,000 people, and there are at least 15 refugee settlements.⁹ Research was focused on Adjumani town, villages near refugee settlements and Boroli refugee settlement specifically,¹⁰ which is home to almost 14,000 people from over 40 tribes.

The background section on pages 3–6 outlines the context where the research was carried out. Chapter 2 focuses on how refugees and host communities access and use land and natural resources, the challenges and conflicts that arise as a result and the related gender dynamics. It also examines other income-generating and livelihood strategies available to refugees. Chapter 3 looks at how gender roles have changed as a result of displacement and the impact this has had both on men and women, including gender-based violence (GBV), masculinities and women's participation in decision-making at domestic and community levels and in conflict resolution processes. The conclusion includes recommendations for humanitarian and development agencies, international non-governmental organisations (INGOs) and the Ugandan government on how to better address the differing gender needs and dynamics resulting from this complex and changing context and to ensure their work is conflict sensitive.

Overview of methodology

The research that this report is based on was conducted by Saferworld staff from London and Uganda, in collaboration with staff from the Rural Initiative for Community Empowerment West Nile (RICE-WN).

Research location

The research was conducted in Adjumani District for three reasons. First, the district hosts the second-highest refugee population in northern Uganda. Second, Saferworld has been working in Adjumani since 2014 carrying out capacity building, awareness raising, advocacy, and monitoring, evaluation and learning work focused largely on gender and conflict analysis, conflict sensitivity, and land and human rights. Finally, as a result, Saferworld knows the context well and has established relations with host communities and local and national authorities working with refugees, as well as holding the necessary permissions to work in the district's refugee settlements.

The research focused on three groups of people in Adjumani District:

- 1 South Sudanese men and women refugees who have settled in Boroli refugee settlement,¹¹ and who have been allocated a plot of land there on which they live and receive food or cash rations distributed by the World Food Programme.
- 2 South Sudanese men and women refugees who have self-settled outside the official refugee settlements in Palanyua village and Adjumani town. The majority of these have previously been registered within settlements and still receive food or cash rations.
- 3 Ugandan men and women host community members in Boroli village, Pakele town, Palanyua village and Adjumani town.

Research process

The research team developed and followed research ethics guidelines as well as internal risk mitigation strategies to ensure the conflict sensitivity of the research process. Data collection was carried out in Adjumani District over a ten-day period in April and May 2019. The team conducted 21 key informant interviews and 18 focus groups discussions (FGDs), reaching a total of 177

people – 110 women and 67 men. FGDs were held with the following participants from each of the three groups: i) men and women over 35; ii) men and women between 25 and 35; iii) men only, mixed ages and iv) women only, mixed ages. Key informant interviews were conducted with community leaders, local government officials, and humanitarian and development agency staff.

After preliminary analysis of the data, the research team conducted an analysis workshop in July 2019 in order to interrogate the findings and identify gaps. The team then presented the data to a representative group of participants in Adjumani – through eight FGDs and six key informant interviews – to validate the findings and fill in identified gaps.

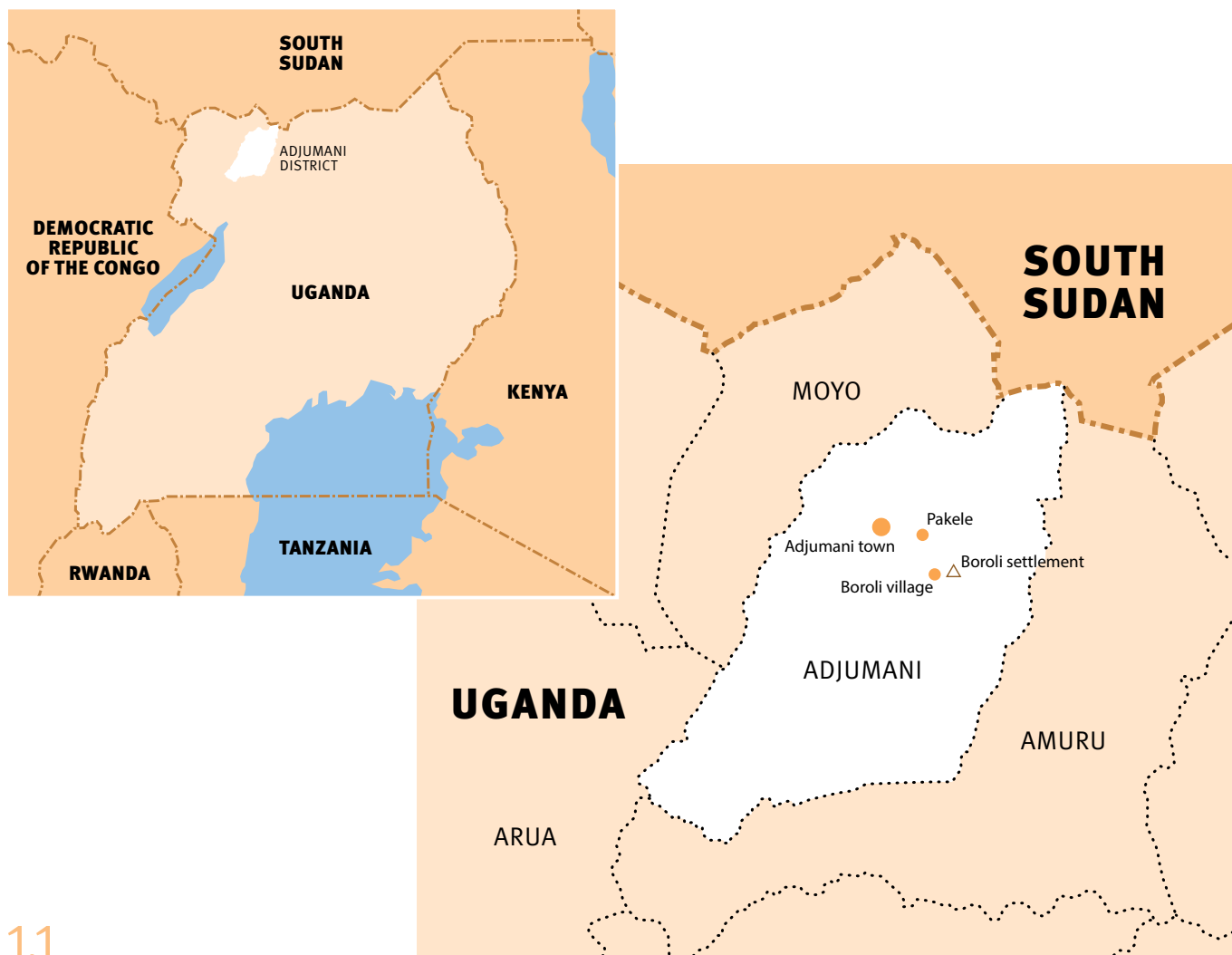
Research limitations

Interviews and FGDs were primarily conducted in the Ma'di language and in South Sudanese Arabic¹² by RICE-WN staff and two professional translators familiar with the context and Saferworld's work. As with any research process that involves translation, there is a risk that some of the meaning or nuance will be lost. The team sought to minimise this risk through a data-collection planning workshop – which included the whole team and translators – to develop shared understanding of the research purposes and process, methods, context, translation, ethics and note-taking. The data collection team also met every evening to debrief on the day and address any translation or other issues.

While criteria were proposed for the FGDs, including age, gender and the number of people taking part, it was not always feasible to achieve these. The most common challenge was people joining discussions as they went along, as well as the merging of age groups. This was often because people came along with friends or saw the FGD happening and wanted to join in.

The research team decided not to ask direct questions about GBV due to the sensitivity of the issue and the need to manage this appropriately.¹³ Therefore, this report does not include specific details related to GBV such as the nature, frequency or intensity of incidents but instead considers the motivating factors for GBV, particularly at the household level.

Adjumani District within Uganda



1.1 Background

Uganda and southern Sudan (now South Sudan) have both experienced periods of political upheaval, conflict and displacement over the last 50 years. As a result, there is a long history of refugee flows in both directions across the border. Uganda has hosted refugees from southern Sudan since the early 1960s, when people fled the first civil war in Sudan.

A significant number of refugees from Sudan and South Sudan have been displaced several times since then due to conflict, and over the years many have chosen to stay and make their life in Uganda. Conversely, from the 1970s until the mid-2000s, many Ugandans sought refuge in southern Sudan, firstly fleeing President Idi Amin and his regime and then later, in the late 1980s and onwards, seeking sanctuary from the conflict between the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) and the Ugandan government and the resulting violence centred in northern Uganda.

While Uganda is now relatively peaceful, civil war has been ongoing in South Sudan since 2013. South Sudan gained its independence in 2011 after decades of conflict and violent struggle with the Sudanese government in Khartoum. However, the optimism that surrounded the creation of the new country was short-lived. In December 2013, a violent confrontation in the capital Juba between President Salva Kiir's forces and those of former Vice President Riek Machar evolved into a series of confrontations along ethnic lines (mainly Nuer and Dinka) in Unity State, before spreading to different parts of the country.¹⁴ Since then, nearly two million people have been internally displaced due to violence and conflict and over two million people – mostly women and children – have fled to neighbouring countries including Ethiopia, Kenya and Uganda.¹⁵

There were substantial and rapid influxes of refugees from South Sudan into Uganda in 2013 and 2016, when violence in South Sudan escalated again.



A woman carries her possessions in a sack on her head and her poultry in her hands as she makes her way to a refugee camp for people fleeing violence over the border in South Sudan.

© Sven Torfinn/Panos Pictures

There are now almost 850,000 South Sudanese refugees from more than 40 different tribes, who have mainly come from former Central and Eastern Equatoria states¹⁶ across the Eastern Equatoria border into Uganda.¹⁷ When refugees arrive they are processed and then allocated a place in a settlement, to which they are then transported. Most of the refugees live in settlements in northern Uganda – in Adjumani, Yumbe, Arua and Moyo districts¹⁸ – with Adjumani District hosting more than a quarter of Uganda’s South Sudanese refugees.¹⁹ Registered refugee numbers represent 47 per cent of the district’s population and have increased the population of Adjumani by over 80 per cent.²⁰

1.1.1 Uganda’s refugee policy

The Ugandan government’s Self-Reliance Strategy, implemented since 1999, aims to transform refugees into agents of self-development who become self-reliant within four years of entering the country. In theory, the Self-Reliance Strategy seeks ‘to integrate services provided to refugees into existing

public service structures and make refugee settlements self-reliant by allocating land to refugees and allowing them free access to government health and education services’.²¹ The Refugees Act of 2006 and the Refugees Regulations of 2010 – which are the current legal provisions that regulate all refugee-related issues and are overseen by Uganda’s Office of the Prime Minister (OPM) – follow these principles.²² This model encourages integrated service provision and access to markets that is meant to benefit both refugees and neighbouring host communities.²³ Refugees who live in settlements are entitled to benefits, including allocated plots of land for living and cultivation as well as regular food and/or cash distributions provided by United Nations (UN) institutions or non-governmental organisations (NGOs) – these are distributed to the person registered as the head of household.²⁴ On paper at least, this means that refugees in Uganda are entitled to work, have relative freedom of movement, and access to services such as healthcare and education.²⁵ This approach has boosted Uganda’s reputation internationally.

However, the Self-Reliance Strategy and the policies that have followed have not been as successful as envisioned. This is partly due to the geographical location of many of the settlements, which are in remote and economically vulnerable areas, and also because when refugees move out of the settlements – to live in urban areas or towns – access to benefits, such as training offered by INGOs, is more limited.²⁶ In addition, despite the relatively progressive policies for living and working, refugees are prohibited from engaging in any form of political activity or representation. They do not have the right of assembly, and are not allowed to participate in political activities, including elections and membership of political parties.²⁷ The definition of what is viewed as ‘political’ is extremely broad, essentially stopping refugees from accessing the rights they are entitled to or expressing views on the political situation in South Sudan. In theory, long-term refugees should be allowed to access citizenship by naturalisation but this appears to be equally challenging, with an often contradictory patchwork of laws and regulations preventing people from attaining citizenship, including some confusion as to whether time spent as a refugee counts towards the required 20-year residency period.

