

International  
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Social Studies

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**THE EFFECTS OF CONFLICTS BETWEEN  
REFUGEES AND HOST COMMUNITIES ON  
DEPRESSION IN KIRYANDONGO REFUGEE  
SETTLEMENT, BWEYALE SUB COUNTY,  
UGANDA.**

A Research Paper Design

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***Disclaimer:***

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Lord, God, please, you take over

## **Abstract**

Based on phenomenological fieldwork and fifteen participant interviews, the research paper addresses effects of conflicts between refugees and host communities on depression in Kiryandongo refugee settlement in Bweyale Sub County. This paper reveals that the prevalence of moderate depression to severe depression is high among the refugees and their hosts. This was found to be a result of the challenges they encounter as evidence shows that there is a divide of classes between the two groups – refugees and host community. Hence, conflicts between refugees and host community are a contributing factor to depression symptoms among these two groups. This research reveals the causes of conflicts between refugees and host communities stemming from land eviction by the host community because the refugees were settled on the local community's land with minimal to no compensation for such land. These issues together with inadequate water sources, limited provision of firewood and limited job opportunities - all exacerbate the conflict situation between refugees and the host community.

**Keywords:** Conflicts, Refugees, Host Communities, Depression, Kiryandongo refugee settlement

## **Relevance to Development Studies**

Conflicts do not just make people fight between each other, but they also make it hard for them to have access to basic needs like education and healthcare – leading to increased financial burdens for securing necessities. The study shows that leaders in areas with conflicts need more support and must be accountable for their actions to better manage conflicts. Furthermore, learning from past conflicts can guide government agencies, community leaders, and international organizations in making things better. This study shows that solving conflicts and caring for people's mental health are important for long-lasting development. This aligns with different Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) such as ending poverty, ensuring good health, providing quality education, promoting gender equality, reducing inequalities, establishing peace and strong institutions, and working together for global goals.



## Acronyms

|       |   |
|-------|---|
| DSM   | Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders |
| IOM   | International Organization for Migration              |
| IRRI  | International Refugee Rights Initiative               |
| NGO   | Non-Governmental Organization                         |
| OPM   | Office of the Prime Minister                          |
| PEP   | Peace Education Program                               |
| PHQ-9 | Patient Health Questionnaire                          |
| PTSD  | Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder                        |
| REACH | Refugee Assistance and Information System             |
| RHCP  | Refugee-host community project                        |
| UN    | United Nations  |
| UNDP  | United Nations Development Program                    |
| UNHCR | United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees         |

# Chapter 1

## 1.0 Introduction

This research paper focuses on understanding the effect of conflict between refugees and host communities on depression in Kiryandongo refugee settlement in Bweyale Sub County, Uganda. Uganda hosts over 1.4 million refugees (UNHCR, 2019), most of which come from nearby countries like Rwanda, Congo, Sudan, Burundi, and Kenya. Kiryandongo refugee settlement, one of the settlements hosting thousands of refugees is located in north-western Uganda. Instead of settling refugees in camps, the government decided to have refugees officially registered with the government and UNHCR (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees) and live in settlements. Ssejjemba (2018: 53) notes that, “Uganda’s Pan-African ideology and its historical close ties with neighbouring populations have led to more open policies, which can accommodate refugees irrespective of their number or country of origin”. This is what has been commonly dubbed the “open door” policy. In this policy, refugees are given land for farming, building homes and mixing-up with host communities.

Refugees live in settlements near local communities and have or meant to access basics needs like land, water, and some humanitarian support from implementing partners and UN agencies like the World food program and UNHCR. In the policy, they are allowed to work, start businesses, go to school, and move around Uganda freely. They are also given land (30 x metres of land piece) to build homes and grow crops (Zetter, 2016). Despite Uganda's good policies for refugees, there have been some problems since 2016. Disputes between refugees and local communities have arisen over issues of land, water, and business opportunities. However, refugees still contribute to the local economy by creating new markets and expanding consumer choices for local goods (Ahimbisibwe, 2019). At first, the people living in Kiryandongo refugee settlement were welcoming and kind to the refugees. However, over

time, they started showing hostility and fear towards them. As refugee numbers increased, competition for basic resources also increased and hostilities emerged with host communities sometimes calling for the return of the refugees (Turyamureeba, 2018).

Kiryandongo has become a centre of conflicts between the local population and the refugees. The host communities are afraid that they might lose their land, which they use for farming and getting water for their animals and households, because more land keeps getting allocated to the refugees (Bjørkhaug, 2020). Conflicts are linked to stress among refugees and host communities often triggering mental depressions. This study further unveiled the depression implications resulting from the conflicts between refugees and host communities. Specifically, the study found that the causes of conflicts between refugees and host community, escalate depression among the refugee and host communities. and the study further recommends strategies to reduce conflicts between these groups.

This research paper consists of the contextual background of the study, statement of research problem, research questions and objectives, current state of the research problem, theoretical approach, methodological strategies, justification of the study, the scope and limitations of the research, ethical consideration, findings and recommendations.

## **1.1 Contextual Background to the Study**

At the end of 2021, there were almost 89.3 million people forcefully displaced across the world (UNHCR, 2022). Most of these refugees were generated by several wars, persecution, conflicts as well as violation of human rights (UNHCR, 2022). Uganda became a party to the Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees in 1987, as per the United Nations (1951). The presence of refugees in Uganda can be traced back to the 1940s, when Polish refugees sought refuge in Nyabyeya and Koja in Masindi Mukono (Muluba, 2014). However, in 1955, Uganda faced a significant influx of refugees, with approximately 78,000 individuals entering the country from southern Demo-

cratic Republic of Congo, and Sudan. As of 2017, World Vision Uganda estimated that Uganda was home to around 1,064,043 refugees and asylum-seekers, with 68% of them, equivalent to 723,550 individuals, originating from South Sudan alone. Refugees from Rwanda and Burundi have also sought safety in Uganda. By late 2017, Uganda had the highest population of refugees and asylum-seekers in Africa (World Vision Uganda, 2017).

The establishment of Kiryandongo Refugee settlement was a fulfillment of Uganda’s membership to the United Nations High Commission for refugees. Kiryandongo Refugee Settlement is located Bweyale in Kiryandongo district and was established in 1954. According to UNHCR (2022), the total population is 76,527 people; among these 76,487 are refugees and 40 are asylum seekers with 10,744 total households as presented in the Table 1 below:

**Table 1: Population of Refugees in Kiryandongo Refugee Settlement**

| <i>Category</i>    | <i>Number</i> | <i>Percentage</i> |
|--------------------|---------------|-------------------|
| Women and children | 62,764        | 82%               |
| Female             | 39,612        | 52%               |
| Youth 15-24        | 22,525        | 29%               |
| Elderly            | 1,520         | 2%                |

**Source: UNHCR (2022)<sup>1</sup>**

In the refugee settlements, refugees face a number of challenges such as shortage of water, food, inadequate land for agricultural production, and poor hygiene – all of these create consequences for the host communities. In Uganda, refugees have a right to establish business, work, freedom of movement, education and are given land for shelter and agricultural purposes. Despite this policy in Uganda, there has been a rise in disputes between the host communities and refugees over issues on water, cash handouts, firewood, and land (Atukwatse & Chidiebere, 2022). Host communities in refugee settlements were initially welcoming to refugees, but they have since shown signs

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<sup>1</sup> <https://data.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/92175>

of xenophobia by calling for the repatriation of refugees, which is fueled by the perception that many of the refugees may not be able to return to their home, and this has intensified the competition for resources like grass for thatched roofs, land and water (Turyamureeba, 2018). There are tensions in Kiryandongo refugees as host communities fear being displaced from their land and losing access to vital resources like water, firewood due to the allocation of land to refugees. The main conflict between the host communities and refugee population revolves around the collection of firewood. In the area around Kyirandongo, the collection of firewood is done without any clear rules or access rights for both communities. This leads to daily negotiations which often result in hostility, tension, and a sense of insecurity. Refugees have to negotiate every day to gather firewood from the nearby land. Since the refugees don't have formal land rights, they are constantly at risk of violence, assault, and extortion, which adds to the trauma they have already experienced.

In addition, land is a sensitive and controversial subject, and discussions about sharing resources often lead to bitterness and feelings of insecurity (Barigaba, 2017). The local communities have strong cultural and emotional connections to their land that go beyond resource-related matters. They view refugees as temporary guests who may not show proper respect for the land or demonstrate concern for its long-term sustainability. The pursuit of land by the local community poses a challenge to the self-reliance strategy developed by the Office of the Prime Minister and the UNHCR in 1998 which aimed to empower refugees in a way that they can support themselves. The refugee settlement managing agencies including Office of Prime Minister Uganda and UNHCR must allocate land to refugees for cultivation and other livelihood activities, however, as more refugees arrive in Kiryandongo, there is constant increasing demand for land and other resources causing some of these refugees to encroach the land for the locals – causing disputes between the groups.

Disputes between the local communities and refugees have had significant implications for mental health. Studies have shown that exposure to conflict can lead to various mental health problems, including anxiety, post-traumatic

stress disorder (PTSD), and substance abuse (Steel et al., 2009; Mollica et al., 2004). These have long-term consequences, affecting individuals' well-being, social and occupational functioning, and overall quality of life. Therefore, it is key to understand the effects of conflict between refugees and host communities on depression in Kiryandongo Refugee Settlement.

## 1.2 Research Problem

Uganda is among the countries with the most favorable environments for refugees in the world (UNHCR, 2016) and is an active member of the UN Global Compact on Refugees project. While many states keep refugees in camps away from citizens, Uganda allows them to work for others, set up businesses, and move freely around the country. Refugees in Uganda are settled in rural areas, 'refugee settlements' under the Office of the Prime Minister. Ugandan communities living close to these refugee settlements give land to host them and maintain good relationships with them (IRRI, 2019). Tensions arise between refugees and their hosts over water, cash handouts, grass for thatched roofs, firewood, and land (Atukwatse & Chidiebere, 2022). Some of these tensions spark a few violent incidents, and if not properly addressed result in a broader conflict. These conflicts have consequences on an individual's mental health including causing anxiety, fear, sadness, self-blame, alternations in sleep, body weight, and efficiency (Schlechter et al., 2020). Studies have found that refugees are more exposed to 'stress at every displacement stage than those living in host communities.'<sup>2</sup> Jens-R et al. (2020) revealed that the prevalence rates of depression, anxiety, and PTSD were significantly higher in populations living in refugee settings.<sup>3</sup> Also, Klabbers et al. (2022) found

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.unhcr.org/africa/news/press-releases/refugees-need-better-mental-health-support-amid-rising-displacement>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7443922/>

that individuals living in and around refugee settlements were associated with a higher prevalence of depression, anxiety, and PTSD.<sup>4</sup>

Studies on conflicts and depression are developed but have a narrow focus because many focus on displacement and depression symptoms among refugees (Ljiljana et al., 2009), and mental health stressors (Hyojin et al., 2017). Ljiljana et al. (2009) established that displacement characteristics influenced the expression of their depression as well as social functioning. Wadih et al. (2016) covered religiosity and found no substantial correlation with depression.<sup>5</sup> Marija et al. (2012) studied mental disorders in long-settled refugees and found higher rates of anxiety disorders. Therefore, less focus has been put on the effect of conflict between refugees and host communities on depression. In my research, the study seeks to understand the depression among the local community born in Bweyale and the refugees in Cluster J and Cluster B – these are refugees who were brought in 2015-2016, through this, I seek to characterize depression among refugees and host community and understand the underlying causes of these conflicts, and what can be done to harmonize the situation.