Uganda’s comparatively open refugee policy does not, therefore, necessarily translate into self-reliance or development for refugees.²⁸ The reality is inevitably more complex when such policies are applied in a context where there are different groups of people with limited access to resources and land, and when legal barriers to citizenship and political participation for refugees remain.

1.1.2 Gender roles in South Sudan and Uganda

In order to understand variations in gender roles resulting from displacement, it is important to understand the gender norms and roles refugees bring from South Sudan and how these differ from or are similar to host communities’ gender norms and roles. South Sudan is a strongly patriarchal society where women and young people (men and women aged 18 to 35 years) are largely excluded from decision-making processes. Girls are less likely than boys to receive education and almost half are married before the age of 18.²⁹ South Sudan was ranked 163 out of 167 in the 2019/20 Women, Peace and Security Index (WPSI) – which uses a wide range of indicators to analyse the well-being of women in relation to inclusion, justice and security – and it has one of the highest rates of intimate partner violence in the world at 47 per cent.³⁰ Long-standing patriarchal structures and social norms, which include discrimination and violence against women

Definitions

For the purposes of this research the following definitions are useful to keep in mind:³¹

Gender: socially and politically constructed roles, behaviours and attributes that a given society considers most appropriate and valuable for men and women. Gender is also a system of power which shapes the lives, opportunities, rights, relationships and access to resources of women and men.

Gender norms: sets of expectations about how people of each gender should behave, according to notions of masculinity and femininity. These are not determined by biological sex but rather are specific to particular cultures or societies, and often to particular social groups within those societies.

Masculinity: those behaviours and attributes that societies expect of men and boys. Ideas about what is masculine vary over time, as well as within and between cultures. What is considered masculine is usually more socially valued than things considered feminine.

Femininity: those behaviours and attributes that societies expect of women and girls. Ideas about what is feminine vary over time, as well as within and between cultures. What is considered feminine is usually less socially valued than things considered masculine.

Intersectionality: the idea that different identities interact with each other and cannot be understood separately from one another. Gender identities are shaped by other systems of power and aspects of people’s identities, such as age, marital status, class, caste, race, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation and (dis)ability.

Gender-based violence (GBV): Physical, mental and emotional abuse that is directed against a person on the basis of their gender. GBV includes, but is not limited to: intimate partner violence, rape, sexual assault and harassment, incest, dowry-related violence, female genital mutilation, trafficking in persons, forced abortion, abduction and confinement, verbal abuse and mental harassment.

as a measure to exert power, combined with years of conflict resulting in the breakdown of law and order partly help to explain why these rates are so high.³² Under statutory law in South Sudan, rape is not considered a crime if the perpetrator and the victim are married. Moreover, according to the Code of Civil Procedure, courts will apply customary law to family law disputes, which often results in discriminatory and patriarchal customary practices being enforced by statutory courts. Men are also required to pay a ‘bride price’, usually in the form of cattle, in order to get married. This is an inherently economic transaction in which women and girls are exchanged as currency.³³

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Social and gender norms put pressure on men to behave as protectors of and income providers for their family and community.

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 Uganda was ranked 109 out of 167 in the 2019/20 WPSI, with particularly poor performance in relation to discriminatory norms, intimate partner violence, community safety and education.³⁴ Social and gender norms put pressure on men to behave as protectors of and income providers for their family and community, and women are usually excluded from decision-making and leadership positions both in and outside of the home.

In Uganda, girls are also often married at an early age, with approximately 46 per cent married before they turn 18, polygamy is largely accepted, and the practice of bride price is also prevalent.³⁵ Under the 1998 Land Act, women are guaranteed a say in any major decisions related to land allocation and sales, but customs dictate that men maintain control of resources and household decisions.³⁶ Cases of domestic sexual violence and physical abuse are often not reported and when they are, a largely patriarchal system of local leaders and police means they are not necessarily taken seriously or adequately addressed.³⁷

The displacement of South Sudanese refugees into Uganda has impacted not only their daily lives and routines but also those of the host community. There are many different gender dynamics at play in refugee settlements and surrounding towns and villages. The result is a landscape where previous expectations and roles for men and women are evolving, often leading to increased GBV in families and tensions between refugee and host communities. However, this can also create new opportunities, particularly for women.

Notes

- 8 Host communities refer to the Ugandan people who live alongside refugees, either where refugees have self-settled or where settlements have been created close to Ugandan villages and towns.
- 9 Nyumanzi, Baratuku, Boroli I and II, Pagirinya, Elema, Olua I and II, Ayilo I and II, Agojo, Alere II, Olijji, Mirieyi, Mungula I and II, and Maaji I, II and III. Settlements are usually smaller, with more permanent dwellings and more freedom of movement than camps, as explained in Schmidt A (2003), 'FMO Thematic Guide: Camps Versus Settlements', Forced Migration Online (<https://www.alnap.org/system/files/content/resource/files/main/fmoo21.pdf>)
- 10 Boroli settlement comprises Boroli I (opened on 1 January 2014) and its extension, Boroli II (opened in 2015). UNHCR (2018), 'Uganda Refugee Response Monitoring. Settlement Fact Sheet: Boroli', June.
- 11 Boroli settlement was chosen because Saferworld had already conducted research there and staff had contacts who could help mobilise people. Boroli settlement is located in Pakele sub-county in Adjumani District and has an area of 103 hectares. Boroli is the fifth largest settlement in Adjumani District, and comprises Boroli I, which opened in 2014, and its extension, Boroli II, established in 2015. The vast majority of refugees residing at Boroli settlement are South Sudanese, with a minority from Ethiopia and Somalia.
- 12 Ma'di is widely spoken in Adjumani and also by many South Sudanese refugees, while South Sudanese Arabic is the other language most commonly used.
- 13 According to the Women, Peace, and Security Index of Georgetown University, Uganda ranks 109 out of 167 countries and 30 per cent of people suffer from intimate partner violence. South Sudan ranks 163 out of 167 and 47 per cent of people suffer from intimate partner violence. Georgetown Institute for Women, Peace, and Security (2020), 'Women, Peace and Security Index' (<https://giwps.georgetown.edu/the-index/>)
- 14 As part of initial negotiations for a peace deal in 2018, it was agreed that Riek Machar would be reinstated as first Vice President, with three other people holding the office of Vice President. However, the negotiations have stalled and with the deadline for forming a unity government by February he is yet to be reinstated. *Aljazeera* (2019), 'S Sudan's Kiir, Machar agree to form unity government by February', 17 December (<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2019/12/sudan-kiir-machar-agree-form-unity-government-february-191217140121044.html>)
- 15 Of these refugees, 37.6 per cent are in Uganda. UNHCR (2019), 'Uganda comprehensive refugee response portal', 31 October (<https://ugandarefugees.org/en/dataviz/62?sv=0&geo=220>); OCHA (2019), 'South Sudan humanitarian snapshot', July (https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/ss_20190822_humanitarian_snapshot_july.pdf)
- 16 In October 2015, Salva Kiir announced the rearrangement of states in South Sudan, with the total number rising from ten to 28 and later to 32. However, this was rejected by the opposition and is still a highly contentious issue. More information in: International Crisis Group (2019), 'Salvaging South Sudan's Fragile Peace Deal', 13 March.
- 17 The Lutheran World Federation (2017), 'A refugee's journey', 23 March; OCHA (2019), 'South Sudan humanitarian snapshot', August (https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/ss_20190927_humanitarian_snapshot_august.pdf)
- 18 UNHCR (2019), 'Uganda comprehensive refugee response portal: Regional overview of the South Sudanese refugee population', 31 October (<https://ugandarefugees.org/en/dataviz/62?sv=0&geo=220>)
- 19 There are at least 15 refugee settlements in Adjumani: Nyumanzi, Baratuku, Boroli, Pagirinya, Elema, Olua I and II, Ayilo I and II, Agojo, Alere II, Olijji, Mirieyi, Mungula I and II, and Maaji I, II and III. For detailed information and a map, visit the UNHCR Uganda website: UNHCR (2019), 'Uganda comprehensive refugee response portal', 31 October (<https://ugandarefugees.org/en/country/uga>)
- 20 Host community population was 234,300 as of August 2019 and refugee population was measured as 206,955 as of September 2019. UNHCR (2019), 'Uganda comprehensive refugee response portal', 31 October (<https://ugandarefugees.org/en/country/uga>)
- 21 Hovil L (2018), 'Uganda's refugee policies: The history, the politics, the way forward', International Refugee Rights Initiative, October, p 5.
- 22 The World Bank (2016), 'Uganda's Progressive Approach to Refugee Management', 31 August (<https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/fragilityconflictviolence/brief/ugandas-progressive-approach-refugee-management>)
- 23 UNDP (2017), 'Uganda's contribution to Refugee Protection and Management', June.
- 24 Poole L (2019), 'The refugee response in northern Uganda. Resources beyond international humanitarian assistance', Humanitarian Policy Group, February.
- 25 By law refugees need permission to leave settlements or relocate. However, in the vast majority of cases, refugees can move around freely. However, some do not, either because they've been told about the law or have been stopped and fined/harassed by authorities for being outside without a permission document. The documents are issued by OPM in the settlements. International Refugee Rights Initiative (2015), 'South Sudanese refugees in Adjumani District, Uganda: Telling a new story?', July.
- 26 Tigranna Zakaryan T, Antara L (2018), 'Political Participation of Refugees. The Case of South Sudanese and Congolese Refugees in Uganda', International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance, p 10.
- 27 Ibid.
- 28 UNHCR (2018), 'Analysis of Refugee Vulnerability in Uganda and Recommendations for Improved Targeting of Food Assistance', April.
- 29 Saferworld (2020), "'Like the military of the village": security, justice and community defence groups in south-east South Sudan', February (<https://www.saferworld.org.uk/resources/publications/1245-alike-the-military-of-the-villagea-security-justice-and-community-defence-groups-in-south-east-south-sudan>)
- 30 George Town Institute for Women, Peace and Security (2019), 'Women, Peace and Security Index 2019/20' (<https://giwps.georgetown.edu/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/WPS-Index-2019-20-Report.pdf>)
- 31 Saferworld (2016), 'Gender analysis of conflict', pp 6–7 (<https://www.saferworld.org.uk/resources/publications/1076-gender-analysis-of-conflict>)
- 32 Global Women's Institute of the George Washington University, International Rescue Committee, CARE International UK and Forcier Consulting (2017), 'No Safe Place: A lifetime of violence for conflict-affected women and girls in South Sudan'.
- 33 K4D Helpdesk (2018), 'Livestock and conflict in South Sudan', 29 October (https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5c6abd6ec40f0b61a22792fd5/484_Livestock_and_Conflict_in_South_Sudan.pdf)
- 34 Ibid.
- 35 Ninsiima AB, Leye E, Michielsen K, Kemigisha E, Nyakato VN, Coene G (2018), "'Girls Have More Challenges; They Need to Be Locked Up": A Qualitative Study of Gender Norms and the Sexuality of Young Adolescents in Uganda', *Environmental Research and Public Health* 15 (2), p 3.
- 36 Focus on Land in Africa (2011), 'Women and Customary Land Rights in Uganda', April (<http://www.focusonland.com/countries/womens-customary-rights-in-uganda/>)
- 37 Ibid.



A South Sudanese refugee attending her vegetable stall in Boroli settlement.