### **1.3 Justification and relevance of this research**

The justification behind this research lies in its aim to address a critical gap in the literature concerning the relationship between inter-group conflict and depression in refugee settlements. Although we notice a growing body of research in the area, much of the focus has been on individual-level factors and has not adequately addressed how conflicts cause depression among the refugees and host communities. The current study uses a case study of a specific refugee settlement in Uganda, Kiryandongo Refugee Settlement, which is one

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<sup>4</sup> <https://www.joghr.org/article/39600-mental-disorders-and-lack-of-social-support-among-refugees-and-ugandan-nationals-screening-for-hiv-at-health-centers-in-nakivale-refugee-settlement-in>

<sup>5</sup> [https://www.academia.edu/33682593/Prevalence\\_of\\_depression\\_in\\_Syrian\\_refugees\\_and\\_the\\_influence\\_of\\_religiosity](https://www.academia.edu/33682593/Prevalence_of_depression_in_Syrian_refugees_and_the_influence_of_religiosity)

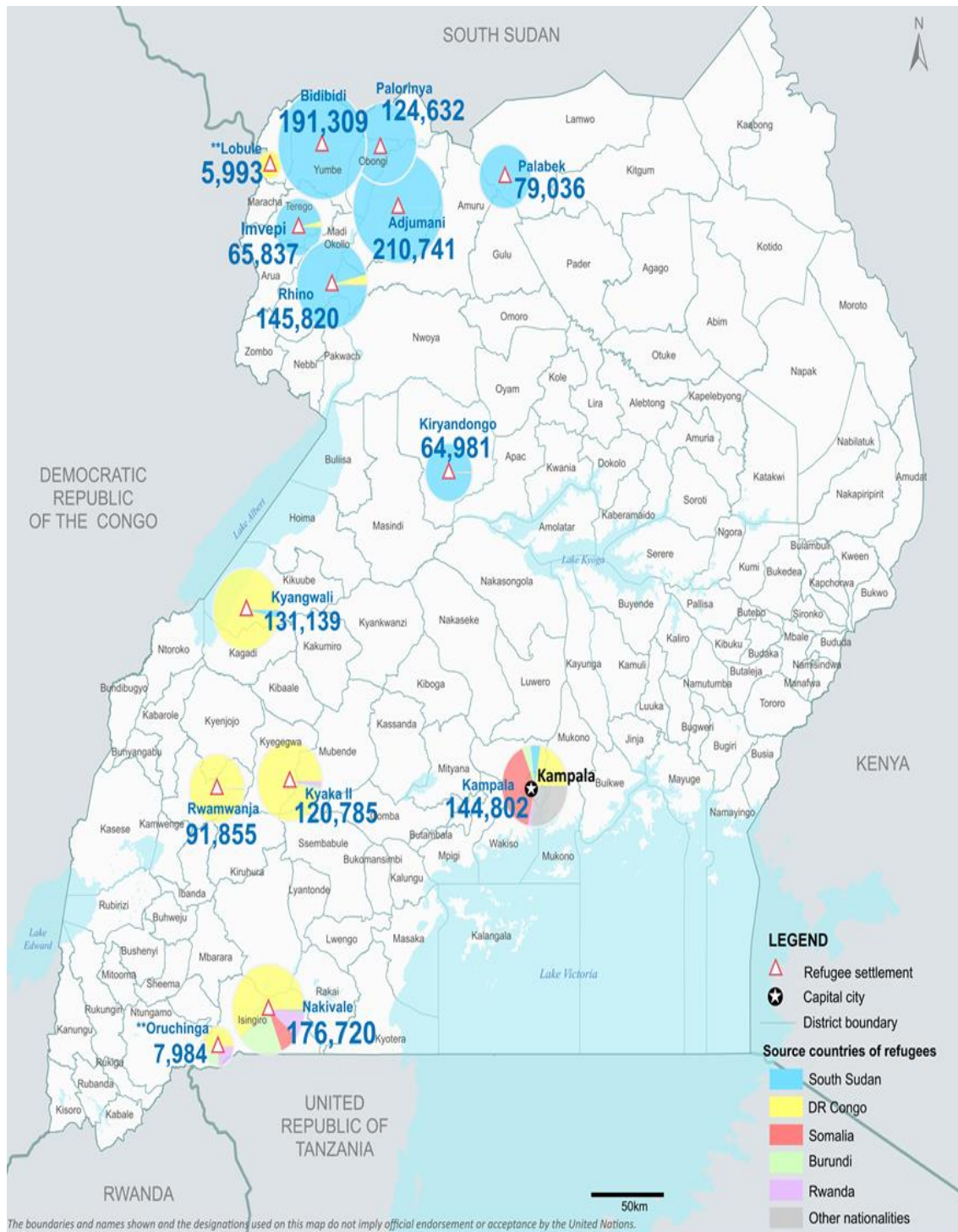
of Uganda's largest and most diverse refugee settlements, with a population of 76,487 refugees (UNHCR, 2022). Therefore, my study contributes to the literature by providing insights of the effects of conflicts on depression among refugees and host communities specifically in Kiryandongo refugee settlement in Uganda.

### **1.3.1 Description of Kiryandongo refugee settlement**

Kiryandongo refugee settlement was first established in 1954 and it was reopened in 2014 to help people fleeing the emergency in South Sudan. As of June 30, 2023, it is home to 64,981 refugees. The settlement is in Bweyale, Uganda, and managed by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). It provides shelter, land, and support for over 100,000 people, including refugees from Kenya, DR Congo, Rwanda, Burundi, and South Sudan. During the years 2013 to 2016, Kiryandongo experienced conflicts between different tribal groups, resulting in 300 recorded cases and the loss of more than 50 lives (Busena, 2020).



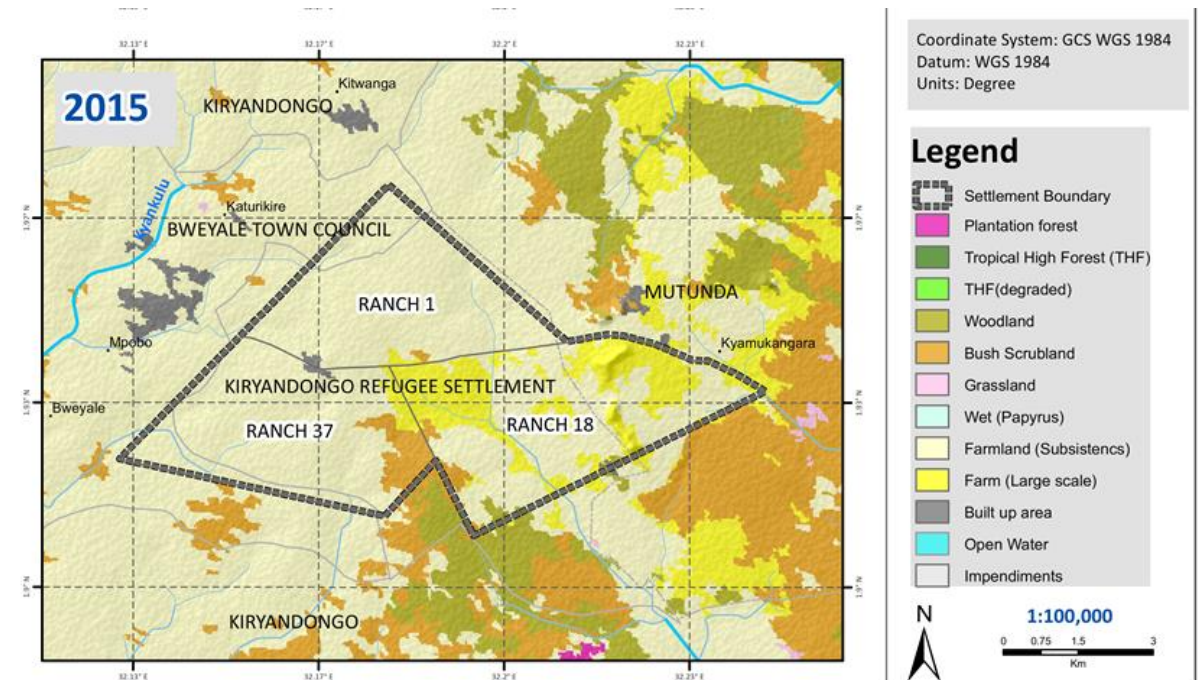
## Map of Uganda showing refugees per settlement



Source: UNHCR (2023)<sup>6</sup>

<sup>6</sup> <https://data.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/101775>

## Map of Kiryandongo refugee settlement



Source: OCHA (2023)<sup>7</sup>

## 1.4 Research objectives and questions

The main Objective of this research is to understand the effects of conflicts between refugees and host communities on depression in Kiryandongo Refugee Settlement, Uganda. As such, this research exposes the causes of conflicts between refugees and host communities in Kiryandongo refugee settlement, the effects of such conflicts on depression and the characteristics of depression among the two population groups – refugees and host communities. Below are the research questions that guided this study.

### Main Question

<sup>7</sup> [https://reliefweb.int/map/uganda/uganda-kiryandongo-refugee-settlement-kiryandongo-land-use-and-land-cover-map-2000-2005?gclid=CjwKCAjwIjmBhAsEiwA1hrp5h1DjzNzV4Jb8a8wgg0AgyObh50JY-xxk-on8ZtrPLPQYTsAXK-RXBoCECYQAvD\\_BwE](https://reliefweb.int/map/uganda/uganda-kiryandongo-refugee-settlement-kiryandongo-land-use-and-land-cover-map-2000-2005?gclid=CjwKCAjwIjmBhAsEiwA1hrp5h1DjzNzV4Jb8a8wgg0AgyObh50JY-xxk-on8ZtrPLPQYTsAXK-RXBoCECYQAvD_BwE)

- ✚ What are the causes of conflicts between refugees and host communities and what are the effects of such conflicts on depression among refugees and host communities in Kiryandongo refugee settlement in Uganda?

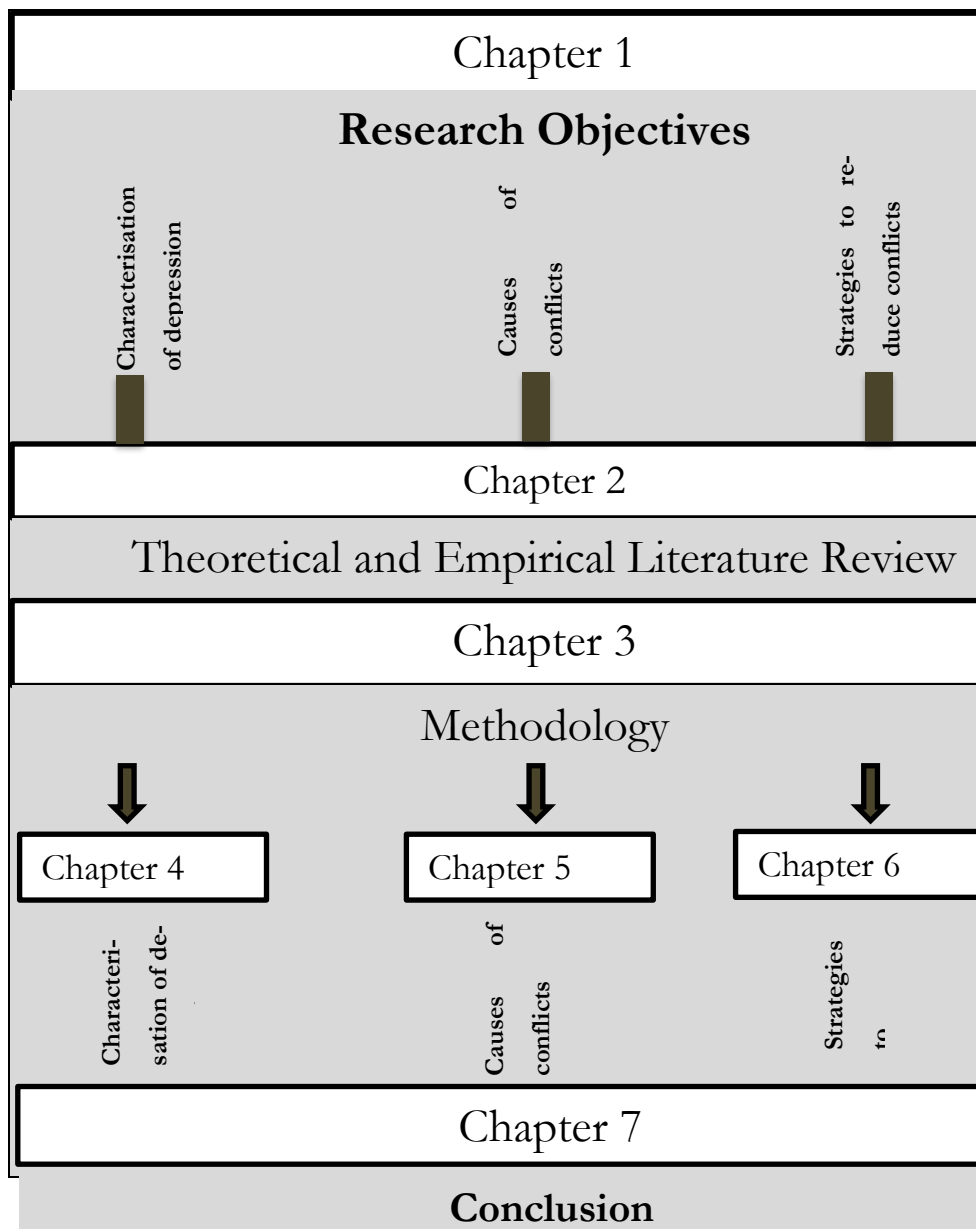
### **Specific Questions**

- What are the causes of conflicts between refugees and host communities in Kiryandongo refugee settlements?
- What are the effects of Conflicts between refugees and host communities in Kiryandongo refugee settlements?
- How are Conflicts between refugees and host communities related to Depression among refugees and host communities in Kiryandongo refugee settlements?
- What are the effects of conflicts between refugees and host communities on depression in Kiryandongo refugee settlement, Bweyale sub-county, Uganda?
- Which specific strategies can be implemented to reduce conflicts between refugees and host communities in the Bweyale sub-county?

The chapter presented, the Introduction, Contextual Background to the Study, Research Problem, Justification and relevance of this research, background about Kiryandongo and Research objectives and questions. The following section gives an overview of what the different chapters entail and subsequently, Chapter 2 which covers the Theoretical and Empirical literature review.

## 1.5 Chapter Outline

The paper comprises of seven chapters (Figure 1.1). Chapter 1 includes Introduction, Contextual Background to the Study, Research Problem, Justification and relevance of this research, background about Kiryandongo and Research objectives and questions. Chapter 2 explains the theoretical and literature review that support the analysis in the subsequent chapters. Chapter 3 explains the methodology that the study has adopted. Chapter 4 to 6 aim to answer the research questions and form the basis for the conclusion of the study presented in the last Chapter 7.





**Figure 1.1. Outline of the Research Paper**

## **Chapter 2**

### **2.0 Theoretical and Empirical literature review**

This Chapter discusses the Theoretical and empirical literature. In the Theoretical literature review, I explore Elias' Theory and the Refugee Aid and Development (RAD) Theory. The study provides theoretical considerations about Elias' theory and Refugee Aid and Development (RAD) Theory to explain the causes of conflicts, their effects, and how to solve them. These concepts are brought to bear on qualitative methodology that aims to uncover the lived realities of refugees and host communities in Kiryandongo refugee settlement. Bweyale, Uganda. Also, the literature reviewed including how resources such as water, land, and cash influence conflicts between refugees and host communities.

### **2.1 Theoretical perspective**

I used two theories (Elias' theory and Refugee Aid and Development theory) to explain the causes of conflicts and how to mitigate them. The two theories give traditional explanations of host countries and aid organisations treat host communities and refugees in unequal measure. The host communities [seen as 'Established'] are seen as superior to the refugees ['Outsiders'] who have no say in the country to which they are hosted (Elias Theory). The RAD theory, on the other hand, focuses emphasis on telling the host government and aid refugees to put their focus for the joint development of both refugees and host communities to avoid the occurrence of conflicts because of biased aid focused on only refugees (Anomat, 2018: 12).

#### ***2.1.1. Elias' Theory***

The theory was advanced by Norbert Elias and John Scotson in their classical study on Established and Outsiders in 1965 (Elias and Scotson 1994; Hogenstijn et al 2008). According to the theory, the 'Established' are the host

community and the 'Outsiders' are referred to as the refugees Outsiders (Elias and Scotson 1994; Hogenstijn et al 2008). In the beginning, the theory analysed suburban neighbourhood names Winston with a population of less than 5,000 inhabitants – who formed a compact society with its own factories, churches, schools, clubs, and shops (Hogenstijn et al., 2008: 6). The theory aims to show disparities within the community, specifically focusing on neighbourhoods where differences in social class, income levels, and occupations are evident. Elias and Scotson (1965) initiated their investigation by examining demographic and social aspects such as class, income, employment, and the origin of the population. Their goal was to understand the reasons behind the social inequality observed between newcomers and old residents in the established zones.

In Goodwin and Hughes (2016: 7-17), the assumptions of Elias' theory are grounded in several assumptions. One is that human beings are interdependent and interconnected. Also, Elias suggests that individuals' behaviours are shaped by long-term historical developments (Elias and Scotson 1994; Hogenstijn et al 2008). The theory assumes that social structures and individuals' actions are interlinked, and changes in one aspect can have ripple effects throughout the social fabric. Finally, Elias argues that power, control, and civilization are important in shaping social relationships and structures (Elias and Scotson 1994; Hogenstijn et al 2008).

The established residents perceive themselves as holding a higher social status in comparison to the newcomers. This perception comes from the belief among the old residents that the recent arrivals from London showed a lack of respect for their way of life and lacked strong, structured family bonds (Tollebrandt & Wrede, 2013: 13). Conflict arose between the two groups as the original residents expected the newcomers to eventually assimilate into the community's norms and values, rather than persisting in their London-influenced behaviour (Tollebrandt & Wrede, 2013: 6). In essence, Elias' theory explains the origins of conflicts arising from the coexistence of refugees and the host community.

The newcomers refrained from adopting the lifestyle prevalent in their new environment leading to their isolation in comparison to the more established residents. This isolation became evident, particularly for working mothers among the newcomers who struggled to find suitable childcare solutions while the old residents faced no such challenges (Elias & Scotson, 1965). Elias and Scotson observed a power dynamic where one group considered itself superior and exerted more social influence over other interdependent groups. The old residents maintained their powerful position through social control, dominating key roles in social clubs and institutions (Elias & Scotson, 1965). The resulting stigmatisation and discrimination fuelled by gossip, created a substantial divide between the old residents and the newcomers hindering meaningful interactions (Hogenstijn & Terlouw, 2008). This theory explains the treatment of refugees in a new country, and Elias and Scotson's 'Established and Outsiders' concept indicates the profound differences in how these groups interact with each other.

### ***The Established and the Outsiders***

Elias and Scotson's analysis of the two neighbourhoods explains the division between the established residents and the outsiders (Elias and Scotson 1994; Hogenstijn et al 2008). Their observation led to the conclusion that one group wielded more social power over other interdependent groups, consequently viewing itself as superior. In terms of social cohesion, one group was tightly integrated and the other lacking such unity. The group division was predicated on whether individuals were firmly established in the community or were recent arrivals (Elias & Scotson, 1965). Members of the established group perceived themselves as possessing superior qualities, marked by heightened social cohesion that facilitated social control. This cohesion served as a mechanism fortifying their superior position, evident in their active participation in local organizations, churches, and activities. The outsiders were generally branded by the established as untrustworthy, undisciplined, and lawless, shaping the self-image of the outsiders themselves (Elias & Scotson, 1965).

In terms of *social power*, Elias and Scotson noted that within the social framework, members of the established group held greater social power



than the outsiders and perceived themselves as superior. They defined *social power* as intricately tied to the established group's self-image. Self-image, both among the established and the outsiders was important in the established-outsider relationship. The power differential was maintained through the established group's exercise of social control and the deliberate exclusion of the outsiders. Elias outlined various factors serving as mechanisms to maintain a distinct separation between the two groups. The established employed exclusionary practices to fortify their own power identity, using social tools such as labelling the outsider group as inferior and stigmatising them through gossip and rumours. This tactic effectively shaped the self-image of the outsider group, weakening their position. While the established were attributed superior qualities, the outsiders eventually internalised their subordinate status in society. Any personal relationships between an established member and an outsider beyond professional boundaries were deemed taboo and subject to social control through derogatory rumours [a behaviour rewarded within the established group] to which Elias defines it as either praise-gossip or the threat of blame-gossip (Elias and Scotson, 1965). The justification for the power differential lay in the outsiders' acceptance of the stigmatisation imposed upon them. Elias argued that altering the balance of power between the groups could be achieved through increased integration, such as the assimilation of outsiders or the establishment of a separate territory for the outsider group (Elias and Scotson, 1965: 85).

In terms of social cohesion, the factors in differentiating the power disparity between the established and the outsiders lie in the level of internal unity and collective control. Elias noted a significantly higher cohesion among the established, contributing to their increased social power. This cohesion was rooted in strong intergenerational relationships among families with a longer history in the community, in contrast to the newcomers who were strangers to both long-term residents and each other. These relationships were based on shared memories, values, long-term friendships, forming secure networks that cared for their members. In contrast, the outsiders lacked such family ties or long-term friendships within the community leading to a deficiency in social networks and cohesion. Also, the high level of cohesion

enabled the established to secure influential positions within the community, reinforcing their unity and excluding members of the outsider group. Simultaneously, the establisher's active participation and leadership roles in the community further enhanced their cohesion in a reinforcing cycle. This cohesiveness allowed the established to present a unified front, sustaining their own social norms, values, and traditions. Deviations from these norms by the outsiders were perceived as threats to the established way of life. The outsiders' lack of a comparable social network diminished their cohesion, reducing their social control and power (Elias and Scotson, 1965).

Through the Elias' theory, the study establishes the causes of tensions between the refugees [Outsiders] and host communities [Established]. One of the differences between the two groups is their social cohesion relates to the time the groups lived in the community and with this in mind, this study bases on the fact that most of the nationals have lived in Bweyale for a long time than the refugees which might have them [host communities/nationals] greater possibilities to be united. In characterising the depression of refugees and host communities, the Elias' explains that an examination of how the perceived superiority of the host community and the challenges faced by newcomers influence the prevalence of depression among these groups. While Elias' theory acknowledges the role of long-term historical developments in shaping behaviours. In this study, when refugees feel accepted and integrated in the host community, it may reduce their depression tendencies. Also, the theory guides on how the actions of one group impacts of the wellbeing of the other group. The theory guides the study on whether individuals with stronger social ties experience lower levels of depression and whether the nature of these social connections differs between the established and outsider groups. The reason for choosing Elias' theory is due to its focus on understanding community challenges between groups that are created possibly from an imbalanced power distribution. Also, this theory is based on the interests of a collective communities and not an individual (Elias & Scotson, 1965: 47).

In short, this theory explains how refugees are treated when they find themselves in the host country. What is clear is that the host community is not in the focus of aid agencies and host country especially in providing aid

assistance. Elias Theory concept represents the traditional ideology of focusing help to refugees and leaving out the nationals [hosts] from it which is a source of conflict.

### ***2.1.2 Refugee Aid and Development (RAD) Theory***

The Refugee Aid and Development (RAD) theory identifies the connections between development initiatives and refugee challenges emphasising the necessity of building infrastructural capabilities to support refugee populations while acknowledging their specific needs. The assistance provided must incorporate development-oriented objectives, concurrently addressing concerns of the host population (Betts, 2009: 7-15). This theory contends that incoming refugees are often perceived as a burden rather than an opportunity by the host community. Recognising this scenario, it becomes evident that creating a friendly atmosphere necessitates ongoing efforts to ensure positive relations between the involved parties (Kuhlman, 1990: 12). Refugees are viewed as burdens in resource-constrained areas suggesting that implementing RAD approaches holds the potential to transform refugees from being perceived as burdens into self-sufficient individuals.

This theory shows the frequent occurrence of conflicts between refugees and the host community primarily arising from the shared dependence on common resources. Tensions escalate due to the exclusive direction of aid and development efforts toward refugees, leading to disputes over essential social amenities like hospitals and schools situated within the camp. The host community perceive these resources as disproportionately allocated to refugees, exacerbating feelings of neglect. Shaver and Zhou (2015: 13) added that the environmental impact of refugees utilising resources for construction and cooking further intensifies tensions, as the host community interprets this as a disregard for their way of life and harm to their surroundings. Addressing the current global refugee crisis requires establishing partnerships among the hosting government, refugee aid agencies, and the host community, forming the foundational basis of the Refugee Aid and Development theory. According to Corrigan (200: 48), a shift towards inter-agency cooperation and coor-

dination is crucial for the effective functioning of the host government, refugee aid agencies, and the host community. The traditional separation of relief and development aid is deemed outdated and ineffective in the current situation, representing a short-sighted approach for refugees. Harrell-Bond (1986: 15) critiques the prevalent recommendation to separate relief and development aid, considering it an insufficient strategy that misses the opportunity to positively impact both refugee populations and host nation communities.

The traditional relief aid strategies are now giving way to the Refugee Aid and Development (RAD) approach, presenting a more sustainable solution to the challenges faced by refugees. The RAD approach seeks to benefit both refugees and the host community by not only providing financial support from the international community but also implementing initiatives aimed at alleviating the burdens imposed by refugee populations. Consistent with the RAD approach's principles, programs should adopt a participatory approach, emphasising inclusive planning and implementation to integrate refugees into the host community while concurrently creating local development (Corrigan, 2005: 50). The integration of relief and development aid is envisioned not only to enhance the living conditions of refugees but also to cultivate self-reliance, ensuring sustained benefits even after their return to their home countries or relocation to a third country. The current practices of refugee aid agencies, primarily offering short-term assistance, may lead to ongoing issues without imparting developmental skills and financial support for refugees to achieve self-sufficiency.

The third objective of this study on suggesting measures to address refugees-host community conflicts in Kiryandongo refugee settlement, the RAD provides a theoretical foundation for proposing measures to mitigate conflicts between refugees and the host community in Kiryandongo. This includes suggesting initiatives that promote inclusive planning and implementation, ensuring equitable distribution of resources, and creating positive relations between the parties involved. When the RAD principles are applied to this study, the proposed measures aim at transforming the perception of refugees as burdens into self-sufficient individuals, thus promoting harmonious

coexistence. The RAD theory emphasises sustainable solutions and the integration of relief and development aid aligns with the objective of addressing conflicts in an enduring manner.

## **2.2 Empirical review**

### ***2.2.1 Water resources and conflicts between refugees and host communities***

As discussed in Hrudey (2006), access to clean water is crucial for any community. It helps with productivity, personal hygiene, food preparation, and healthcare. When providing water to refugees, their unique social, economic, and political characteristics should be considered to plan and maintain service infrastructure. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) 1992 Water Manual for Refugee Situations and the 2008 Guidance for UNHCR Field Operations on Water and Sanitation Service emphasize the importance of water access for refugees. International organizations like the International Organization for Migration (IOM) also prioritize providing displaced populations with water, sanitation, and hygiene services.