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2

Livelihoods, gender and conflict

Finding a way to make a living is challenging for both host community members and settlement-based and self-settled refugees in Adjumani. This is a largely rural district with few urban centres, and people are mostly reliant on their ability to grow enough crops or access items like grass for thatching or charcoal to sell in order to buy other necessities. While there are some small-scale businesses and entrepreneurial activities that provide other income-generating opportunities, it can be a challenge for refugees to access these, partly because settlements are often located away from urban centres.

Ugandan refugee policies include provisions for refugees to access employment in the formal sector; however, accessing such jobs is perceived by refugees to be difficult, if not impossible. Prospective employees report being asked for a valid national identity card, which refugees are not eligible for, or being asked for other documents that they have not been provided with. As a result, they feel they are excluded from formal employment, which is a source of frustration given many have qualifications and had good jobs or an easier economic life in South Sudan. “Life in South Sudan was better. I had a saloon that I was operating and a garden where I grew my crops. In Uganda I am unable to do this because I lost my capital and the only way to survive is the rations”.³⁸ A small number of settlement-based refugees have found work with NGOs, often as translators, cooks or cleaners, but these jobs are few and far between.

The majority of refugees are therefore reliant on the monthly food or cash rations they receive, but these only meet basic nutritional needs and do not include necessities such as soap or sanitary items, nor do they cover school fees and related costs. Refugees therefore need to find other livelihood opportunities to supplement their income and support themselves and their families. These options and their gendered dimensions and implications will now be discussed.

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Life in South Sudan was better. I had a saloon that I was operating and a garden where I grew my crops. In Uganda I am unable to do this because I lost my capital and the only way to survive is the rations.

A self-settled refugee woman.

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2.1 Land and access to natural resources

In Adjumani, both the Ugandan host community and South Sudanese refugees are heavily dependent on the ability to access and use land. Land is needed for a variety of reasons, including the cultivation of crops to feed families and/or to sell, grazing for animals, charcoal production, firewood collection and thatching for roofs. The post-2016 influx of South Sudanese refugees has exacerbated pre-existing pressures and tensions over land ownership. The sheer number of refugees and the speed with which they arrived meant that the land that the Ugandan government had negotiated for the settlements was simply not enough. As a result, the size of the plots allocated to each refugee household is not sufficient, so they must negotiate with the host community to access additional land to be able to fulfil their daily needs.

2.1.1 Land ownership for host communities and related conflicts

Understanding how land ownership works within the host community is important, as it helps explain the context in which refugees are arriving and trying to create new lives. Land is a complicated issue in Uganda, especially in northern Uganda – including Adjumani – where the majority of land is held under the customary land tenure system,³⁹ land ownership documentation is rare and decision-making power resides with male clan elders. A history of conflict and the exploitation of resource-rich areas have led to displacement and land disputes, exacerbated by the fact that people are unable to prove ownership.⁴⁰ Many of those who were displaced during the two decades of conflict with the LRA in the late 1980s, 1990s and early 2000s returned to their homes to find a different landscape. Natural markers, such as

trees or water courses that had traditionally outlined boundaries in the absence of formal documentation, had changed or disappeared – resulting in opposing claims of ownership.

While Adjumani was not the most heavily affected district during this time, there were high levels of insecurity and conflict leading to displacement within the district. During

the conflict and as people returned, some land was claimed by the government, while wealthy individuals and companies made moves to claim

other land based on evolving laws and regulations. Land grabs and land disputes are ongoing in most areas of northern Uganda, including Adjumani, and are the most common source of conflict and tension within and between communities.⁴¹

Conflict within families also arises when one family member decides to sell communal land (often to speculators or investors) without the permission of other family members. “We have conflicts between brothers. Most times, such pieces of land do not have papers, they are customary. So it becomes easy for this young man to sell it, without the consent. They know this is the plot for their parents. So they will get somebody to buy this plot”.⁴² In addition, there are often conflicts between brothers over boundaries when fathers divide land out between their sons.

In recent years there has also been an increase in the sale of land. Previously, small plots of land might have been sold to raise money for a wedding, for medical treatment or to send a child to university. However, host community members say that life has become more difficult since the refugees arrived and that the only way to make money to buy food is to sell land. They recognise that this is a short-term solution but it still happens. As one woman told us, “The seller becomes the labourer, you sell today, tomorrow you have to dig the foundations. You waste your money and then have to labour!”⁴³ A number of women respondents expressed disapproval of this approach, but as men family members have the final say there is little they can do. “Men don’t have a futuristic vision, they don’t like to work. They will sell off land today and live off that money for a year and then grab land. A vicious cycle that spins faster and faster”.⁴⁴ It is worth noting however that this trend is also visible in other, non-refugee hosting districts, so it is a more general issue across northern Uganda than host community members in Adjumani realise.

Any conflict regarding customary land is, in the first instance, usually dealt with through the customary system and taken to the elders to resolve. If it cannot be resolved then the dispute is taken to the village leader, known as the LC1, and then referred higher up the local council hierarchy.⁴⁵ However, formal interference is often not welcome, and in one case the LC3 (the local government council at the sub-county level) was told: “you cannot come and handle our issues, these are family businesses”.⁴⁶ Cases can also be referred to the land area committees, although according to respondents there is a facilitation fee for this which can make it inaccessible. If a case does go through these processes and one party still does not agree with the outcome then the matter can also be taken to court; however, this entails fees that are often unaffordable.⁴⁷ This dual system, whereby informal

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Land grabs and land
disputes are ... the most
common source of conflict
and tension within and
between communities.

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customary mechanisms exist alongside the formal legal system, is supposed to be complementary but in reality can often result in ‘forum shopping’ for those with financial means, further undermining the poor and vulnerable. The fees required to access the formal system mean they are in fact inaccessible to most, so the majority rely on traditional land governance systems. While in theory decisions made through the customary system are supposed to be legally binding, they tend to be harder to enforce in the longer term and are often challenged in the formal system by those with means.

2.1.2 Gender and land in host communities

According to host community respondents, married women are usually consulted by their husbands about the use or sale of land but the final decision comes down to the man. However, women do appear to have more decision-making power over what crops are planted for household use, as they are responsible for deciding what should be eaten and are expected to prepare food for their family. On the other hand, men are more likely to cultivate and grow crops for sale, which are then taken by women to the markets.

Unmarried women and girls have little say over any decisions regarding land as it is assumed they will move to their husband’s home when they marry and so their brothers are given precedence when it comes to the family’s land. However, in some cases unmarried women and girls are given access to land at their father’s home while they still live there and some men said that they kept land available for their sister(s) if she needed to move back home. In many cases, when a woman divorces or becomes widowed, her husband’s family reclaims the land that was allocated to her husband and the woman is left landless and forced back to her parental household, as she cannot simultaneously have demanded a bride price and own land. “The strongest barrier here is the traditional belief that women don’t have ownership to land. If you are born in a home and you have brothers, the land belongs to the boys. And you the girl, because you are married, you will only get land in the husband’s home”.⁴⁸

As a result of this belief – which is still pervasive – widowed women are particularly vulnerable. In some cases, a woman might be ‘inherited’ by one of her husband’s brothers (confirming the value of women as property or currency), but if she is unwilling or this practice is not subscribed to then it is likely her husband’s family will grab her land. If a woman has children then she is more likely to be allowed to stay as

children have a right to their father’s land, but childless widows often experience intimidation and harassment and are told that they should go back to their father’s home, where they may or may not be allocated land of their own. “You are left with nowhere and nothing and nowhere to go and your brothers keep telling you the only land you have is your husband’s but they have already chased you away”.⁴⁹

Officially, widows can appeal to the LC1 and LC3 and are supposed to be protected by the elders, but these systems tend to be dominated by men, leaving women once again vulnerable to discrimination and at risk of losing their land. Many interviewees told of situations where widows had been intimidated by their husband’s family into leaving their land. There are, however, cases where widows have won the right to stay on their land.

One woman’s experience illustrates how it can work: “I was taken to police by the children of my brother-in-law who said that the land was not mine but theirs. The judge brought the case back from the court to be solved by the elders. The elders ruled in my favour and the land was given back to me. The judge advised that I should take the accuser to court but since I am a person of God I left the matter. I now have the ownership of the land”.⁵⁰ When there are tensions over the demarcation of customary land, women-headed households are particularly vulnerable to land grabs unless they can mobilise men family members to protect them.

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The strongest barrier here is the traditional belief that women don’t have ownership to land. If you are born in a home and you have brothers, the land belongs to the boys.

A local government official.

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2.2 Access to land for refugees

Uganda’s OPM aims to allocate land to refugees on arrival. The land is registered under the name of the head of household, who is also the only person permitted to collect the cash or food rations for their family members. The aim is to give refugees a plot of land on which to build their home as well as additional land for agriculture (either as part of their own plot or somewhere else). However, while this happened previously, the influx of South Sudanese refugees in 2016 meant there was not enough time to adequately plan the layout of the settlements nor was there enough land to ensure the plots were big enough for agriculture. Plot sizes were reduced from 100x100 to 30x30 metres, so are only big enough to

build a house on and perhaps have a small kitchen garden.

Under the 2006 Refugees Act and 2010 Refugees Regulations,⁵¹ refugees are allowed to buy and own land as leaseholders, but most lack the financial resources to be able to do so. They therefore need to find another way to secure access to additional land if they want to cultivate crops – both to eat at home and to sell at the market for cash to use for other essentials, such as personal hygiene items and soap. Land rental is expensive, costing around UGX50,000–80,000 (USD\$13–22) per hectare per year.⁵² As the majority of negotiation processes and the ensuing agreements are done on an informal basis, refugees are in a very vulnerable position.

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When women who have no husbands go to ask for land they [the host community] give them land easily but with a hidden agenda.

Legal incentives officer,
Boroli II settlement.

Both men and women settlement-based and self-settled refugees have had experiences of digging the land and cultivating crops only for the landlord to claim the land back after a year. Refugees believe that in many cases they are used as free labour to break virgin land and test whether it is fertile, so it can be claimed back after a year – in the best-case scenario, they are then offered an alternative, unbroken piece of land instead, and so the process starts again. “They give it to you for one year and then they take it from you. You dig and they take it back so that they can plant. As soon as you finish digging, they come and plant”.⁵³ In other cases, the family members of the individual with whom refugees have entered into an agreement have chased refugees off the land, claiming that the individual did not have the right to enter into the agreement, which is certainly possible.

2.2.1 Conflict and gender issues related to access to land for refugees

As has been described, both settlement-based and self-settled refugees (regardless of gender) feel that the host community exploit them as free labour and then take their land back. This directly impacts their ability to provide for their family, as they no longer have access to other suitable land on which to grow crops. While there have been no documented serious violent incidents stemming from this to date, it was an issue that was raised in every FGD held with the refugees and was mentioned by both men and women. A woman explained how “I give the money to the landowner to rent that land. I have also cultivated the land, well prepare [sic] it for planting. So before I plant in the land, the landowner sells it off to another person and I don’t get a refund. So I end up losing it twice”.⁵⁴ Given the tensions over

land ownership in Adjumani more generally, this is an issue that needs further attention.

South Sudanese women tend to find it easier to negotiate with landlords and have been known to enter into intimate relationships with host community men during the process. There have been cases of intermarriage, helped by the fact that many refugees are of the same Madi tribe as a large proportion of the host community in Adjumani and therefore speak the same language (Ma’di). The reasons women enter into these relationships are complicated and in some cases may be a genuine choice. However, women are undeniably vulnerable to sexual exploitation during negotiations – negotiations that are unavoidable in order for them to provide for their families.