According to Zhongming et al. (2018), Jordan – a country facing severe water scarcity, the arrival of refugees has put even more pressure on freshwater resources, affecting both refugees and locals. However, in Uganda, managing resources for refugees and host communities faces challenges due to funding gaps from the international community (Frank, 2019). The lack of funds has led to competition for land and resources, creating conflicts between refugees and the host communities (Relief Web, 2018; Refugee Law Project, 2014). Physical separation between the two groups also leads to misunderstandings and tensions, as host communities might perceive the benefits provided to refugees as unfair (Dryden-Petersen and Hovil, 2003). The influx of refugees may also negatively impact the local economy (Walton, 2012).

### ***2.2.2 Cash hand-out initiatives and conflicts between refugees and host communities***

Cash hand-out initiatives in humanitarian responses refer to providing money to individuals or households as emergency relief to meet their basic needs for food, non-food items, and services or to buy essential assets for their livelihoods (Doocy & Tappis, 2017). Cash transfers come in different forms, depending on the program design, such as one-time assistance or multiple transfers, and they can help with immediate needs like food, shelter, water, sanitation, and hygiene for refugees and displaced people (Campbell, 2014).

Studies have shown that giving unrestricted cash is more efficient than in-kind assistance, leading to faster delivery, lower costs, and improved transparency (Brady, 2018). It also benefits local markets and businesses. Cash provides recipients agency and choice, empowering households to prioritize their needs and make purchasing decisions (Smith, 2020). For instance, 60-70 percent of households traded in-kind aid in Iraq to get cash for urgent needs (UNHCR and REACH, 2014). In Jordan, cash assistance increased purchasing power, allowing households to buy more food (Idris, 2018). Cash transfers are essential for covering basic expenses, especially for displaced people who lack access to public services. They also have a positive impact on the local economy. Additionally, cash has been used successfully to support older people in some development settings. Social pensions in Namibia and Lesotho improved the well-being of older individuals without relatives, preventing isolation and exclusion from community life (Mokomane, 2012).

### ***2.2.3 Land allocation and conflicts between refugees and host communities***

In many developing areas, land allocation is often based on informal arrangements such as inheritance, agreements among kin, and sharecropping (Burke & Young, 2019; Deininger & Feder, 2017; Yami & van Asten, 2018). These arrangements can lead to competition and conflicts over land resources. Land disputes have been drivers of violence in various countries, affecting resource governance and community relations. In Uganda, the allocation of land

among refugees is guided by the Refugee Act (2006) and Refugee Regulations (2010) (Ilcan, 2015). The government promotes self-reliance for refugees, encouraging them to develop skills and resources for their future return to their home countries. However, this land allocation model faces sustainability challenges with a fixed amount of land and increasing population growth (Ahaibwe and Ntale, 2018). The continuous influx of refugees fleeing conflicts in neighboring countries further strains the available resources. Resource distribution among refugees and host communities can create competition for land, water, and forests (Bassam, 2014). It is essential to build a peaceful and prosperous world to ensure that people feel safe and secure in their homes and communities (Albert, 2012). This includes addressing conflicts and resource competition to create a harmonious coexistence between refugees and host communities.

### **2.3 Literature gap**

According to Martin (2005), a study on resource allocation in Bonga Camp, Ethiopia, and the host communities revealed that resources like land, forests, and wildlife have become scarcer for both refugees and host community (Charny, 2009). The arrival of refugees was blamed for this situation (Dryden-Peterson and Hovil, 2003). Land conflicts between refugees and the local people are a result of the government policy of settling refugees in specific areas, which sometimes overlaps with areas that the locals used to access (Kalyango, 2002). Physical separation between refugees and host communities can lead to an exaggeration of benefits enjoyed by refugees in the eyes of the local communities, further fuelling tension between the two groups (Dryden-Petersen, 2003).

Studies on depression are developed but have a narrow focus because many focus on displacement and mental health stressors (Hyojin et al., 2017). Kartal and Kiropoulos (2016) studies effects of acculturative stress on PTSD, depression, an anxiety symptom among refugees in Austria and Austria, thus, they did not study conflicts between among refugees and host communities. Kabunga and Anyayo (2020) studied demographic factors among refugees

amidst covid-19 in Nakivale Refugee Camp in Southwestern Uganda. While Marija et al. (2012) studied mental disorders in long-settled refugees and found higher rates of anxiety disorders. Jens-R et al. (2020) studied anxiety, depression, and post-traumatic stress disorder in refugees resettling in high income countries, but they never linked it with conflict. Therefore, less focus has been put on the effect of conflict between refugees and host communities on depression in and around the refugee settlement. The study sought to understand the underlying causes of these conflicts with the host communities, the effects of the conflict on depression, and what can be done to harmonise the situation.

## **2.4 Definition of key concepts**

### ***2.4.1 A refugee***

According UNHCR Geneva (2010:14) a refugee is any person “Owing to well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his former habitual residence as a result of such events, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it”

### ***2.4.2. Conflict***

The management study guide, Juneja (2015) defines conflict as a clash between individuals or groups arising out of a difference in thought process, attitudes, understanding, interests, requirements and even sometimes perceptions.

### ***2.4.3 Depression***

Depressive disorder (also known as depression) is a common mental disorder which is characterized by loss of pleasure or interest in activities for long



periods of time, persistent sadness and a lack of interest or pleasure in previously rewarding or enjoyable activities, disturbs sleep and appetite, causes tiredness and poor concentration. WHO also adds that Depression is a leading cause of disability around the world and contributes greatly to the global burden of disease. The effects of depression can be long-lasting or recurrent and can dramatically affect a person's ability to function and live a rewarding life. The world health organization further notes that the causes of depression include complex interactions between social, psychological and biological factors. Life events such loss and unemployment contribute to and may catalyse the development of depression. (WHO 2023)

In the next section I explain the Methodology and Methods of data collection including the Study design; Participant selection; Data collection tools; Ethical choices and political choices; positionality, Limitations of the research, practical problems and mitigation strategies used and Data Analysis

## **Chapter 3**

### **Methodology and Methods**

This section highlights the methods, procedures, techniques, and strategies that were employed for data collection and analysis.

#### **3.1 Study design**

This study used a case study design because Kiryandongo refugee settlement was a representative of other refugee settlements in Uganda and the situation in other settlements is like almost the same for Kiryandongo. I found case study design more suitable approach because it entails detailed and intensive analysis of a single case (Bryman, 2008: 52-53). I have chosen Kiryandongo refugee settlement as my “case” where the aim is to explore and provide detailed analysis of how conflicts between refugees and host community influences depression among these two groups. The research used a purely qualitative approach using descriptive phenomenological design. Qualitative research, according to Silverman (2001: 25) is intended to explore people’s lives and history, and it emphasizes words (Bryman, 2008: 366). According to Bryman he identified features that characterize research strategies that are qualitative. One is the inductive approach, common where theory is developed out of research. Also, interpretive epistemology and understanding the social world through participant’s interpretations (p.389). Qualitative approach was selected because it uses a small sample size. Secondly, due to the focus of this study, centered on the depths of the information, a qualitative approach was highly necessary. On the other hand, descriptive phenomenological design helped to develop new understanding of human lived experiences, relying on first hand account obtained from the participant interviews (Creswell, 2013). This is consistent with the focus of this study.

### 3.2 Participant selection

For this research, the population consisted of refugees and host communities living around Kiryandongo refugee settlement. Thus, the sampling frame of the study comprised of refugees and their hosts. Cluster sampling narrowed down the sampling frame to fifteen participants in Kiryandongo Bweyale sub county. Three clusters were targeted including, cluster N, J and B, who were brought into the settlement between 2015 and 2016. Participants were selected if they were 18years and above, stayed in Kiryandongo refugee camp, or Bweyale for the case of host community and were not sick to ensure ample talking time with the participants. Those who spoke another language other than English, Runyoro, or Kiswahili, a translator was used during the interview session. Refugees and host communities selected were willing to answer the Patient Health Questionnaire (PHQ-9) to screen and monitor the level of depression and symptoms. The tool had 9 items with scores ranging from 0 (not at all), 1 (several days), 2 (more than half the days, to 3 (nearly every day). These 9 items represented the symptoms of depression found in the DSM V. The researcher then sums up the total of scores for each item ticked to come up with the symptom severity and those found with score 1-4 were with minimal depression, 5-9 (mild depression), 10-14 (moderate depression), 15-19 (moderately severe depression), 20-27 (severe). This helped in understanding the prevalence of depression among communities with high conflicts between refugees and host communities. This tool was complemented with a semi structured questionnaire that enabled the collection of lived experiences through In-depth interviews in relation to experiences of conflicts and their relation to the participants' rate of depression.

**Table 2. Research participants**

| S.No | Codes | Respondent category | Age           | Gender | Interview Date           |
|------|-------|---------------------|---------------|--------|--------------------------|
| 01   | R1    | Refugee             | 37            | Female | 8 <sup>th</sup> /08/2023 |
| 02   | R2    | Refugee             | Not disclosed | Male   | 8 <sup>th</sup> /08/2023 |
| 03   | R3    | Refugee             | Not disclosed | Male   | 8 <sup>th</sup> /08/2023 |
| 04   | R4    | Refugee             | 29            | Female | 8 <sup>th</sup> /08/2023 |

|    |     |                       |               |        |                           |
|----|-----|-----------------------|---------------|--------|---------------------------|
| 05 | R5  | Refugee               | 53            | Female | 8 <sup>th</sup> /08/2023  |
| 06 | HC1 | Host community member | 26            | Female | 9 <sup>th</sup> /08/2023  |
| 07 | HC2 | Host community member | Not disclosed | Male   | 9 <sup>th</sup> /08/2023  |
| 08 | HC3 | Host community member | 28            | Male   | 9 <sup>th</sup> /08/2023  |
| 09 | HC4 | Host community member | 31            | Male   | 9 <sup>th</sup> /08/2023  |
| 10 | HC5 | Host community member | Not disclosed | Female | 9 <sup>th</sup> /08/2023  |
| 11 | R6  | Refugee               | 37            | Male   | 10 <sup>th</sup> /08/2023 |
| 12 | R7  | Refugee               | Not disclosed | Male   | 10 <sup>th</sup> /08/2023 |
| 13 | HC6 | Host community member | Mid thirties  | Female | 10 <sup>th</sup> /08/2023 |
| 14 | HC7 | Host community member | 47            | Female | 11 <sup>th</sup> /08/2023 |
| 15 | R8  | Refugee               | Mid forties   | Male   | 11 <sup>th</sup> /08/2023 |

Information about the pseudonym, category of participants, codes, gender, and date the interview was done are summarised in Table 2 above. The use of pseudonym was decided to provide protection for identity and privacy. Majority of the participants were refugees (8) while the host community members who participated were (7).

### 3.3 Data collection tools

The data for this study was collected through direct interaction with the host community and refugees. In-depth interview being a type of qualitative research technique was used to conduct intensive interviews with a small number of participants to get and understand their perspectives on a specific idea or situation. This method offered flexibility of sensing whether the question had not been fully answered and in such a case, I was able to introduce probing/follow-up questions on the spot. Using this method, the study had the opportunity to engage in detailed and open-ended conversations allowing participants to share unique stories, insights, and feelings. The guide was designed to cover sub-sections and themes identified in the study, guided by the research questions. The study collected data from 15 participants including 8 refugees and 7 members from the host community. Many of the participants were very engaged in asking what the intentions of the research was, what the aims were and how it could help them. To that, the research purpose

for my academic qualifications was communicated and voluntary participation sought from the refugees and host community prospective participants. I started with doing interviews in the camp and then moved to members of the host community. I also moved back and forth during the collection period. The interview guide was used for the same purpose as with the host community and refugees and was developed mainly based on research objectives and questions.

### **3.4 Ethical choices and political choices, and positionality**

I decided to work on this topic because of my background. I grew up in Uganda where I observed numerous individuals facing the challenges of conflicts and displacement. I encountered stories of resilience within refugee communities which impacted me. The firsthand experiences ignited my passion to understand the complexities of refugee issues and the intersection of their struggles with mental health. I worked in a refugee settlement and throughout my time there, I closely observed the disputes that often arose between refugees and host communities. It was these on-the-ground experiences that fueled my desire to think deeper into this research, seeking to contribute lead to more harmonious coexistence and sustainable development within the refugee settlement. I do believe in peace and would like to find answers to some questions that policymakers might not have asked about peace being implemented in refugee settlements. I am biased by the way I have researched conflict in Kiryandongo given that I have worked in the area. However, this only informed my understanding of the area but remained a student who wanted to learn and feed into this study as much as I could without being biased but open to new knowledge collection. The researchers' personal knowledge and experience of any conflict, bias and pre-conceived notions about this topic were suspended by reflective bracketing. According to Creswell (2013), bracketing helps to set aside researcher's personal knowledge of previous research findings and theories about the related research to suspend personal bias.

The researcher obtained information from participants who were requested to sign a statement of consent. The information was obtained from the participants who were treated with great importance and confidentiality. Anonymity was observed by using pseudonyms during data collection. This implied that information provided by participants did not reveal their identity. Reference was only made to document information collected from the field of study.

### **3.5 Limitations of the research, practical problems and mitigation strategies used**

There was limited time to build rapport with participants and this made some respondents being hesitant in providing some crucial information which they deemed confidential. This was minimized by thoroughly explaining to them the purpose of the study and assuring them that whatever information they shared was kept in a confidential manner.

Qualitative data collection calls for ample time, however, the time needed to carry out the study was not enough. This was minimized by including a small sample size and following the work schedule that was drafted to meet the deadlines.

The researcher also faced a challenge of language barrier mostly while interviewing the refugees. This was solved by using a translator who eased communication. To mitigate the translation gaps, I ensured to brief the translator beforehand on how I wish to have the instant interpretations done. We agreed on first person reporting and allowing me to understand every utterance of the research participant be it a question or a minor comment in the middle of the interview. I also paid attention to non-verbal cues to ensure I did not miss on any communication from the participants.

### **3.6 Data Analysis**

According to Brown and Kudyba (2014) Data analysis is the process of examining, cleansing, transforming, demonstrating and fine-tuning data into

useful information, informing the study questions and draw conclusions. After every interview session, data was transcribed immediately at the evening of that same day of the interview and then reviewed to ensure it is in line with the research objectives and for data clarity and trustworthiness. The results from the field were presented descriptively to derive final meaning and quick understanding of the information.

The transcribed data was manually categorized into themes and sections which helped me identify powerful and relevant quotes to use from each of the 15 participants. The manual process was possible due to the small sample of participants. The themes identified were also guided by the research objectives and questions. For every transcribed interview I read, I used different highlighting colors to note which theme I would place such data from a particular respondent's transcribed data. Thereafter, I cut and placed specific color data under their respective themes and sections.

For every data which I noticed that it made connections/correlations or raised questions or required cross analysis, I made notes and comments to keep track of that particular data. I also made comments to specific data that I wanted to take as direct quoted speech from the participants and noted what theme it would fit to be quoted. For example, although I did not have a question on coping mechanisms, in the findings, it came out strongly on what the refugees and host community research participants are doing to cope with the depressive factors and to help themselves out of depression situations as noted in Chapter 4 under the findings. During the process, I would also note any ideas or thoughts that came to my mind upon reading the data and this subsequently informed my discussion in this paper.

## Chapter 4

### 4.1 Characterising depression and conflicts among refugees and host communities

This chapter presents an account of the rate of depression among refugees and host communities using a screening questionnaire in Kiryandongo refugee settlement. This chapter is largely based on data and provides an overview of the depressive symptoms including anxiety, hopelessness and despair, social isolation, impairment in daily functioning and worsening the mental health issues among the refugees and host community. The Patient Health Questionnaire (PHQ-9) was answered by all the participants in the study [refugee and host community members] to screen and monitor their depression symptoms.

**Table 3. Prevalence of depressive disorders**

| S. No | Codes | Respondent category   | Total scores | Severity          |
|-------|-------|-----------------------|--------------|-------------------|
| 01    | R1    | Refugee               | 08           | Mild              |
| 02    | R2    | Refugee               | 23           | Severe            |
| 03    | R3    | Refugee               | 18           | Moderately severe |
| 04    | R4    | Refugee               | 03           | None-minimal      |
| 05    | R5    | Refugee               | 11           | Moderate          |
| 06    | HC1   | Host community member | 13           | Moderate          |
| 07    | HC2   | Host community member | 23           | Severe            |
| 08    | HC3   | Host community member | 10           | Moderate          |
| 09    | HC4   | Host community member | 08           | Mild              |
| 10    | HC5   | Host community member | 10           | Moderate          |
| 11    | R6    | Refugee               | 16           | Moderately severe |
| 12    | R7    | Refugee               | 02           | None-minimal      |
| 13    | HC6   | Host community member | 14           | Moderate          |
| 14    | HC7   | Host community member | 08           | Mild              |
| 15    | R8    | Refugee               | 24           | Severe            |

Key: None-minimal (0 – 4), Mild (5 – 9), Moderate (10 – 14), Moderately Severe (15-19), and Severe (20 – 27).

There are two participants (R4 and R7) with none-minimal depression implying that there were no specific symptoms mentioned, indicating a lack of pronounced depressive feelings..



Three (03) Participants R1, HC4 and HC7 exhibited mild depressive symptoms. Participant R1 with mild depression symptoms marked by persistent sadness and loss of interests in activities she once enjoyed. .

Meanwhile, six participants (R5, HC1, HC3, HC5, and HC6) reported moderate depression. Some of these participants indicated that their life in the refugee settlement is characterised by the challenges of adapting to a new environment and the difference in lifestyle which leads to clashes between the refugees and host communities. Also, results from the screening for one member from the host community [*HC1*] indicated struggles in sleeping and sadness that impact his daily life. Other participants including, HC3, HC5, and HC6 also showed struggles with emotional issues.

WHO (2017) reported that people with moderate depression reported guilt, decreased productivity, difficulty sleeping, feelings of hopelessness, low self-esteem, and fear.

From the PHQ-9 screening, two participants (refugees - R3 and R6) reported experiencing moderately severe depression. This level of depression indicates a higher degree of emotional distress and impairment in daily functioning compared to moderate depression. While, three participants including both refugees [*R2 and R8*] and host community member [*HC2*] reported experiencing severe depression, indicating a significant impact on their mental and emotional well-being. A participant identified as *R2*, is a refugee with severe depression symptoms. He shared that leaving his home-made things uncertain for his future and the separation from his home affected him so much because he is grappling with land wrangles which are stressing for him. He shared that:

“I am partly safer here in Kiryandongo, but inside I am not safe as I would be in my own country and land the reason is because the people here gave us a place to stay away from wars but they fight us because of their land and resources like firewood, I am always afraid for the future of my family”. [Participant, R2]

The preoccupation with a separated family from their own land and resources interfered with the participant's wellbeing. This is also the same situation for participant R8, he stated that,

“You just think about your family, how their wellbeing is, what is going on, or what is happening to them like when they chase my daughters away from fetching water at that well and fetching firewood, such sort of things. And that goes on and on.” – R8

This shows that separation from family and ease of accessing resources without conflicting another person or family exerted an emotional toll on participants, particularly featuring fear, sadness, and hardship, with all participants describing their situation in negative emotional terms such as being difficult, hard, challenging, or suffering. They faced difficulty living with the uncertainty about what was happening for their separated family members and uncertainty if they will ever return to their own properties and resources which they were using at ease. Similarly for the host community participants, they portrayed a desire to have peace and not have any wrangles which they said stemmed from the shrinking resources that they have to share with the refugees.

From the PHQ-9 screening, moderate to severe depression symptoms, were detected in 75% of the sample population, which is considerably higher than depression rates at Uganda national level of 22.9% as reported Opio et al (2022). My research findings are different from research which used the same depression measure in Germany on Syrian refugees in which 14% of their study population screened positive for moderate to severe depression symptoms (Georgiadou et al., 2018). The prevalence of depression is known to vary based on cultural, social, and environmental factors. The studies by Karam et al. (2008) and Georgiadou et al. (2018) were conducted in different contexts with different cultural backgrounds and support systems for refugees. Also, the experiences and stressors encountered by both the refugees and host communities different from those in Germany and Lebanon.

Tensions and conflicts arising from resources between the refugees and host community in Uganda have worsened their pre-existing mental

health issues or triggered new depressive symptoms. The host community noted that refugees have made things harder for services that were already not well-equipped and insufficient especially healthcare and schools. More people needing these same limited services have caused prices for water, housing, land, education and food to go up. HC7 was probed to explain the correlation between prices and refugees, she gave an example comparing the situation to before when her area had no refugees;

“When refugees came, they were given money and some of them have their relatives in other countries who send them money I think, so they started to buy things here and they were not bargaining maybe because they don’t know the language but when they went to buy something and they told them the money, they would just pay and that is why people got used to them that they give a lot of money. A Ugandan like me will not sell me something but will sell it to the refugee because they want to earn more from the refugees. So those refugees have made everything to go up in price, it was not like that when they were not here”- HC7

Some participants shared that refugees are treated unfairly when they try to use services or buy things in markets where the local host community are the sellers. R3 shared how their family stopped buying from the host communities and resorted to shops of refugees alone;

“I went to local market sellers and shop keepers many time but they were giving me at high price, I could stand and see what price they give their fellow Ugandans and when I saw that it was different, I also told my family and we agreed to always buy from refugees like us who have set up businesses here in the settlement” – R3

It was interesting to note from the host community participants who said their colleagues who sell stuff expensively to refugees do it because the refugees get more support from the implementing development partners. They cited the monthly stipends, land and food items that are given to the refugee community and not to them despite of living in the same neighborhoods with what they called the same financial and social status. HC5 narrated her dilemma of

how she does not want refugees to touch her stuff because they are supported yet the local community members are not;

“I suffered when I had no money to go to the hospital yet a refugee whom I know very well to be better off than me feel sick and the implementing partner sent to her a vehicle which ferried her to the health facility in Bweyale town and they even gave to her upkeep money there in the hospital but who can give me that support?, that is not good so I cannot help those refugees and I don’t want them to take anything from me because I don’t have and for them they are anyway helped and it makes me not to like them and it gives me a bad feeling” HC5

These findings align with what Kabunga and Anyayo (2021) established, that majority of refugees and host community in Nakivule had depressive disorder. The situation in Kiryandongo refugee settlement is not different from that of Nakivule as stated by Kabuya and Anyayo (2021). Despite that the host community feel that the refugees are receiving a lot, many refugees who settled in Kiryandongo, got smaller pieces of land. The land they got is not very good for farming because it has rocks and it is not fertile. So, the refugees make deals with better off local people, for example the refugees work on the local people’s land, and the local people pay them money for the service rendered. This helps both groups but sometimes there are problems if the deals are not followed or when breached, and this causes conflicts and some mental issues especially if the person gets out of the deal with nothing causing feeling of hopelessness and sadness. A 37yr old male participant narrated his ordeal when he cultivated land of a Ugandan business man and failed to pay him;

“Some of those Ugandans you see are very bad, I made a deal with that man who has a shop there and we agreed that I will dig for him and he will give me money or 5kgs of posho (*Maize flour*) when I go to his shop, but when I went there after 3days of digging with my family, that man said that we did not dig well and he did not give us anything. Imagine I was there with all my family thinking we are going to get posho and then he refused to give us anything not even a

quarter of posho, I felt very bad, we even got disagreements with my family because of him” – R6

In situations where resources are already scarce such as limited access to water and land for farming, conflicts over crop damage intensify. The fear of resource scarcity contributes to anxiety as host community members worry about how they will provide for their families if their crops continue to be destroyed. The study indicates that the participants believe that the refugees and host-community never live in peace and harmony because of disputes that have been reported mostly resource related conflicts. The study also is consistent with Thjis et al. (2019) who noted that refugees have access to facilities like free land, social facilities like hospitals and schools whose services are only restricted to the registered refugees. This creates divisions among host communities and refugees as there are many families which are also in need. The locals see refugees as a group being given special treatment thereby creating conflicts among the refugee community and host community leaders.

Both the host community members and refugees face daily emotional toll of the disputes resulting in depressive symptoms. The high prevalence of moderate to severe depression symptoms among refugees and host community in Kiryandongo suggest that unique factors specific to the unique context of the settlement contribute to these mental health challenges.

As noted in this chapter, the Elias’ theory explains the situation in Kiryandongo refugee settlement where there is that divide of the ‘established’ and the ‘outsider/newcomer’. It explains the resulting stigmatization and discrimination towards the ‘outsiders’ and the power and control the ‘Established’ have in the social and economic interaction which all cause conflicts and consequently depressive factors which inhibit wellbeing.

## 4.2 Coping mechanisms for refugees and host communities facing depression

It is important to take note of the coping strategies that were highlighted by the participants as below;

One of the participants with none-minimal depression R4 stated that her life has not been without challenges, but she has found ways to thrive. She shared during the in-depth interview that she actively engages in church activities, where she volunteers as a choir member and provides counselling to fellow refugees. She finds support in her faith community, which has become a pillar of strength for her and helped so much to manage her daily stressors' her involvement in church not only offers her a sense of purpose to live another life, but also a strong support network. She expressed how the community she found in the church has helped her overcome feelings of isolation and despair, which can often accompany life in a refugee settlement. Similarly, R7 – a participant with minimal depression revealed that the educational programs offered within the settlement by some NGOs has given him a platform to find purpose as he works to improve his own life and contribute positively to the wider community. Despite, the hardships he has faced, he sees the current situation as a temporary phase in his life. Both stories for [R4 and R7] indicate that individual coping mechanisms influence one's depression levels.

R1 has however, tried to find happiness by attending women's groups in the camp where they talk about things that help individuals with different challenges. "We meet to express our feelings and connect with others who share similar struggles," she said. However, she continues to face daily challenges which could contribute to the depressive struggles.

While, participant HC7 also has mild depression, however, the screening showed that her biggest challenge is difficulty in sleeping and persistent sadness. During the interview she expressed the bond she created with other people in the community to have helped her. She said, "*I got some friends here whom we share our problems, and we also have a saving group that help*

*us.*” Her experience of sharing with others in the community gives social support network which help people in the community navigate their daily life more effectively.