“When women who have no husbands go to ask for land they [the host community] give them land easily but with a hidden agenda. Often there is a courtship between the owner of the land and the person who went to acquire it and the price given for renting would not be the same. The women are given land cheaply because of courtship”.⁵⁵

However, there are also positive examples of collaboration between the host community and South Sudanese refugees due to shared experiences. Many Ugandans living in Adjumani lived as refugees in South Sudan during the LRA conflict and had previously met some of the South Sudanese who are now refugees themselves. Young men in Boroli II settlement said that if they didn’t have money they could approach a friend from the host community who might give them land to use anyway.⁵⁶

In Adjumani – like other refugee-receiving districts in northern Uganda – due to the prevalence of customary land ownership, land for settlements is provided by landlords from the community, either when the government contacts landowners or, in some cases, when land owners themselves contact the government to offer part of their land. In both cases a memorandum of understanding is signed. In some districts there have been concerns about the details of these memorandums of understanding, the ability of communities to understand them given low literacy levels, and the length of time they cover. Some of the concerns raised by respondents in Adjumani suggest a similar lack of transparency.⁵⁷

There have also been tensions over the lack of compensation offered to the host community for providing land for refugee settlements, with community members feeling that they have not benefitted as much as they should have and that some people are profiting from the situation. A male clan leader in Pakele town told us that “We understand that some local landlords have been

privately rewarded. But the land belongs to the community. So cultural leaders are of the opinion that if OPM wants to appreciate the landlords, they should consult the community, they should consult the cultural leaders. I think that the appreciation instead of going to an individual, it should go to the community”.⁵⁸

While officially landlords do not receive any monetary compensation from the government, there are expectations that communities that provide land will benefit in other ways; for example, through access to health facilities, markets and schools provided for refugees and through better road infrastructure. Development agencies and INGOs are also supposed to ensure that livelihood and other programmes targeted at refugees benefit the host community on a 70/30 per cent basis.⁵⁹ In reality, many communities that have handed over their land have expressed disappointment or resentment due to a misunderstanding or misrepresentation of the perceived benefits they expected to receive in exchange. This is exacerbated by the perception that they are being further disadvantaged compared to refugees who receive cash and food aid.⁶⁰

However, it was also clear that host communities are generally benefitting from better-resourced health centres and access to new markets and schools, as one host community woman explained: “Before the refugees came we lacked a market here or a trading centre where we could easily access little things where we could maybe get soap, we would go up to Pakele to buy certain things but on the arrival of the refugees we at least have a trading centre very near”.⁶¹

2.3 Access to and use of natural resources

Linked to the importance of access to land is the ability to access land-related natural resources.⁶² The increased competition for these resources has created tensions.

Host community

Women are largely responsible for collecting grass for thatching and firewood, while men engage in charcoal burning and brick making and collect poles for house construction. The host community reported that it is harder to find resources now, and that women in particular are having to travel further afield, which respondents said makes them feel

vulnerable and adds to their daily burden of chores. It is difficult to establish the extent to which this is due to the increased refugee population and the environmental degradation resulting from this or if it is due to environmental pressure resulting from climate change, or a combination of both. However, many in the host community believe it is due to the refugees. One man reported that “since these refugees came we have been experiencing a number of challenges, you find that it is very difficult for women to get grass for thatching because the refugees have already cut all the grass”.⁶³

A common complaint from both host men and women was that refugees cut grass and poles earlier in the season than the host community, that they cut grass while it is still green, and that they don’t know how to cut bamboo poles in a sustainable way so that the plant keeps growing and producing for future years. As one host community woman said, “We normally, traditionally used to start cutting grass from December up to January but with the arrival of these people their women start cutting grass from October and so by the time it reaches December there is no grass”.⁶⁴ Because refugees are only given the bare necessities to build their home they have no choice but to cut grass and poles to supplement what they have and to continue to maintain their homes. Service providers should be doing more to ensure refugees are provided with what they need in order to minimise both the environmental impact and tensions with the host community.

Firewood for cooking and charcoal production is similarly becoming harder to find. The host community claim that while they know what kind of trees to cut, refugees cut trees regardless of their size. Some host community men allege that it is no longer possible for them to burn trees for charcoal because there are not enough trees left.⁶⁵ This scarcity impacts on the host communities’ ability to make money to buy soap and other small necessities, as the sale of charcoal is a key income generator for them.

Refugees

The difficulties refugees face in accessing land are mirrored in the challenges they face accessing natural resources. While settlement-based refugees said that there were some host communities that were friendly and that let them take grass and firewood, many reported problems and said that host community members have attacked them and driven them away. It is common for host community members to burn grass as it is seen as a way to

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Since these refugees came we have been experiencing a number of challenges.

Host community member in Boroli village.

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refresh the land before planting again. However, refugees perceive this to be a way of stopping them from collecting grass and instead profiting from it by selling it to them.

“There are some host communities who are good and you can go to their place and cut some grass and come back with it without any complaints or fighting but there are those ones who wait for you to cut and tie it very well to take back and then they come and ask ‘where are you taking this, it is not yours, you do not have orders over it, this land does not belong to you so please leave it’ and you go home with nothing even though you have cut and tied it”.⁶⁶

Women refugees have been most affected by difficulties in accessing grass and firewood both because these tasks are seen as ‘women’s jobs’ and because of the prevalence of women-headed households. As a result, South Sudanese women are shouldering the burden of finding the necessary resources to provide for their family and facing the antagonism of the host community in the process.

Self-settled refugees appear less reliant on natural resources, as they tend to live in towns or villages in rented houses – so they don’t need thatch or poles because the landlord is, in theory, responsible for the maintenance of the property. Refugees settled in Paridi village reported that host community members let them collect firewood for cooking at home but not wood to make charcoal.⁶⁷ In Mgbere village, one self-settled refugee explained: “Here we are renting, so it is for the landowner to come and thatch the house, it is not our role. We also don’t use firewood for cooking as it’s town so it is charcoal which we buy from town”.⁶⁸ Other women said that if they did need firewood it was very hard to find and they had to travel far to get it.

2.3.1 Conflicts related to access to natural resources

It was made clear by everyone who was interviewed – both from the host community and settlement-based and self-settled refugees – that there is a daily struggle to find natural resources. Women from the host community and settlement-based and self-settled women refugees are the most affected by conflict over access to natural resources because gathering them is seen as a woman’s job. Refugees have been chased away by groups of host community women, sometimes wielding machetes (which they have been using to cut grass), and have often fled, leaving the grass they have collected behind.⁶⁹ Host community women also say that if they are out in small groups, they are targeted by refugees if the refugees are in larger groups. It would appear that these encounters are usually not

physically violent but the quarrelling is unpleasant for everyone. “We the ladies feel so bad because of the quarrels and the fights we get in the bush”.⁷⁰ At the heart of these tensions is the need for both host community and refugee women to fulfil their expected roles and bring home the resources that their family needs.

A positive model for resolving some of these disputes has been developed in Boroli village. An Environment Committee has been established which comprises two women and three men from the host community and the same number from the refugee community.⁷¹ The members look into how resources are used and report the destruction of trees and depletion of resources to the LC1 and the Refugee Welfare Committee.⁷² Once an issue has been reported, the elected members assemble with the LC1, the Refugee Welfare Committee and the wider community in order to settle it. As a result of such meetings and because of the committee’s existence, host community members report that the rampant cutting of trees has reduced. The committee has also marked the trees to show which of them are not supposed to be cut, and anyone found to have cut a marked tree is fined.⁷³

2.4 Cash and food rations

The majority of settlement-based and self-settled refugees in Adjumani, including those who had employment in South Sudan, rely almost exclusively on the food and cash rations distributed by the World Food Programme and other partners. As mentioned earlier, South Sudanese refugees are registered by the UN High Commissioner for Refugees on arrival in Uganda and are transported to a settlement where they are allocated a plot and a ration card. Rations are distributed as food or cash, and must be collected by the head of household named on the ration card. The majority of heads of household are women as they are normally the first to arrive from South Sudan, but also because they are more likely to be in the settlement at distribution times, whereas men might come and go from South Sudan. In addition, it seems that donors tend to prioritise registering women as heads of household to promote women’s participation and because women are perceived to make more responsible decisions about how rations are used for the benefit of the family.

Currently, in Boroli I and Boroli II, one person in the family is allocated either 12 kilograms of grains and



A South Sudanese refugee tending his goats on his plot of land.

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a small amount of beans, oil and salt, or UGX31,000 per month. If a refugee chooses to live outside a settlement and this is officially notified to the settlement management partners, they lose access to their plot and rations, but most people don't notify officials that they are leaving so they continue to go into the settlement on distribution days and receive their rations. Indeed, the majority of self-settled refugees are heavily reliant on rations. The food rations usually consist of beans, cereals and oil. The composition varies but most of the time sorghum and soya beans are provided, together with palm oil. The grains that are distributed need grinding however, which costs money, and the combination of the food items distributed, even though they are in line with basic nutritional standards, does not provide enough of a diverse diet.⁷⁴

Consequently, refugees who opt for the food rations end up selling part of their ration to buy other ingredients or to pay to grind the cereals they are given. As illustrated by a refugee woman in Boroli II, "they give us grains and beans. But of course you can't cook these just like that, you need flour but you

are not given money to take these to a grinding machine. So you need to figure out how to do that. This is what is forcing us to sell a portion of what we get so that we are able to get money and grind it and get flour, then you need to buy salt to add to the sauce and spices to add to the food".⁷⁵ Refugees also sell their food so that they have enough money to buy small things that are not provided by aid agencies, like soap or sanitary items. "The reason as to why we end up selling what we get is because we have daughters who are staying with us. They have reached the age of puberty and are undergoing menstruation. But we are not provided with sanitary pads".⁷⁶

The provision of livestock to some settlement-based refugees has also caused some problems between communities. A number of NGOs have given goats to settlement-based refugees without thinking through how they can access grazing for the goats and what happens when the goats reproduce, increasing the pressure to find grazing. "Partners that support refugee communities with livelihoods, give them goats and cows. You find that these goats and cows don't have allocated or gazetted land for grazing.

So these animals start destroying the crops, people's gardens. This is one of the major conflicts that we have".⁷⁷ When goats are caught destroying crops they are 'arrested' and the owners must then pay a fine of UGX50,000 (and sometimes more) to have them released. These fines can be too expensive for the refugees to pay and so they are forced to leave their animals behind. In other cases, host community members have allegedly stolen goats and taken them home.⁷⁸ Host community members do acknowledge that their animals (mainly cows and pigs) stray onto refugees' land and destroy their crops too. When this happens, the animals are taken to the Refugee Welfare Committee and the LC1 is then involved in negotiating the release of the animal.⁷⁹ Self-settled refugees complained that host communities let pigs roam in their vegetable gardens but that there was nothing they could do to address this. While the sources of the conflicts go both ways, it is clear that the provision of livestock to refugees in Boroli I and II has caused significant problems and that implementors of future projects should think through the wider impact of such support and ensure such interventions will not create conflict but are instead sensitive to the impact they will have on conflict dynamics.

2.5 Access to and dynamics within markets

Since the refugees arrived and the settlements in Adjumani were established, more markets have been created both in the settlements and the areas surrounding them, and existing markets in these areas have increased in size. This has not only provided settlement-based and self-settled refugees with places to sell their goods, including part of their food rations, but has also meant that host community women often have less distance to travel, which reduces their daily burden. "Women

would go up to Pakele market and that is very far from here. When the refugees came there was a new market here, in the camp, where our women can take their vegetables to sell and that is closer to our village".⁸⁰

This change has allowed some host community women to access an income-generating activity for the first time: "Initially women here used to stay

at home but now they go to our rural trading centres and do small businesses. This changed since the refugees came because before there were no trading centres near here. There was only one market which was far and they used to stay at home. But now that the refugees have come, they also need some things from the host communities and the women have now resorted to doing business and selling such items to them".⁸¹

It has also meant that some families have changed the way they cultivate their land so that they can produce more crops to sell. Traditionally, families focused on providing vegetables for themselves and producing a bit more to sell in the market in order to buy other items. Now they have started to consider the possibility of a greater commercialisation of their crops. As a host community leader explained, "my people never had the culture of growing for market or export. But now they have understood that if they produce food, they can sell it because people are asking for it. Clients are coming from the settlement. This has benefitted our people, our women. It makes women less dependent on men".⁸²

Host community and refugee women sell side-by-side in the markets – host community women are able to access markets within the settlements and refugee women can access markets outside the settlements, though this varies depending on the location of the market. However, some markets located in host community areas have been relocated or have lost trade to markets that are closer to the settlements. As a woman in Pakele explained, "we have a market here and we used to sell some food there and it was the main place for buying and selling. Since refugees came, the market has been shifted from here to the camp where they are residing. I am a widow and my husband left a child with me that I'm taking care of. It is hard for me to leave the child behind and go to the market in the settlement".⁸³

While markets are a space where refugees and the host community – mainly women – interact, the commercial and competitive nature of this activity can generate conflicts and grievances. Settlement-based and self-settled refugee women were most likely to raise concerns. Some complained that they feel discriminated against by the host community women and also by the market managers, who allegedly charge refugees more for a stall. "When it is the host community, they are charged less but when it is a refugee who is bringing something to sell at the market we are charged expensively so we end up not even gaining. The profit we would have been making we have used it to pay the tax officer at the market".⁸⁴ Market managers are instructed to charge the same amount to everyone for the stalls and to issue a receipt as proof of payment, and other

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Initially women here
used to stay at home but
now they go to our rural
trading centres and do
small businesses.

A local government official.

”

refugees and host community people interviewed – mainly men – refuted these accusations.⁸⁵ Regardless of whether the difference in charges is true, the perception of refugee women is that they are being discriminated against – a perception that is in line with the power dynamics in place when women refugees try to access land and natural resources and the challenges they face from host communities, as mentioned in the previous section. Refugee women also claimed that host community women often make them feel uncomfortable, and that they “insult us and say that we are getting free food [from the settlements] whereas they need to buy from the different villages, very far, and they incur a lot of costs and we want them to have losses”.⁸⁶

Some refugees alluded to the language barrier as a potential source of minor conflicts and misunderstandings. Even though some South Sudanese and Ugandan people speak the same language because they come from the same tribe, many others do not understand each other. Some refugees learn the language of the host community, but many speak South Sudanese Arabic, which is not understood by most of the Ugandan people from Adjumani. This creates misunderstandings and complicates even the most basic conversations that take place at markets. As an example, one of the refugee men told us that “most of us we speak Arabic but this side people speak English and the local languages. You don’t understand them and it brings arguments. But actually the person was trying to say something positive. If our wives could learn the language, they’d go to the market and not quarrel. Our children know the language and when we send them to the market place they don’t have problems. Language barrier brings segregation to the market place”.⁸⁷ As it is women who interact the most at the markets, it is women who are most likely to be involved in these kinds of minor conflicts and to be affected by them.

Many people from the host communities believe that since the refugees arrived there has been less food than before. As one host community woman observed, “as the food ration of the refugees is small, they come looking for food in the villages. And they are given money to buy food. So, they come to your house and even if you didn’t want to sell your food, you sell it to them because they are begging you”.⁸⁸ Host community women also argue that refugees sell their produce in larger cups at the market but for the same price, thereby undercutting them. Self-settled refugee women said that they use bigger cups because they get beans from the camp so they have more to sell, while host community women have to buy them. This can cause many arguments in the market, with host community women insulting refugees because they are causing

them to make losses. In this rural region, the presence of refugee women as competitor sellers at the market awakens grievances in some of the host community women and ignites small conflicts that hinder social cohesion. However, overall most acknowledged the benefits the refugees have brought to the area in this regard, such as enabling host community men and women to access markets more easily, not only because new markets have been created but also because roads have been built.

2.6 Other income-generating activities for refugees

As well as relying on food and cash distributions and partly using these to acquire other items to fulfil their basic needs, some refugees have secured other income-generating activities. These are usually small contributions that help to alleviate their precarious situations. It is mainly women who take these initiatives forward, in part because they are based on activities that in South Sudan are usually performed by women, such as hair braiding, tailoring, making chapattis or other snacks such as cassava fritters, and brewing alcohol. While these income-generating activities provide a meagre but valuable contribution to their households, women encounter a number of constraints when trying to set them in motion. One such constraint is limited access to finance. Because women use their cash ration or sell some of their food ration to start an activity, they often run out of the necessary investment to keep their business going, even if this is a small sum. For example, one of the refugee women explained that she makes chapattis with the oil provided in her food distribution: “That is at the beginning of the month. By the middle of the month the cooking oil is over. And even the grains are getting over, so I need to put in money that I made with this business to buy these. The business ends up collapsing because I don’t have more cooking oil to make chapattis and the money I use to buy it is now being used to buy food”.⁸⁹

Tailoring is a difficult option as most of the women refugees do not own sewing machines and the skills

“**Most of us we speak Arabic but this side people speak English and the local languages. You don’t understand them and it brings arguments. But actually the person was trying to say something positive.**

A self-settled refugee man.

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In some cases, women refugees turn to exploitative coping strategies to help alleviate their situation and ensure they can provide for their family.

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trainings offered by NGOs are few. Self-settled refugees living in nearby villages or towns also pointed to problems of accessing NGO support because this is only given and announced in the settlements. Even if they are registered and can attend any training or distribution of goods or technical materials, they usually hear about it when the opportunity has passed. One woman said “I rushed and went there because I heard they were distributing the tailoring machines but because for me I am residing in town they told me ‘no we don’t give these to those who are self-settled’”.⁹⁰ There are still challenges for those lucky enough to access training, as the training courses are too short and therefore don’t provide women with the necessary skills to compete with existing tailors. Even those refugees who have tailoring skills and access to a sewing machine still have to compete with host community tailors and with each other. As one self-settled refugee woman said, “Sometimes even the money you get from the sales each day is very, very little but of course you cannot say let me give up you continue and say that maybe tomorrow will be better”.⁹¹

Brewing alcohol is another income-generating activity carried out by some refugee women, using part of their grain ration. However, this source of income is also a source of dispute, as men in the settlements are often drunk and this increases the possibility of domestic violence. “The women use the ration for brewing to get income but it brings problems because of drunkards [men]. The drinking has increased because you have nothing to do”, said a self-settled refugee man.⁹² This view – that there is nothing to do – is interesting given that women refugees are trying hard to secure livelihood opportunities to sustain their families and is perhaps a clear indicator of what men see as acceptable ‘men’s work’, of which there is little available, and what is seen as ‘women’s work’.

The fact that there are few regular, or what men perceive to be appropriate, income-generating activities that people can undertake in Adjumani was mentioned as a cause of refugee men being idle, which in some cases results in heavy drinking. Men feel useless because they cannot fulfil their traditional, pre-displacement male roles, which

mainly rely on providing economic and physical security at home. Men from the host community also go to the settlements to drink and this causes tensions at home, both because of the money they spend and the way they behave when they come home – if indeed they do come home. Drunkenness is reportedly more common with the arrival of the refugees and the increased availability of home-brewed alcohol. “Men are not helping us, they are just drinking. I suffer with the children alone. When they send my child back from school because of fees, I am the one who moves around to find money. He has money for drinking but not for fees. This has happened since the refugees arrived, before it was not like this”.⁹³

In some cases, women refugees turn to exploitative coping strategies to help alleviate their situation and ensure they can provide for their family. They establish intimate and sexual relationships with host community men who give them money that they then use to provide food for their family. “Most of us don’t have our husbands and surviving here is very hard if you don’t do the trick we are doing; getting another man here. At least it gives you your daily bread and money you can use to raise the children”.⁹⁴ Some refugee women referred to this arrangement as commercial sex or prostitution, but the majority of people did not use these terms. However, many mentioned the economic benefits of these relationships. In most cases, refugee women’s husbands are absent, but in some they live together in the settlement. Some of the women end up leaving their husbands to settle down or consolidate their relationship with another man from the host community. As a woman explained: “This happened to my sister, she ended up leaving her husband and going with a host member because he provided money for her, while her husband who she came with from South Sudan is not”.⁹⁵

As a result, many host community women, particularly those who live near the camps, complain that their husbands have abandoned them to live with a refugee woman in the settlement, and as a result their care and income provision for their family has declined and now relies wholly on them. This situation raises the possibility of conflict at the household level, both for refugee and host communities, as well as increasing the potential for social tensions between refugee and host community women in the region.