During the interview, participant *R5* described how she has been trying to find comfort in daily routines and social connections. She [*R5*] is currently participating in support group where she can share her experiences.

The research participants have shown remarkable strength in maintaining their daily lives as most of them participate in community programs aimed at promoting wellbeing. These illustrate that both refugees and host community members have mild depression, though, they have tried to cope with it through community support networks.

The subsequent chapter, explains Elias’ theory explanation of one group being established and the other outsider will create an understanding on how conflicts between refugees and host communities a contributor to the high depression rates could be.

## Chapter 5

### 5.1 Causes of conflicts between refugees and host communities

This chapter draws closely to the causes of conflicts between refugees and host communities in Kiryandongo refugee settlement. The study found several causes between the two groups, among them: competition for land, water, firewood, and opportunities. The people living in the refugee settlement were seen by the host communities as ‘the privileged, yet they were not the indigenous people’. On the other side, the refugees viewed the host community as established, powerful and the ones with control of resources while refugees seeing themselves as the outsiders.

#### *5.1.1 Land issue*

The study revealed that a significant number of refugees depend on land for their economic survival, making land a contributing factor to conflicts as they clash over attaining it. Particularly, this becomes evident with the rising refugee population and the restrictions imposed by the Ugandan government on the settlement's borders, leading to a scarcity of arable land. In Kiryandongo, the relationship between refugees and the host community became strained due to distrust and suspicion that each side wanted the other side of the land they use for economic survival. It was explained that this occurred when the Ugandan government and UNHCR settled the initial group of refugees on the host community's land in Kiryandongo without obtaining prior permission from the residents/landowners. The host community participants highlighted that, not only did the government fail to seek consent from the landowners, but it also forcibly displaced them to accommodate refugees, offering little or no compensation. In an interview with locals from Bweyale, one participant was concerned, stating that government officials wrongly perceived the unoccupied tracts of land in their area as wastelands without owners, deeming them suitable for refugee settlement. He emphasized that all the land in the



area has rightful owners, with some properties being passed down through generations, as quoted saying;

“There is no concept of vacant land in our area; the government should not relocate people to our land without engaging in dialogue with us. Every piece of land in this area is owned. You cannot imagine how stressing and mentally disturbing to wake up and your land is taken yet you have children who are waiting for their inheritance because they know this is family property that is why I cannot allow anyone on my land, we shall fight them until they take them away.” - HC2.<sup>8</sup>

The land issue has evolved into a political matter with politicians advocating on behalf of the Bweyale local community. One member of the host community (HC3) noted that the land problem has become politicised. The government's rejection of the hosts' requests for compensation has further intensified the frustration and anger among the hosts. Another participant (HC6), who resides near the refugee settlement observed that the increase in refugees and the gradual encroachment on host land by authorities have displaced hosts from their ancestral homes. Many refugees in Kiryandongo have encountered various forms of violence, either within the camp or in its surrounding areas. With the land issue remaining unresolved, conflicts between locals and refugees, among other issues, are likely to persist (R4 and R5).<sup>9</sup> The level of violence in Bweyale appears to be escalating with incidents resulting in casualties and severe injuries occurring on a daily basis which also affects their mental wellbeing (HC5). Participant HC5 recalled that:

“Near Kiryandongo refugee settlement, a refugee man was killed for allegedly burning charcoal after he cut down trees with no permission from the land owner. Now you imagine the mental breakdown his

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<sup>8</sup> Host community member male [HC2], on 9<sup>th</sup> August 2023 in Bweyale

<sup>9</sup> There is a refugee boy who was attacked by a member from a host community because he did not want to share with him money from the bricks, he made and sold. The host community member said that the boy had to pay because he used his land's soil, but the refugee thought it was land for refugees, so he didn't have to pay. [R4]

family faced upon hearing that he was killed for something like that. They will always have no peace of mind when they know who killed him and these things of Uganda, the suspects were arrested and detained but they will be out soon, that too is very disturbing”- <sup>10</sup>

Another element that is adding to the land issue in Kiryandongo is the problem of land boundaries. Some members of the community indicated that refugees often do not know where the border is between the place where they live and the land of the nationals. In the camp and the areas surrounding it refugees claim the land is theirs – so they do whatever they want. Yet in most cases nationals block refugees from using land for income generating activities like brick laying. As quoted from two host community participants;

“We have a problem here of taking our land from us by force, especially those big people from the Office of the Prime Minister (OPM).”<sup>11</sup>

“Refugees here think all the land in this area is for the government. They do not know that the locals in Bweyale have spent here many years, their grandparents grew up in this community.”<sup>12</sup>

However, the land issue does not affect the host community members alone, but also the refugees, as one notes;

I left my home to escape conflict, but now it feels like I am surrounded by it again. I wake up each day with a heavy heart, knowing there will be tension. It is difficult to sleep at night, and when I do, I am haunted by worries of where to cultivate because the land is insufficient to cater for my family’s needs. I have been digging in some land of one national outside the camp, but he wanted almost above half of the harvest. Yet he eats some of the maize when it is in the garden. So, he takes the biggest share”

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<sup>10</sup> Host community member female [HC5], on 9th August 2023 in Bweyale

<sup>11</sup> Interview with host community member male [HC2], on 9h August 2023 in Bweyale

<sup>12</sup> Interview with host community member male [HC2], on 9h August 2023 in Bweyale

### **Deteriorating Security and perceived ‘unplanned’ settling of refugees**

The security situation in Bweyale is deteriorating marked by frequent conflicts between refugees and the host community members. A participant suggested that this escalation may be attributed to the hurried/unplanned settlement of refugees in Kiryandongo by the government and UNHCR, lacking proper preparation and prior consultation with the local elders in Bweyale. A member from Bweyale observed;

At first, many of us believed that refugees were temporarily settled in Kiryandongo. However, as time has passed, it seems they have been here for an extended period. There is growing concern that they might establish permanent settlements. What disturbs our minds is that the expansion of the camp raises fears that they may eventually assert ownership over our land.<sup>13</sup>

The experience of HC2 is a serious concern in Bweyale. The study identified fears among members of the host communities on the prolonged presence of refugees in Kiryandongo. Some people from the host community associate the large refugee numbers with a sense of loss of control, driven by the fear of increasing refugees into Kiryandongo.

#### **Water**

Ability to access water is a challenge which affects refugees and Ugandans living around refugee settlements (International Water Association [IWA] report, 2015). Competition over its inadequacy becomes a serious problem. Water is a serious factor causing clashes between refugees and the host community, primarily due to its scarcity. Host community members contend that the

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<sup>13</sup> Interview, Host community member male [HC2], on 9h August 2023 in Bweyale

increased number of refugees has placed substantial pressure on water resources, resulting in the depletion and significant drying up of traditional water sources. This has led to disputes between the host communities and refugees especially at water access points around the camp and hand-dug wells in Kiryandongo. The host communities further assert that they travel long distances to fetch water for their households. Even though operational boreholes are located throughout the camp, refugees often crossover into the local communities in search of water, resulting in clashes with the host community members. However, one refugee mentioned that, *“There is only one tap, in the whole cluster, there is only one tap which is working.”*<sup>14</sup> The hosts argue that their women are forced to walk long distances from their villages to the refugee camp to access water and instead obstructed by refugees, who sometimes resort to aggression, leading to severe conflicts between the two groups. Ugandans and refugees accuse each other of trying to skip water queues and this has resulted in sporadic scuffles among women, youth and children from refugee and host communities who in most cases are responsible for fetching water.

The water problem has not just began with the Kiryandongo, as it seems to be challenge in most refugee settlements as seen in Thijs et al. (2019) who found out that in Ayilo II and Pagirinya refugee settlements, there was a problem of water scarcity due to water shortages. In their study, one participant in a focus group discussion said: “There is a big problem of water, the population is too high for only one borehole [in one zone], which has brought a lot of conflicts and quarrels at the water point.” Thijs et al (2019) continued to reveal that in May 2017, a fight between two minors in Palabek about who had gone to get water first escalated into a fight between adults from the Acholi and Dinka ethnic groups. Also, a study by Atukwatse and Chidiebere (2022) found that in Nakivule refugee settlement, refugees have no access to enough water and 24 villages out of 76 did not have access to reliable water sources. Atukwatse and Chidiebere (2023) further said that as a result, the host communities will attempt to share on the water resources which have

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<sup>14</sup> Refugee female [R1], on 8th August 2023 in the Kiryandon-do refugee settlement

been set-apart for refugee communities subsequently leading to conflict. Also, many other studies explain water as a source of tension between refugees and host communities (Farishta, 2014; Landau 2002).

### ***5.1.2 Firewood***

Firewood is a natural resource used by both the refugees and the host community regularly for domestic purposes including the cooking, lighting, building semi-permanent houses, and heating. It was found that the host community use wood as an income generating venture, selling firewood, building materials, and charcoal. The study noted that both the locals and refugees cut down trees and shrubs from nearby forests, and this causes conflicts because the locals are upset about the trees being cut down. Refugees in the camp find it difficult to get enough firewood for cooking and for other needs. Therefore, refugees are forced to venture out of the camp to collect firewood whereby they are confronted by locals who feel anger about the cutting their trees. One refugee during an interview stated that, *“the trees and shrubs around the camp are disappearing rapidly, It is so bad that even people cannot find shade from the hot sun, especially in the afternoon”*.<sup>15</sup> When we talked to the local community during interviews one stated;

*“I can tell you that there are big trucks and people bringing wood to the camp every day. What worries and make us furious is that the trees are vanishing and soon or later, we won't have any trees around the refugee settlement.”*<sup>16</sup>

During an interview, a member of the host community accused refugees for over cutting trees near the camp and their villages in Bweyale.

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<sup>15</sup> Refugee female [R5], on 8<sup>th</sup> August 2023 in the Kiryandondo refugee settlement

<sup>16</sup> Interview, Host community member female [HC1], on 9<sup>th</sup> August 2023 in Bweyale

Refugees are cutting trees in the camp, and this has resulted in strong winds blowing toward our village. I am quite certain that if no action is taken, we will soon see a depletion of trees in our area.<sup>17</sup>

Also, refugees from the settlement expressed their fear concerning the attacks from the host community and the reason they go out of the settlement to fetch firewood. In some instances, refugees walk over 15 km searching for sticks and firewood to build temporal housings. Participant R3 observed that, “*we have a problem of finding firewood for household use and sticks to build houses.*” However, agencies provide building materials to refugees but it takes long to come forcing refugees to look for firewood elsewhere and this angers members from the host community. This scenario shows that there exist conflicts between the refugees and locals especially when it comes to who collects and cuts woods from the forest. While, UNHCR has tried to reduce clashes by awarding firewood contracts to the host community for supplying the commodity to the camp. Participants indicated some host community attacks on refugees when they go out to cut trees and gather firewood, there have not been any major incidents which include loss of life. Furthermore, up to this point, there have been no reports of sexual assaults, rape, or instances of robbery by force reported to the security authorities stationed within the camp. Mulumba (2011) also reported similar findings when he revealed that women refugees, whose gender role it is to collect firewood, travel long distances in search of fuel wood, a process that exposed them to exploitation and disagreements with the locals as they sometimes go beyond the boundaries of the settlement.

### ***5.1.3 Opportunities***

The dissatisfaction among the residents of Bweyale regarding the allocation of job opportunities by UNHCR and its partner agencies is perceived as un-

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<sup>17</sup> Interview with a host community member female [HC4], on 9th August 2023 in Bweyale

just, as there is a growing preference for hiring refugees over local individuals. This preference is attributed to the belief that refugees can be employed at a lower wage compared to locals. Local communities contend that employment is a tangible security for them, and the competition with refugees for the same jobs excludes them from these opportunities within the camp. Locals assert that the employment of refugees at the expense of the host community is a potential catalyst for conflicts between the two groups. They argue that the primary benefit they should derive from hosting refugees is employment, which they view as a form of compensation. Also, they contend that their land has suffered a depletion in its natural capacity to sustain their livelihoods due to the occupation and utilization by refugees. Participant, HC3 stated that;

Refugees and individuals from different regions in Uganda are predominantly selected for most job opportunities, a situation attributed to the leadership of external individuals heading partner agencies. These leaders are accused of exploiting their positions by engaging in practices such as tribalism and favoritism, leading to the rejection of locals based on perceived lack of qualifications.<sup>18</sup>

Participant *R6* argued that almost 70% of jobs were reserved for locals in Bweyale and blamed locals for making the issue of employment political. During interviews, members from the host community who agreed to give their land to the refugee settlement hoped to get jobs in return but many of them were disappointed. They are frustrated because people from other parts of Uganda are getting jobs at the refugee settlements in their area, instead of the local people. A participant from the host community [HC7] said that, "Some of our young people do not get jobs in the Kiryandongo refugee settlement especially in NGOs as they prefer to hire someone from other areas and some of these come with their people, even if they apply for the job. This makes some people really bitter...it needs to change, and they consider people from around the settlement."<sup>19</sup> However, some participants stated that some

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<sup>18</sup> Interview, host community member female [HC3], on 9th August 2023 in Bweyale

<sup>19</sup> Interview, host community member female [HC7], on 11th August 2023 in Bweyale

jobs require a higher education background, but there are those which some of our people can do. We have professionals, but they are not being considered... [...] this makes us angry towards these institutions.<sup>20</sup>

Refugees also said they do not have enough job opportunities mentioned that they often only get volunteer jobs. Host community members seem to have an advantage when it comes to getting real jobs, even though the services are meant for refugees. Some NGOs that work with refugees were accused of not paying their salaries on time, or not paying them at all. Generally, both refugees and people from the local community are unhappy with international organizations. They both want jobs, but their demands don't always compete directly. Sometimes, though, there is competition between refugees and local people for jobs. During an interview, one male participant said that, "There is a woman whom they made to leave after she had already cut grass, but they did not let her take what she had already cut. The man was just trying to frighten them so that they would go away."<sup>21</sup> Occasionally, refugees have been attacked physically and women [refugees] have been arrested when cutting trees or grass and some of their tools (pangas) were confiscated but they are released usually. Also, children who have been reported to be beaten by members of the host community because they are trying to cut firewood or grass. A study by Jacobsen (2003) aligns with the study findings. He revealed that availability of economic opportunities increases human security and when refugees are allowed to gain access to resources and work alongside, they would be less dependent on the aid and better able to overcome the sources of tension in their host communities. However, Hoseini and Dideh (2022) said that in most cases, the economic opportunities in areas around refugee settlement, which creates economic shocks and can create disagreements between the refugees and nationals living around the settlements.

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<sup>20</sup> Interview, host community member female [HC1], on 9th August 2023 in Bweyale

<sup>21</sup> Interview, Refugee male [R3], on 8th August 2023 in the Kiryandondo refugee settlement





## Chapter 6

### 6.1 Measures to address refugees-host community conflicts

In the face of conflicts, strategies have been adopted to survive under the circumstances. This chapter is mostly based on primary data, analyses strategies undertaken to reduce the conflict between refugees and host communities in Kiryandongo refugee settlement. In Kiryandongo, there are many aid organisations providing solutions to the challenges refugees face in the camp including clashes with the nationals. What is clearer is that despite the presence of these agencies, there are still issues that affect both the host communities and refugees in Kiryandongo. The study identified measures to reduce refugees-host community conflicts including equitable resource allocation, shared initiatives, and dialogue and resolution.

#### *6.1.1 Equitable resource allocation*

For one to address the effects of conflicts between refugees and host community requires an understanding of the political economy of the host nations and the development implications of long lasting refugee situations in such areas. In this sense, development assistance that target both refugees and their hosts in Kiryandongo is an effective approach in reducing the effects of long-lasting refugee presence including conflicts. These would also build on the positive contributions of the refugees to communities that host them. One participant stated that in Kiryandongo, UNHCR and other aid agencies implemented initiatives aimed at targeted development assistance to create a ‘win-win’ solutions for host communities and refugees. UNDP started the refugee-host community project [RHCP] aimed at reducing conflicts with a purpose of improving the living conditions of the hosts around the settlement and the refugees. A participant stated that

The RHCP provides peaceful co-existence and helping us [refugees] to be self-reliant by engaging in income generating activities.<sup>22</sup>

Such development programs would improve the daily lives of the refugees and their hosts and perhaps prepare also the refugees to find sustainable solutions to displacement. Participants suggested that development opportunities for all bring benefits to both sides and prepare sustainable initiatives including one that prepares refugees to return to their home countries, settlement in a third country or in a country of asylum.

However, the experiences of collaboration between refugees and hosts have been limited and majority of the participants request for more initiatives from NGOs and government that target both the refugees and host communities. While several members from the host community mention that they collaborate with refugees in business and marketplaces inside the settlement a few have created friendships with refugees. One member from the host community observed that, “I have a friend whom I gave my land to cultivate, but, we share the harvests.”<sup>23</sup> Another said, “Yes I have many friends from the camp and we have no problem.”<sup>24</sup> Despite the existence of these co-existence, some refugees expressed fear of interacting with the hosts. One participant stated that, when it comes to food, when the hosts also given food from the camp then it would not be a problem talking with them. When the aid agencies and OPM allow host community members to use the schools and health centers used by the refugees, they would create a harmonious environment where both groups can stay together.

The same would happen if refugee agencies increase refugees’ self-reliance by maximising their entrepreneurship skills. This would make host

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<sup>22</sup> Interview, Refugee male [R4], on 8th August 2023 in the Kiryandondo refugee settlement

<sup>23</sup> Interview with a host community member female [HC3], on 9th August 2023 in Bweyale

<sup>24</sup> Interview with a host community member female [HC7], on 11th August 2023 in Bweyale

community members to worry less about whether refugees being redundant increases crimes and conflicts. Youths from the refugees and hosts should be encouraged to participate in educational conflict related seminars, workshops and be encouraged to train together at the vocational training centres available. When there are many ventures where the hosts and refugees can mix and be able to do things together, they would create an environment of co-existence.<sup>25</sup> Therefore, when government of Uganda and aid agencies introduce initiatives that target both the refugees and hosts, their lives of both would be improved. This is similar in Walton (2012) who established that when joint host community programmes are introduced into settlements, they assist impoverished communities within and surrounding refugee settlement in optimising their constrained resources. The program would contribute to increased access to food and water. Therefore, there is need for policies that ensure fair distribution of resources, including job opportunities and essential services between refugees and the host community. This would align with the principles of RAD theory that call for meeting the needs of both groups to prevent feelings of neglect and inequality.

### ***6.1.2 Shared initiatives***

Encouraging joint agricultural projects that involve both refugee and host community members. This could include community gardens or farming co-operatives where individuals from both groups work together, share resources, and benefit collectively from the produce. This shared initiative could involve the cultivation of staple crops such as maize, beans, and vegetables, with the produce being distributed equitably among participants. In Kiryandongo, what is happening is that the agreements between the refugees and hosts on using their land are done individual to individual, but if the OPM and aid agencies come up with an office in the camp where such agreements are followed and contracts signed. The issue of clashes between the two

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<sup>25</sup> “When refugees and host communities share boreholes, schools, and other necessities – the issue of conflict would be minimized because when people stay together, they do not want to harm others.”

groups would be minimised.<sup>26</sup> Also, there is need to allocate additional land to the refugee settlement. Increasing the land available for the settlement will help reduce overcrowding issues. With more space, refugees and host community members will reduce the disputes that can arise from cramped living conditions. One participant stated that, the focus of the government should be securing more land for the settlement because it is not just about providing shelter, but also providing a livelihood for refugees.<sup>27</sup> Additional land will also support agricultural activities for refugees and land for cultivation can reduce conflicts over arable land. But to prevent inequality and neglect on the side of the host communities, the owners of the land should be compensated well so that wrangles and clashes are prevented.

### *6.1.3 Dialogue and resolution*

Discussing the issue with the affected parties in the dispute is a common way to reduce clashes. If a problem affects both refugees and Ugandans, they [refugees and host community] usually come together to talk about it with each other and the people it is affecting. Whenever there is a problem involving both refugees and the host community, the local leader respond. Elder people from both sides are also available in most cases and usually try to settle things peacefully or give a small punishment.<sup>28</sup> Doing things like this sometimes makes things better for both groups [affected] and ease disagreements in many places. However, some people are frustrated because it does not always lead to the big changes they want to see. But having discussions between communities is significant while dealing with problems though it might not work well for bigger issues like damage to the environment or when the government or donors are involved. When conflicts arise between refugees and

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<sup>26</sup> Interview, Refugee male [R5], on 8th August 2023 in the Kiryandondo refugee settlement

<sup>27</sup> Interview, Refugee male [R2], on 8th August 2023 in the Kiryandondo refugee settlement

<sup>28</sup> Interview with a host community member female [HC1], on 9th August 2023 in Bweyale

host community members, the first people to respond are usually the leaders [refugee leaders and local leaders]. These leaders include the local chairman at the village, parish, and sub-country levels, or the Refugee Welfare Committee at the village, cluster, or zone level. The Refugee Welfare Committees work in a similar way to the local government system. Both the local leaders and Refugee Welfare Committees are the main contacts for national and international organizations, and they help resolve conflicts. The Refugee Welfare Committees play a big part in solving issues within the refugee community and in educating people about various matters. One participant observed that,

We refugees have tried to get religious leaders and older people to help us solve problems peacefully without making things worse. Also, people who hurt others are told to make peace and fix the damage they have caused. After that the person who was hurt should not try to get revenge.<sup>29</sup>

In addition, traditional leaders from both the refugee and local communities have come together to talk about issues, like how refugees and Ugandans get along. Some international organizations have also helped with this, but there is still a gap between these different groups, partly because of past bad experiences with older leaders. To improve dialogues and resolutions of these conflicts, there is need to improve police reactions to disputes. When small disagreements turn into fights or crimes, the police respond by making investigations, arrests and handling the situations. Many participants said they [refugees and host community] have a good relationship with the police but some said the police do not have enough resources and they need more police to help.<sup>30</sup> In addition, refugees accuse police of not adequately investigating

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<sup>29</sup> (Refugee, male [R2], on 8th August 2023)

<sup>30</sup> “When we called the police to follow up with the disagreement both the refugee and one member from the host community, they spent 7 hours to come because we had sent them [police] money for fuel. Both were taken to the police station, but they

incidents that involve the host community and they also release perpetrators very early. One refugee said: "They [police] support the other group [host community], and even if we [refugees] try our best, they won't listen to us." However, local community members also expressed similar concerns about refugees getting preferential treatment from the police.

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were later released. But the issue here is that police should improve on their reactions to these disputes because one day, one man who had been accused of stealing a cow was killed after people beat him to death and police came later to collect the dead body." (Host community member female [HC5], on 9<sup>th</sup> August 2023 in Bweyale)

# **Chapter 7 Conclusions**

## **7.1 Introduction**

This research concentrated on answering the research question “What are the causes of conflicts between refugees and host communities and what are the effects of such conflicts on depression among refugees and host communities in Kiryandongo refugee settlement in Uganda?” In this research paper, I used the Elias’ Theory and RAD to understand the causes of conflicts, the correlation and effects of Conflict on depression between refugees and host communities in Kiryandongo refugee settlement, Uganda. During the findings, It was found that there are some mechanisms that the study participants use to cope with the depressive conditions.

The study took on characterizing depression among refugees and host communities using a screening questionnaire, identifying the causes of conflicts between refugees and host communities and the measures to address refugees-host community conflicts in Kiryandongo.

## **7.2 What the study Found**

The following summary and reflection about the results is presented with the disclaimer that this research holds challenges while collecting data, conversing with different people, and constantly learning and unlearning throughout analysis;

The study reveals a variety of depression severity among both refugees and host communities. While few of them indicated none-minimal symptoms of depression, majority showed moderate, moderately severe, and severe depression categories. The prevalence of moderate depression to severe depression is high. Those who have minimal depression found support in religious and educational activities that helped them despite the challenges they went through as a means of coping to the depressive conditions.



The study found four major causes of conflicts, namely land issue, water, firewood, and opportunities. The relationship between the refugees and their hosts was marred by mistrust when the government evicted host communities from their land for the purposes of settling refugees. Lack of water sources including limited provision of firewood and job opportunities was responsible for growing clashes among the two groups. However, through equitable resource allocation, shared initiatives, and dialogues and resolution could help minimize the conflicts between refugees and host community.

The application of Elias' theory in this paper indicated how refugees ('outsiders') experience treatment upon entering a new country where there exists a host community identified as the 'established' residents. Elias' theory revolves around the concept of uneven power distribution between the established residents (host community) and the newcomers (refugees) which was mirrored in the context of refugee and host communities in Kiryandongo refugee settlement. This theory served as the foundation and link for understanding the social disparities between refugee and host communities that arose between the two groups due to the identified causes. There is a perception that the established residents hold more influence than the outsiders leading to social dissimilarities that potentially lead to conflicts over time. While this is true to this context, the effects of the conflicts have the same impact on the two populations-refugee and host communities. These conflicts between refugees and the host community often are a result of mistrust, difference in views and other causes as were identified herein this study.

This research has exposed the correlation between conflict and depression among refugee and refugee hosting communities. The research further dived deep into understanding what the causes of such conflict are and how these causes of the conflicts trigger depressive symptoms among the affected communities. In their discussions, the participants used words like, 'lack of sleep', 'anger', 'withdrawal from community interactions', 'worry', 'feeling sad', 'missing their homeland', 'nightmares of land being taken', 'feeling unheard', 'cheated' among others which all make them slow into depressive conditions.

There was also a gap on understanding that refugee depression is caused by only the wars they experienced in their countries, however, as it has been revealed, also the conflicts that refugees find within the host communities also take a toll on their mental health.

In the same vein, the mental health of the host community members which is largely forsaken as they are rarely engaged in activities with the refugees, they are unable to get psychological support in such cases.

### **7.3 Recommended future research and policy improvement**

Future research should engage deeper with a bigger population sample to understand further the effects of conflict on depression especially in a refugee hosting community. This creates new knowledge where it is highlighted that there is continued conflict happening in the lives of refugees and how it affects their mental wellbeing.