Notes

- 38 Saferworld focus group discussion, self-settled refugee women, Mgbere village, April 2019.
- 39 Customary land tenure (the majority of which is unregistered) is a legally recognised land tenure system regulating around 75–80 per cent of land in Uganda. It operates alongside the formal registered tenure systems – freehold, lease and *mailo* (an ownership system unique to the Buganda region and dating back to colonial time). Customary land can be held either by an individual, head of family/ household or clan, and while they are often referred to as the land owner they actually act as custodians and hold the land in trust for the rest of the family or clan members with rights to the land, as the land is never the personal property of one person. Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, 'Uganda: Prevailing systems of land tenure' (http://www.fao.org/gender-landrights-database/country-profiles/countries-list/land-tenure-and-related-institutions/prevailing-systems-of-land-tenure/en/?country_iso3=UGA)
- 40 Lenhart L (2013), 'Alleged Land Grabs and Governance: Exploring Mistrust and Trust in Northern Uganda. The Case of the Apaa Land Conflict', *Journal of Peace and Security Studies* 1.
- 41 Mabikke SB (2011), 'Escalating Land Grabbing in Post-conflict Regions of Northern Uganda', April (https://www.researchgate.net/publication/261805324_Escalating_Land_Grabbing_in_Post-conflict_Regions_of_Northern_Uganda). Saferworld has also done extensive work on land and conflict in northern Uganda. See: www.saferworld.org.uk/uganda/uganda
- 42 Saferworld focus group discussion, community development officers, Adjumani District, April 2019.
- 43 Saferworld focus group discussion, host community women and men, Pakele, April 2019.
- 44 Saferworld interview, Paramount Chief, Adjumani District, April 2019.
- 45 Local councils (LCs) are the local government structures at different administrative levels. The LC1 represents the authority in villages, LC2 in parishes or groups of villages, and LC3 at the sub-county level, which consists of several parishes. The county is run by LC4 and the district by LC5. Each local council is made up of a group of several people, both men and women.
- 46 Saferworld interview, LC1, Boroli village, April 2019; Saferworld interview, community development officers, Adjumani District, April 2019.
- 47 Saferworld focus group discussion, host community adult men, Boroli village, April 2019.
- 48 Saferworld interview, Boroli LC1, April 2019.
- 49 Saferworld focus group discussion, host community women and men, Pakele, April 2019.
- 50 Saferworld focus group discussion, young host community men and women, Boroli village, April 2019.
- 51 Laws of Uganda (2006), 'Refugees Act 2006' (<https://ugandalaws.com/r/323-refugees-act,-2006..html>) and National Legislative Bodies/ National Authorities (2010), 'Uganda: The Refugees Regulations, 2010', 27 October (<https://www.refworld.org/docid/544e4f154.html>)
- 52 'The per capita income in Uganda at 2009/10 constant price increased from Ug. Shs 1,571,000 in 2016/17 to Ug. Shs 1,621,000 in 2017/18.' The average annual income is USD\$724 (2017/18) and the average rural monthly income is UGX120,000. Uganda Bureau of Statistics (2018), 'Statistical abstract' (https://www.ubos.org/wp-content/uploads/publications/05_2019STATISTICAL_ABSTRACT_2018.pdf)
- 53 Saferworld focus group discussion, refugee women, Boroli II settlement, April 2019.
- 54 Saferworld focus group discussion, refugee women, Boroli II settlement, July 2019.
- 55 Saferworld interview, legal incentives officer, Boroli II settlement, May 2019.
- 56 Saferworld focus group discussion, young refugee men, Boroli II settlement, April 2019.
- 57 International Refugee Rights Initiative (2018), "'My Children Should Stand Strong to Make Sure We Get Our Land Back": Host Community Perspectives of Uganda's Lamwo Refugee Settlement', March.
- 58 Saferworld interview, man clan leader, Pakele town, April 2019.
- 59 UNDP (2018), 'Understanding Land Dynamics and Livelihood in Refugee Hosting Districts of Northern Uganda', September.
- 60 A recent World Bank study found that 'About half of the refugee population in the country (48%) endure poverty, considerably higher than the poverty incidence for the host population at 17%. Poverty among refugees is highest in the West Nile region of the country where nearly 60% of refugees are poor and around 30% of hosts are poor'. World Bank (2019), 'Informing the Refugee Policy Response in Uganda: Results from the Uganda Refugee and Host Communities 2018 Household Survey', September.
- 61 Saferworld focus group discussion, young host community men and women, Boroli village, April 2019.
- 62 In the context of this report the term natural resources is used to describe resources derived from the land – grass for grazing and thatching, wood for charcoal and firewood – that people need for everyday life.
- 63 Saferworld focus group discussion, young host community men and women, Boroli village, April 2019.
- 64 Saferworld focus group discussion, young host community men and women, Boroli village, April 2019.
- 65 Saferworld focus group discussion, host community men, Boroli village, April 2019.
- 66 Saferworld focus group discussion, refugee women, Boroli I settlement, April 2019.
- 67 Saferworld focus group discussion, self-settled refugee women, Adjumani town, April 2019.
- 68 Saferworld focus group discussion, self-settled refugee women, Mgbere village, July 2019.
- 69 Saferworld focus group discussion, refugee men, Boroli I settlement, April 2019; Saferworld interview, Refugee Welfare Committee Chairman, Boroli II settlement, April 2019.
- 70 Saferworld focus group discussion, young host community men and women, Boroli village, April 2019.
- 71 This initiative is part of a Lutheran World Federation programme.
- 72 The Refugee Welfare Committee represents refugees based in settlements and is designed to mirror the Uganda local council system. If there is a conflict between a refugee(s) and host community member(s) then officially the Refugee Welfare Committee and the local council should be involved.
- 73 Saferworld focus group discussion, young host community men and women, Boroli village, April 2019.
- 74 '... there were reports of inadequate, monotonous and poor quality food, with refugees stating that they often went hungry. The standard rations include beans and sorghum. However, when the kind of sorghum that is provided to refugees is cooked, it turns dark and is not easy to eat, with members of the host community explaining that it is only palatable when mixed with cassava flour, which is not part of the rations. As a result, there were reports of refugees, particularly children, getting sick when they eat it.' In International Refugee Rights Initiative (2015), 'South Sudanese refugees in Adjumani District, Uganda: Telling a new story?', July.
- 75 Saferworld focus group discussion, refugee women, Boroli II settlement, April 2019.
- 76 Saferworld focus group discussion, refugee women, Boroli II settlement, April 2019.
- 77 Saferworld interview, LC1, Boroli village, April 2019.
- 78 Saferworld focus group discussion, refugee women, Boroli II settlement, April 2019; Saferworld interview, focus group discussion with refugee women, Boroli I settlement, April 2019.
- 79 Saferworld focus group discussion, host community men, Boroli village, April 2019.
- 80 Saferworld focus group discussion, host community men, Boroli village, April 2019.
- 81 Saferworld interview, LC2, Boroli village, April 2019.
- 82 Saferworld interview, clan leader, Adjumani town, April 2019.
- 83 Saferworld focus group discussion, host community women and men, Pakele, April 2019.
- 84 Saferworld focus group discussion, refugee women, Boroli I settlement, April 2019.
- 85 Saferworld interview, LC3 chairman, Pakele, July 2019; Saferworld focus group discussion, self-settled refugee men, Mgbere, July 2019.
- 86 Saferworld focus group discussion, self-settled refugee women, Adjumani town, April 2019.
- 87 Saferworld focus group discussion, self-settled refugee men, Adjumani town, April 2019.
- 88 Saferworld focus group discussion, host community women, Boroli village, April 2019.
- 89 Saferworld focus group discussion, refugee women, Boroli II settlement, July 2019.
- 90 Saferworld focus group discussion, self-settled refugee women, Mgbere, April 2019.
- 91 Saferworld focus group discussion, self-settled refugee women, Adjumani town, April 2019.
- 92 Saferworld focus group discussion, self-settled refugee men, Mgbere, July 2019.
- 93 Saferworld focus group discussion, host community women, Boroli village, July 2019.
- 94 Saferworld focus group discussion, self-settled refugee women, Adjumani town, April 2019.
- 95 Saferworld focus group discussion, self-settled refugee women, Adjumani town, April 2019.



South Sudanese refugees at a local market in Boroli settlement.
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3

Changes in gender roles and women's participation

3.1 Absence of men: lack of economic opportunities and challenged masculinities

The lack of options for income generation in this area of northern Uganda has resulted in a considerable number of refugee men resorting to returning to South Sudan either to search for a job or to fight in the ongoing civil war, while women stay in Uganda with their children. Returning to South Sudan, which remains highly insecure, is a dangerous choice and indicates the extent of the despair many men feel at being unable to support their families in Uganda.

However, not all men who go back manage to find a reliable source of income to send money to their wives and children. Some women said that they received economic support from their husbands to pay for school fees and other basic needs, but others stated that their men do not provide any livelihood support and some never come back. “Our husbands are in Juba working and they come home from time to time. When they are here you ask for fees for the children and they say ‘let me go again and come back’. But they never come back, so you don’t have the money to pay for the children’s school fees”.⁹⁶ Salaries in South Sudan are often not paid for months, which further complicates the ability of men to send money back to their wives.

Some men return to South Sudan in part because they feel they are not living up to the social expectations of what it means to be a man. “Back home, like a man, you are supposed to be doing something. I was a driver but then because of the war I am empty handed here and there is nothing I am doing. This is bad because as a man in a home you are expected to be doing something”.⁹⁷ As men are meant to be the income providers, when they cannot find a job in line with their expectations it undermines their sense of masculinity. This situation is exacerbated by the fact that women are generally registered as the heads of household in the settlements. They receive the food or cash rations and the majority of men depend on their wives or on other women of their household to receive livelihood support. While this can be a positive opportunity for women, it also constitutes a reversal of traditional gender roles, which can have negative consequences. “Women came first and so they have been put as the family heads. The woman is supposed to be the one to sign and everything.

The man feels low, he feels like they are undermining him so that brings in that anger”.⁹⁸ Due to this frustration, some men prefer to go back to South Sudan than to stay in the refugee settlements. “The men feel that their role is being taken away because now it is the woman who is the head of the household . . . Men feel idle and go back to South Sudan so that they can do other things”.⁹⁹ They might be able to get a job there, join the fighting factions or work their own land. In general, they wish

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The main cause of conflict is being the family head. That makes the men feel bad . . . [They] feel bitter and fight the women.

A refugee woman in Boroli I settlement.

to escape the feeling that they are not fulfilling their masculine role as head of the family. As for their wives, some would prefer them to stay, while others understand the need for them to go back – and encourage this.

Gender norms therefore often underlie men’s decisions to return to South Sudan, and result in the women taking on roles that are traditionally considered masculine, thereby increasing their roles and responsibilities. “Women take care of a lot. Most of us are widows, our husbands are dead and those who are not are in South Sudan. They think that when they are here, they aren’t doing anything so they should be on the other side”.¹⁰⁰ The pressure on women is acute, because they are forced to take on all the roles that are traditionally shared within the family: they take care of children, do the housework, and generate income so they have food to eat and money to pay school fees and any other basic needs, as well as dealing with all of the difficulties that living as a refugee entails.

Respondents also highlighted that the majority of INGO and civil society interventions are perceived to benefit women: “most of the grants target young women and girls . . . The boys complain”.¹⁰¹ While it is important that vulnerable young women and girls are given support, the failure to offer enough opportunities to young men and boys, many of whom have been traumatised by conflict, has potentially serious consequences. Put in a position where they feel their masculinity is being challenged and with no alternatives in sight, it is unsurprising that many choose to take the risky decision to return to South Sudan. At a time when agencies are being encouraged to ‘do no harm’ or to be conflict sensitive, it could be argued that this approach is inadvertently contributing to the conflict in South Sudan.

Some refugee men who decide to stay in Adjumani accept that their wives are seen externally to be the heads of household and the main income providers and collaborate with them. However, in other cases men find this situation difficult and start drinking heavily. This is attributed both to the loss of their

social role as men and to their lack of meaningful occupation. Women complained that their husbands used the money allocated to them to buy alcohol, and some refused to give their husbands cash for this reason. This creates further dissatisfaction and resentment from their husbands, which results in disagreements and violence. “The men who are not going back to South Sudan, they are starting to drink alcohol and when you talk to them about this, he beats you”.¹⁰²

“The main cause of conflict is being the family head. That makes the men feel bad. They think that they should be in charge of everything, every instruction on the card; and not women. This makes them feel bitter and fight the women”.¹⁰³ This sense of frustration increases the possibility of GBV, with women usually the victims, as men use violence to assert the power they fear they are losing in the public sphere, and to vent their frustrations.

In a context where men feel their masculinities are being challenged, it is important to recognise the risks to women’s safety. Programmes and policies that support women refugees should continue, but with mitigating action to ensure that they don’t increase the risk of violence in the home. Proactive steps should also be taken to create positive male role models and masculinities.

3.2 Extramarital relationships and intermarriage

As has been discussed, the lack of income-generating opportunities for refugees has forced some refugee women into intimate relationships with host community men. Many refugee women talked about the economic benefits of these relationships, implying that there is an agreement – often based on the necessity to survive – whereby refugee women receive money from host community men when they establish an intimate relationship. However, not all respondents highlighted the economic benefits; some described these relationships as purely romantic whereas others saw them as part of an active sex life linked to the prolonged absence of refugee men. This dynamic, together with the impact of host community women feeling that their husbands are neglecting them in favour of refugee women, affects marital relationships, albeit in different ways.

Some South Sudanese refugee men may turn a blind eye to the extramarital relationships of their wives when the main reason is an economic benefit for them and their families. “Because they [our husbands] cannot provide us with anything, what we do is we cheat. We go and have a relationship outside but we don't stay as a wife to that person. We come back but still that person gives us some money and that is the money we use to provide food at home, with our husband in the house”.¹⁰⁴

However, many refugee men interviewed said they feel frustrated and angry when they find out that their wife has a relationship with another man. This can lead to intimate partner violence, as women's extramarital relationships are usually not accepted and men resort to violence to reinforce this norm. One man explained the reaction of some men coming back from South Sudan: “we found that there were women who had gone their own way getting involved with the nationals. Domestic violence happened in those cases. In our dreams we thought that they were going to prepare a place and to settle the family. But after finding out that they had gotten married and some of them were pregnant, it made some of our brothers go back to South Sudan”.¹⁰⁵ Some refugee women who out of necessity decide to initiate intimate relationships with host community men in order to provide extra income are therefore abandoned by their husbands and have to cope alone with the needs of their family.

This is also a source of grievance among many host community women, who blame their husbands for neglecting their responsibilities as income providers. In some cases, their husbands spend their time at the refugee settlement and use a substantial part of the family money to support refugee women or to gain their affection. Consequently, host community women need to find a way to pay for the basic necessities that were being covered by their husbands, such as school fees. “Since the men are gone, it is entirely us, the women, who are the family head, who do the work, who try to look for other sources to find money to pay for school fees. When the men were here, you could plant within a week, you could dig two acres or more. But now, since it is us alone, we can only work half a day, take some greens to sell in the market, your child might fall sick . . . There is no support and we do all the work”.¹⁰⁶

Some men no longer work in their fields with their wives because they spend more time at settlements with refugee women, which means that families' capacity to cultivate and produce vegetables for their own consumption or to sell at the markets is highly reduced. In this situation, host community women have to take on the additional responsibility of providing income for their family, which, together

with the housework they are already supposed to do, constitutes a double burden. Their role is both as carers of children, elders and any household matters, and ensuring the economic sustainability of the family. The greater consumption of alcohol by some host community men also contributes to this situation. Many women complain that their husbands are often drunk and cannot provide for their families, or spend a substantial amount of the family income on buying alcohol.

Even if host community women do not directly blame refugee women for this situation, they associate their husbands' propensity to drink alcohol with the arrival of the refugees, due to the idleness that their husbands develop when they begin a relationship with a refugee woman and also because locally brewed alcohol is easier and cheaper to find, particularly in the settlements. They also referred to their fears of being infected with a sexually transmitted disease as a result of their husbands' extramarital relationships.

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Host community women have to take on the additional responsibility of providing income for their family, which, together with the housework they are already supposed to do, constitutes a double burden.”

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3.3 Decision-making power at home

As previously discussed, many women respondents – both refugees and from the host community – pointed out the double burden they now shoulder, due to becoming the main income provider while still taking care of the household. “Women perform all the domestic duties regardless of the man being around at home all the time and being idle. The woman will do the domestic work and run her business to try to provide for the family and she might be helped by her elder daughter”.¹⁰⁷ However, some refugee women have gained a degree of freedom since arriving in Uganda. “In South Sudan, if you want to do something, you need to beg your husband. Here I do everything, because there is no activity that he can do to earn money so he feels that he should leave me do whatever I want. I am taking the role that he is supposed to do. I have some businesses that I am running and can buy some stuff that side [in South Sudan] and bring and sell. I do them my way”.¹⁰⁸ However, this is not always the case. Some refugee women have not gained decision-making power at home when men are present and, although they do try to restrict the



A woman stirs a pot of vegetables at mealtime.

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The scope and sustainability of any empowerment women may experience is potentially restricted by the conditions in which refugees live.

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is potentially restricted by the conditions in which refugees live and the exceptional nature of their situations. They live in a very challenging environment, in temporary situations away from other cultural norms and impositions, and men are fewer than women in number. These circumstances allow for a change in gender roles to take place but

amount of money they give to their husbands, they still accept or are forced to accept the authority of their husband’s opinion over their own. “The men came after the women, and even those that are getting the cash instead of the grains, their men

want to take the money out from them and they use the little money for drinking and useless activities.

The woman goes and says please this money is so small and we should use it for our kid to go to school. They say no, I am the one who sent you from South Sudan to Uganda, so this money is mine and I will use it”.¹⁰⁹

Despite these changes in gender roles, the scope and sustainability of any empowerment women may experience

do not ensure their sustainability, which would entail a change in gender norms. As a man block leader in the settlement said, “in our stay here some roles have changed but when we get back to South Sudan, the man has to take full responsibility”.¹¹⁰

It is difficult to predict the extent to which these changes will endure if the situation evolves and men have greater access to jobs in Adjumani, or if refugees go back to South Sudan. This is particularly challenging because many men are not experiencing these changes on a daily basis, as they are not living in the settlements. The fact that some men left because they felt their masculinity threatened suggests they might not be open to more permanent changes in gender dynamics.

In the host community, women whose husbands have left to stay with refugee women are also making more decisions than they used to at the household level and in relation to farming and cultivating. “These men usually don’t take decisions on what to plant, on farming, on clothing the children, sponsoring the children in school . . . such decisions now entirely rely on us, the women”.¹¹¹ However, many men still think that they should have the final

say and if a woman takes the initiative, it can generate conflict. “We are supposed to make the decisions together, because we brought these animals to the family together. But since he is not around, I have to make this decision on my own. On some occasions, when the man hears that you sold the goat that you bought together, he comes back home and quarrels and fights”.¹¹²

Host community women whose husbands remain with them still need to report to their husbands on the income they generate. Decisions are made between the wife and husband but the man still has the final say. “There are some businesses that our women do. I assess the business and how much it can bring on a daily basis. If she's got more money I will ask her where she got the extra money from...I can use this money even without her consent”, said a host community man.¹¹³

There are some small changes in gender roles related to host community women's contributions to income provision. Some women have started small businesses that give them some independence from their husbands, although this is seen as a threat by some men: “Our women have become very undisciplined, they save some money and are able to take a loan. The man entirely depends on cultivation and digging to earn a living, whereas the woman is able to start some small-scale business. Her man becomes a useless person and she doesn't respect him anymore”.¹¹⁴

These slow cultural changes are, in part, attributed to two main factors. The first is the work official institutions have carried out to raise awareness about women's empowerment. This was mentioned by public officers such as the LC3 and the Community Development Office.¹¹⁵ The second relates to the presence of refugee women in the region. Observing them taking care of everything at home, including the provision of income, and in most cases making all decisions – particularly when the husband is not present – provides host community women with a perspective on women's roles that goes beyond the traditional social set up they are used to. “There is true sensitisation and maybe also seeing these women from the refugee side doing it. If a fellow woman can do such a thing why not me?”¹¹⁶ said one of the Community Development Officers.

3.4 Women's decision-making in public spaces and in conflict resolution

Women have opportunities to take up official leadership positions within the governance structure of the settlements. For example, we interviewed the Boroli Refugee Welfare Committee deputy chairperson – a woman – who explained that “the OPM makes women deputies because there are some problems that a man cannot handle. There are some problems that a woman would be fearing to explain to a man”.¹¹⁷ These problems are likely to include GBV cases. It was mentioned that some partner NGOs trained a group of women in conflict resolution, although it wasn't clear from the interviews which NGOs these were.¹¹⁸

Women are present in most conflict resolution processes in refugee communities: in addition to men, there are women block leaders, to whom people can refer to if they have a problem; women are involved in the peace committee, an informal group of people who try to deescalate disputes in the settlements; and there is a women-only conflict resolution group that women can consult if they have a concern. While this is a positive feature of the governance structure in the settlements, it is important to establish the extent to which the women are involved in all processes affecting the refugee population or if they are only involved in those that affect women or have a focus on women's issues. Responses from participants do suggest broader involvement, with one woman saying that in the settlements “we gather together and try to solve it [the conflict]. We have women leaders. We address the problems to them and if they fail to solve them, we have the block leaders. We call them. They are men and women. In South Sudan it was different because it was male leaders who were solving the problems”.¹¹⁹ Further evidence is needed to establish how true this is, or whether the voting system to appoint people to the governance structure in settlements is not always as democratic as it is meant to be because some decision makers are appointed rather than elected. This could negatively affect women's participation, as they are particularly discriminated against in patriarchal societies.

On the host community side, the inclusion of women is more formalised within local councils, as the Local Governments Act states that one third of all local government council members should be women.¹²⁰ However, all the local council chairpersons that we interviewed were men, as women leaders seem to be a minority. Even when host community women hold positions in official bodies, men occupy most leadership and decision-making positions. A group of host community men said that they welcome women to conflict resolution discussions because they are more honest than men and less biased. It is important to ensure that women participate and make decisions at all levels and about all aspects of community life, not only when they are deemed to be ‘useful’ by men in positions of power.

3.5 Addressing GBV and specifically intimate partner violence

Despite women apparently having options to report their concerns to conflict resolution spaces –

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Many GBV cases, of which women are usually the main victims, are handled only at the family and community level, and are not reported to the police.

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including women-only spaces – many GBV cases,¹²¹ of which women are usually the main victims, are handled only at the family and community level, and are not reported to the police. This occurs both among refugees and host communities. Only very serious cases are reported, such as abuse involving extreme violence and rape; however, most of the interviewees reported that fights in families between husbands and wives occur regularly, often triggered by the frustrations and disagreements that men develop

related to changes in gender roles. Some of these might be non-abusive verbal arguments, but it is also likely that some do escalate to some form of abuse or physical violence. If the person attacked decides to report the case, they normally do so to other family members, neighbours or to leaders in the settlements, such as block or clan leaders or the Refugee Welfare Committee. As a result, the family, neighbours or community representatives arrange a meeting between the husband and wife and help them reconcile, most of the time through conversations that aim to keep the couple together, even if that means perpetuating an abusive relationship, where the woman is usually the victim. For example, a woman told us “if a neighbour has a problem with his wife, the committee would be called plus some other members and they would resolve the conflict by advising the neighbour [man] to stay well with the family”.¹²²

Therefore, in many cases official justice and protection systems are not part of the solution, and impunity and lack of accountability are a reality. The persistence of these forms of violence in households can result in the silencing of one of the two parties, most of the time the woman. As explained by a host community woman, “in case of conflict the husband gives the details to his relatives and they come and sit, discuss and resolve. If you do not feel comfortable about this, as the wife, you can also call your elders to come and solve. When the woman’s relatives see that you still have a problem and they are not happy, it is for them to think and they might take her home so she is free and not oppressed by her husband”.¹²³ It is crucial to address any abuse perpetrated by intimate partners from a protection and justice perspective, ensuring accountability for any violence committed to prevent it happening again. GBV is a tool to silence women, assert men’s power and perpetuate gender inequality. This is also at the heart of women’s low participation in decision-making at the public level, which in turn is detrimental to a sustainable and positive outcome in reducing social tensions.

Notes

- 96 Saferworld focus group discussion, self-settled refugee women, Mgbere village, April 2019.
- 97 Saferworld focus group discussion, self-settled refugee women and men, Mgbere village, April 2019.
- 98 Saferworld focus group discussion, refugee women, Boroli I settlement, April 2019.
- 99 Saferworld focus group discussion, refugee women, Boroli II settlement, April 2019.
- 100 Saferworld focus group discussion, self-settled refugee women, Adjumani town, April 2019.
- 101 Saferworld interview, Boroli camp commandant, Boroli I, April 2019.
- 102 Saferworld focus group discussion, refugee women, Boroli II settlement, April 2019.
- 103 Saferworld focus group discussion, refugee women, Boroli I settlement, April 2019.
- 104 Saferworld focus group discussion, self-settled refugee women, Adjumani town, April 2019.
- 105 Saferworld interview, refugee man, Boroli II, May 2019.
- 106 Saferworld focus group discussion, host community women, Boroli village, April 2019.
- 107 Saferworld interview, refugee woman and local court member, Boroli II, May 2019.
- 108 Saferworld interview, refugee woman and local court member, Boroli II, May 2019.
- 109 Saferworld focus group discussion, refugee women, Boroli I settlement, April 2019.
- 110 Saferworld interview, refugee man, Boroli II, April 2019.
- 111 Saferworld focus group discussion, host community women, Boroli village, April 2019.
- 112 Saferworld focus group discussion, host community women, Boroli village, April 2019.
- 113 Saferworld focus group discussion, young host community men and women, Boroli village, April 2019.
- 114 Saferworld focus group discussion, host community men, Boroli village, April 2019.
- 115 Saferworld focus group discussion, community development officers, Adjumani District, April 2019; Saferworld interview, LC3 chairman, Pakele, July 2019.
- 116 Saferworld focus group discussion, community development officers, Adjumani District, April 2019.
- 117 Saferworld interview, Refugee Welfare Committee deputy woman, Boroli I, April 2019.
- 118 Saferworld focus group discussion, refugee women, Boroli II settlement, April 2019.
- 119 Saferworld focus group discussion, refugee women, Boroli II settlement, April 2019.
- 120 Ministry of Local Government, Republic of Uganda, 'The Local Governments Act' (<https://www.molg.go.ug/publication/laws-and-regulations>)
- 121 Although this research did not focus on GBV, the high incidence rates mean that it was raised in a number of discussions – although when it was, it was mentioned in the abstract rather than as personal experiences.
- 122 Saferworld focus group discussion, self-settled refugee women, Mgbere village, April 2019.
- 123 Saferworld focus group discussion, host community women and men, Pakele, April 2019.



A South Sudanese refugee hurries to finish the straw roof of his newly built hut.

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Conclusion

Saferworld's research clearly shows that displacement has affected gender dynamics for South Sudanese men and women refugees who have self-settled in Adjumani District or who have settled in Boroli refugee settlements. Interestingly it has also shown that these changes are impacting on the host community's gender roles and dynamics too.

The initial registration process when refugees arrive prioritises women as heads of household, both because they are more likely to arrive on their own or before their husbands but also because they are more likely to be around at distribution time to collect the family's rations. From this point onwards, men start to feel like they are no longer fulfilling their roles as providers for their household, aggravated by the lack of what they consider 'good enough' income-generating opportunities. In this context, women usually become the main income providers of their household and seek alternative livelihood options to meet the needs of their family.

The rapid influx of refugees in 2013 and 2016, due to volatile situations in South Sudan, meant that plots of land allocated to refugees had to be reduced to only 30x30 metres, as the refugee response was not designed to cater for such numbers and insufficient land had been negotiated. This means the plots are only big enough for refugees to build a dwelling and grow a small amount of vegetables for household consumption, and they must negotiate with the host community if they wish to access more land to cultivate. The informal nature of most of these rental agreements leaves refugees vulnerable to being chased off the land once they have cleared and cultivated it. Host community men are reportedly more likely to negotiate land agreements with refugee women as they are perceived to be easier to evict; this also leaves women vulnerable to sexual exploitation as they pursue avenues to help provide for their families. The need to find materials to construct and maintain refugee dwellings has created tensions with host communities over access to increasingly scarce resources, and as women are usually responsible for collecting grass for thatching and firewood both refugee and host community women are most affected by this dynamic.

The rations that are provided to refugees, while in line with international standards, are not sufficiently diverse to meet the dietary requirements of refugees nor do they provide for even basic sanitary or hygiene items or factor in the costs of schoolbooks and uniforms. Because refugees then sell a portion of their rations so they can buy other food items and household necessities, they end up with insufficient food to meet their needs. Both settled and self-settled women report that they are more likely than men to look for other ways to generate income. This is partly because men move outside the settlement more, sometimes back to South Sudan, but also because they perceive the jobs that are available as women's jobs. As a result, women take on the extra burden of providing for their families while also looking after the household. For many refugees this is a significant shift in the gender roles that are prevalent in both South Sudan and Uganda, where it is generally men who are expected to provide for their families. This shift allows women to acquire decision-making powers, particularly in domestic affairs, but also in areas beyond their traditional scope, for example in decisions on how to use the income they generate.

Women refugees actively seek alternative ways of earning additional income. However, the lack of options in Adjumani District results in some refugee women being forced to establish intimate relationships with host community men in exchange for economic benefits. This results not only in vulnerable women resorting to negative coping strategies but also affects host community women, who complain that their husbands are no longer supporting their family economically, which puts pressure on host community women to find alternative ways of providing for their family.

These changes in gender roles in which women – usually out of necessity – take on more responsibility have had a significant impact on refugee men, who struggle to accept the loss of their role as the main income providers and heads of household. This challenges their masculinity and the decision-making power they traditionally have at home and in their community and is exacerbated by their perception that they are offered less opportunities than women and girls. The idleness and drinking that often ensue increase the chances of GBV against women, particularly at the domestic level, as men try to assert the power they sense they have lost.

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Changes in gender roles in which women – usually out of necessity – take on more responsibility have had a significant impact on refugee men.

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Recommendations

For humanitarian and development agencies, NGOs and INGOs:

- **Increase understanding of existing gender norms and conflict dynamics.** In contexts of displacement and/or conflict, gender roles and dynamics often change far more rapidly than in stable situations and this is certainly evident among refugee women and men in Adjumani. Conducting a gender-sensitive conflict analysis in all conflict-affected contexts is key to understanding which gender norms are driving conflict, gender inequality and GBV, and can also suggest ways these issues could be addressed, including by strengthening women's participation. A gender-sensitive conflict analysis would shed light on gender norms around masculinities and on how men deal with not being able to live up to social expectations.
- **Make refugee-targeted policies and programmes conflict and gender sensitive.** Ensure that programmes that target South Sudanese refugees are based on an understanding of the gender roles and norms at stake and support gender transformation leading to gender equality and women's meaningful participation, while addressing the risks associated with challenging gender norms. Humanitarian organisations working in Adjumani and in other refugee-hosting communities in northern Uganda should continue to implement policies and programmes that support women, and pair these with interventions and programmes to prevent and mitigate the negative impacts that arise from thwarted masculinities. Strategies and interventions to address these include: linking women's empowerment with GBV prevention programmes, especially intimate partner violence prevention programmes; GBV risk-reduction measures; awareness-raising campaigns that aim to question negative gender norms; and finding ways for men to engage positively in women's empowerment initiatives.
- **Support work on masculinities.** Build on a gender-sensitive conflict analysis and support men and women to challenge existing negative and/or violent masculinities that focus on power and control. At the same time, identify and challenge notions of masculinity that men feel pressured to conform to and that result in negative consequences if they are unable to. Support the development of alternative views that focus on non-violence and gender equality. Awareness raising and community outreach have been shown to have positive results in this respect and could be built on in this context.¹²⁴

- **Ensure that women’s meaningful participation is central to the design and implementation of all programmes and policies.** Women, women-led organisations or collectives and women’s rights organisations, from both refugee and host communities alike, should be involved in all phases of programming and policy development and implementation to ensure that these address their needs and concerns and are gender and conflict sensitive. In these processes, their opinions should not only be heard but should shape decisions and drive these interventions.
- **Increase the number of gender specialists in teams, train more people in gender-sensitive conflict resolution and design, and allocate specific budget to implement gender-sensitive conflict resolution programmes.** This would ensure issues are dealt with in a timely and effective manner, preventing escalation, distrust and enmity – both within and between refugee and host communities. Both men and women from host and refugee communities tend to solve issues either at the household level first or through customary mechanisms, which are patriarchal spaces that are dominated by men, and they turn to the Refugee Welfare Committee and local councils as a last resort. Women should be supported to meaningfully participate in all these processes.
- **Strengthen GBV and protection programming, including access to justice.** Provide training to local council and Refugee Welfare Committee officials where relevant to ensure that cases that are reported are dealt with appropriately. Ensure GBV and other protection programming addresses abuse perpetrated by intimate partners and others from a protection and access to justice perspective, ensuring accountability for any violence committed and using a survivor-centred approach.

For the Ugandan government, OPM and international agencies:

- **Increase refugees’ and host community members’ access to income-providing opportunities.** A joint targeted market analysis should be carried out to identify initiatives that could help both refugee and host community men and women to generate an income. Joint ventures would also help build trust. Some steps have been taken towards a joint commercial farming initiative between host community members and refugees but this would require host communities to provide land and more needs to be done to reassure them that they will benefit from the initiative and will not lose rights to their land in the longer term. Local authorities should ensure that host community employers are aware that they can employ refugees, and similarly refugees should be made aware that they can be employed with their refugee identification cards. The interagency Cash Working Group and/or relevant international agencies, NGOs and INGOs should assess whether there is potential for a 2018 pilot scheme – which provided refugees from the Democratic Republic of the Congo living in Kyaka II refugee settlement in Kyegegwa District, western Uganda, with a large, one-time cash transfer – to be adapted for Adjumani. The scheme enabled beneficiary refugees to invest in longer-term livelihood opportunities, such as purchasing supplies to establish a business.
- **Increase refugees’ access to land.** Work with host communities, humanitarian actors and the Ugandan government to find a way to provide refugees with more access to land, while promoting gender-equal access and decision-making power over land and any economic benefits generated. This would provide refugee men and women with livelihood options that avoid women’s sexual exploitation, and which also ease men’s anger and frustration. Any initiative must take into account the fact that host communities already feel bitter because they perceive that giving their land away to refugees hasn’t brought them the benefits they expected. It is therefore necessary to find new incentives for them to lend their land.

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Work with host communities, humanitarian actors and the Ugandan government to find a way to provide refugees with more access to land.
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- **Ensure women are involved in all phases of decision-making and implementation processes in refugee settlements.** The Ugandan government, OPM, international agencies and INGOs should promote the meaningful participation of refugee women in all decision-making processes in settlements as well as those who have self-settled. It is important to establish the extent to which refugee women are involved in all processes affecting the refugee population or if they are only involved in those that affect women or have a focus on women's issues.
- **Diversify refugees' rations.** This would prevent refugees from having to sell their food aid to buy basic necessities such as soap and other hygiene items, leaving them short of food, or having to resort to sexually exploitative relationships or situations; for example, women risk exploitation in order to pay for the milling of sorghum and other grains. Aid agencies providing food should incorporate GBV

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Unless this gap is filled, women and men refugees will continue to struggle to meet their daily needs and tensions with host communities will be exacerbated.

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risk-reduction measures according to the Inter-Agency Standing Committee's GBV guidelines, and should take measures such as: ensuring that all grains provided are already ground; providing refugee women with milling equipment that can be used for free in the settlements or increasing the amount of grain provided, taking into account that some of it is used for transaction purposes; or increasing cash rations to make sure they cover the cost of grinding the grains, provided there are grinding services near the settlements. All refugees should also be given the option to choose a combination of food and cash rations where appropriate and where this is currently not available.

- **Raise awareness about the situation of South Sudanese refugees and Uganda's role in hosting them to maintain funding.** In order to ensure refugees continue to receive rations in line with Sphere standards and that host communities get the support they need,¹²⁵ funding must continue to be provided to the Ugandan government and UN agencies. Uganda hosts over 850,000 South Sudanese refugees and incurs costs in the process. There is currently a funding gap, which means that services provided to refugees are stretched and unless this gap is filled, women and men refugees will continue to struggle to meet their daily needs and tensions with host communities will be exacerbated.¹²⁶

Notes

- 124 Saferworld (2014), 'Masculinities, conflict and peacebuilding: Perspectives on men through a gender lens'
- 125 The Sphere standards are a set of principles and minimum humanitarian standards in four technical areas of humanitarian response, to ensure basic conditions for life with dignity to people affected by disaster or conflict. Sphere Standards (2018), 'Humanitarian Standards' (<https://spherestandards.org/humanitarian-standards/>)
- 126 UNHCR (2018), 'Refugees bear cost of massive underfunding', 9 October (<https://www.unhcr.org/uk/news/briefing/2018/10/5bbc57d94/refugees-bear-cost-massive-underfunding.html>)

About Saferworld

Saferworld is an independent international organisation working to prevent violent conflict and build safer lives. We work with people affected by conflict to improve their safety and sense of security, and conduct wider research and analysis. We use this evidence and learning to improve local, national and international policies and practices that can help build lasting peace. Our priority is people – we believe in a world where everyone can lead peaceful, fulfilling lives, free from fear and insecurity. We are a not-for-profit organisation working in 12 countries and territories across Africa, Asia and the Middle East.

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