The refugee and host treatment policies can be revised to take into consideration the fair treatment as discussed under the RAD approach.

Implementing partners in humanitarian settings should reconsider integrating host communities into activities for development so that they are not left behind especially because the refugee hosting communities are also usually economically unwell.

The refugee settlement policy should be streamlined to first ensuring that the land on which the refugees are settled by the government has not ancestral owners and that the government creates rapport with the land owners before settling the refugees onto the land.

There is need to enhance dialogues between refugee and host communities. This can be done by both government and development agencies.

The international community should extend its support to developing countries not only in terms of financial assistance but also by hosting refugees within their borders, given the global nature of the refugee crisis. The assistance provided should aim to benefit both refugees and the host community,

this would reduce the competition for limited resources and potential conflicts. This is in line with the principles of the Refugee Aid and Development (RAD) approach that advocate for the integration of emergency relief aid and developmental programs involving both refugees and host communities. This approach not only makes refugees self-reliant, reducing conflicts, but also contributes to the overall development of the local community in Kiryandongo. It has led to the implementation of programs designed to support the self-reliance of refugees and the host community by providing viable livelihood opportunities and improved service efficiency.

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## APPENDICES

### Appendix A: Patient health Questionnaire (PHQ-9)

Show your level of agreement on how often you have been bothered by any of the following problems in the past 2 weeks. Please tick (✓) to indicate your answer.

| No.         | Statement   | Not at all | Several days | More than half the days | Nearly everyday |
|-------------|---|------------|--------------|-------------------------|-----------------|
| 1           | I have little interest in doing things  | 0          | 1            | 2                       | 3               |
| 2           | Feeling of hopelessness, or feeling down  | 0          | 1            | 2                       | 3               |
| 3           | Trouble falling or staying awake, or sleeping too much  | 0          | 1            | 2                       | 3               |
| 4           | Feeling tired or having little energy   | 0          | 1            | 2                       | 3               |
| 5           | Poor appetite or overeating   | 0          | 1            | 2                       | 3               |
| 6           | Feeling bad about yourself that you are a failure or have let yourself or your family down  | 0          | 1            | 2                       | 3               |
| 7           | Trouble concentrating on things like reading a newspaper or watching television   | 0          | 1            | 2                       | 3               |
| 8           | Moving or speaking so slowly that other people could have noticed. Or restless that you have been moving around too much than usual | 0          | 1            | 2                       | 3               |
| 9           | Thoughts that you would be better off dead, or of hurting yourself.   | 0          | 1            | 2                       | 3               |
| TOTAL SCORE |   |            |              |                         |                 |

|             |                        |
|-------------|------------------------|
| Total score | Severity of depression |
| 1-4         | Minimal depression     |
| 5-9         | Mild depression        |
| 10-14       | Moderate depression    |



.....  
Name of participant                      Date                      Signature

## **Appendix C: In-depth Interview guide for Refugees and host communities**

### **Reasons behind conflicts**

- Please tell me about yourself (gender, age, marital status, education level, period spent in the area).
- Do you have any experiences of disputes you have encountered between the host communities and refugees in this area?
- In your experience, can you tell me about any specific incidents that have led to conflicts between refugees and host communities in this settlement?
- What do you think are the main issues that cause tensions between refugees and host communities in this area?
- How does the cultural or social differences between refugees and host communities influence the conflicts?

### **Consequences of conflicts on mental well-being**

- How have the conflicts affected your emotional well-being and mental health?
- According to you, how exactly do you feel related to this?
- In your opinion, how do the conflicts impact the mental well-being of both refugees and host communities in this area?
- Please describe to me, any changes in the behavior of people you observed as a result of the conflicts?
- According to you, how have conflicts affected social relationships in this community?

### **Strategies to reduce Conflicts**

- As a person who has stayed in this area for some time, what do you believe could be done to improve understanding between refugees and host communities in this area?
- Are there any existing programs that have been implemented to address conflicts?
- If yes, how?

- Who are responsible for reducing conflicts between refugees and host communities?
- How do you think involving both refugees and host communities in decision-making processes can help to resolve conflicts?
- Are there any examples from other settlements that you think could be adapted to reduce conflicts in this settlement?
- Do you have anything else to add to my study?

**Thank you for your time**

## **Appendix D: Key informant Interview guide for local leaders**

### **Reasons behind conflicts**

- Please tell me about yourself (gender, age, marital status, education level, period spent in the area).
- Have you witnessed any disputes between refugees and the host communities in this area?
- Describe to me specific situations that led to disputes between refugees and host communities in this area?
- As a community leaders, what do you think are the main issues that cause disputes between refugees and host communities in this area?
- How does the cultural or social differences between refugees and host communities influence the conflicts?

### **Consequences of conflicts on mental well-being**

- How have the conflicts affected the emotional well-being and mental health of refugees and host communities?
- Describe to me the behaviours of these people who have experienced conflicts between refugees and host communities?
- Please describe to me, any changes in the behavior of people you observed as a result of the conflicts?
- According to your experience, how have conflicts affected social relationships in this community?

### **Strategies to reduce Conflicts**

- As a local leader, what have you done to improve understanding between refugees and host communities in this area?
- In your area, what existing programs have been implemented to address conflicts?
- Specifically, who are responsible for reducing conflicts between refugees and host communities?

- How do you think involving both refugees and host communities in decision-making processes can help to resolve conflicts?
- Are there any examples from other settlements or areas that you think could be adapted to reduce conflicts in this area?
- Do you have anything else to add to my study?

**Thank you for your time**

## **Appendix E: Key informant Interview guide for NGO focal person**

### **Reasons behind conflicts**

- Please tell me about yourself (gender, age, marital status, education level, period spent in the area).
- Have you witnessed any disputes between refugees and the host communities in this settlement?
- Describe to me specific situations that led to disputes between refugees and host communities in this settlement?
- As a person with a NGO in his settlement, what do you think are the main issues that cause disputes between refugees and host communities in this area?
- How do the cultural or social differences between refugees and host communities influence the conflicts?

### **Consequences of conflicts on mental well-being**

- How have the conflicts affected the emotional well-being and mental health of refugees and host communities?
- Describe to me the behaviours of these people who have experienced conflicts between refugees and host communities?
- Please describe to me, any changes in the behavior of people you observed as a result of the conflicts?
- According to your experience, how have conflicts affected social relationships in this community?

### **Strategies to reduce Conflicts**

- As a person concerned with issues of refugees, what have you done to improve understanding between refugees and host communities in this area?
- In your organisation, what existing programs have been implemented to address conflicts?
- Specifically, who are responsible for reducing conflicts between refugees and host communities?



- How do you think involving both refugees and host communities in decision-making processes can help to resolve conflicts?
- Are there any examples from other settlements or areas that you think could be adapted to reduce conflicts in this settlement?
- Do you have anything else to add to my study?

**Thank you for your time**

## **APPENDIX F: Uganda's Refugee Policy**

Relative to many other nations globally and in the region, Uganda's approach to refugees is often seen as a positive model. Uganda has consistently welcomed refugees from its neighboring countries, especially South Sudan and the Democratic Republic of Congo, by keeping its borders open. The Ugandan government has taken significant measures to support freedom of movement, such as renaming 'camps' as 'settlements' and permitting refugees to reside in cities, even though most aid is still primarily focused on these settlements. Additionally, the government has actively encouraged self-sufficiency among refugees by providing land, work opportunities, and incorporating them into national development plans and services. Nonetheless, putting these policies into practice has proven challenging, with the majority of refugees still relying on food aid and services primarily provided by UNHCR and international NGOs.<sup>31</sup>

The Ugandan government has broadly adhered to international policy trends and has actively endorsed the comprehensive refugee response framework (CRRF). This framework represents a global commitment aimed at reducing the burden on host nations, fostering self-sufficiency among refugees, and encouraging solutions such as resettlement in third countries or voluntary re-

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<sup>31</sup> International Refugee Rights Initiative, "Uganda's refugee policies: The history, the politics, the way forward", October 2018, available at <http://refugee-rights.org/uganda-refugee-policies-the-history-the-politics-the-way-forward/> (accessed 27 August, 2023).

turns to refugees' places of origin. Unfortunately, Uganda has faced challenges related to its progressive refugee policy, including difficulties in securing adequate international funding, which has been linked to corruption allegations. Moreover, the ongoing arrival of refugees due to prolonged conflicts in the region has placed significant pressure on the country's resources.

## **Appendix G: Population of refugees as of 30 June 2023**

Population Summary by Settlement/Gender and Age Group

| Settlement   | 0-4 years      |                |                | 05-11 years    |                |                | 12-17 years    |                |                | 18-35 years    |                |                | 36-59 years    |               |                | 60 years and above |               |               | Total            |
|--------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|---------------|----------------|--------------------|---------------|---------------|------------------|
|              | Female         | Male           | Total          | Female         | Male           | Total          | Female         | Male           | Total          | Female         | Male           | Total          | Female         | Male          | Total          | Female             | Male          | Total         |                  |
| Adjumani     | 17,335         | 17,275         | 34,610         | 25,740         | 26,308         | 52,048         | 20,605         | 22,139         | 42,744         | 29,809         | 24,230         | 54,039         | 15,172         | 5,845         | 21,017         | 4,581              | 1,702         | 6,283         | 210,741          |
| Bidibidi     | 12,331         | 12,323         | 24,654         | 25,479         | 25,992         | 51,471         | 19,713         | 22,153         | 41,866         | 26,611         | 21,610         | 48,221         | 12,908         | 7,019         | 19,927         | 3,568              | 1,602         | 5,170         | 191,309          |
| Imvepi       | 5,332          | 5,216          | 10,548         | 8,616          | 8,775          | 17,391         | 6,129          | 6,375          | 12,504         | 9,605          | 7,350          | 16,955         | 4,052          | 2,493         | 6,545          | 1,292              | 602           | 1,894         | 65,837           |
| Kampala      | 4,805          | 5,028          | 9,833          | 8,304          | 8,628          | 16,932         | 6,997          | 7,123          | 14,120         | 33,997         | 43,595         | 77,592         | 10,719         | 13,575        | 24,294         | 1,072              | 959           | 2,031         | 144,802          |
| Kiryandongo  | 4,508          | 4,446          | 8,954          | 7,420          | 7,432          | 14,852         | 6,653          | 7,454          | 14,107         | 9,911          | 9,914          | 19,825         | 4,530          | 1,457         | 5,987          | 953                | 303           | 1,256         | 64,981           |
| Kyaka li     | 10,586         | 10,457         | 21,043         | 14,595         | 14,648         | 29,243         | 9,605          | 9,653          | 19,258         | 17,231         | 15,678         | 32,909         | 8,048          | 7,154         | 15,202         | 1,717              | 1,413         | 3,130         | 120,785          |
| Kyangwali    | 12,434         | 12,459         | 24,893         | 15,802         | 15,772         | 31,574         | 9,922          | 10,114         | 20,036         | 19,544         | 14,047         | 33,591         | 9,294          | 7,380         | 16,674         | 2,565              | 1,806         | 4,371         | 131,139          |
| Lobule       | 615            | 614            | 1,229          | 560            | 569            | 1,129          | 650            | 667            | 1,317          | 752            | 719            | 1,471          | 467            | 203           | 670            | 114                | 63            | 177           | 5,993            |
| Nakivale     | 15,061         | 15,034         | 30,095         | 19,290         | 19,286         | 38,576         | 12,177         | 12,639         | 24,816         | 27,681         | 26,800         | 54,481         | 12,588         | 11,436        | 24,024         | 2,484              | 2,244         | 4,728         | 176,720          |
| Oruchinga    | 729            | 716            | 1,445          | 859            | 864            | 1,723          | 652            | 679            | 1,331          | 1,086          | 944            | 2,030          | 665            | 524           | 1,189          | 131                | 135           | 266           | 7,984            |
| Palabek      | 6,802          | 7,074          | 13,876         | 10,261         | 11,457         | 21,718         | 6,979          | 9,577          | 16,556         | 10,761         | 9,126          | 19,887         | 3,746          | 1,881         | 5,627          | 1,063              | 309           | 1,372         | 79,036           |
| Palorinya    | 8,193          | 8,069          | 16,262         | 13,786         | 14,088         | 27,874         | 11,358         | 12,052         | 23,410         | 19,034         | 15,775         | 34,809         | 10,213         | 6,980         | 17,193         | 3,241              | 1,843         | 5,084         | 124,632          |
| Rhino        | 10,185         | 10,702         | 20,887         | 18,140         | 19,227         | 37,367         | 14,204         | 17,695         | 31,899         | 21,252         | 19,808         | 41,060         | 7,657          | 4,029         | 11,686         | 2,084              | 837           | 2,921         | 145,820          |
| Rwamwanja    | 9,132          | 9,230          | 18,362         | 11,513         | 11,248         | 22,761         | 7,559          | 7,452          | 15,011         | 11,626         | 9,870          | 21,496         | 6,319          | 5,594         | 11,913         | 1,188              | 1,124         | 2,312         | 91,855           |
| <b>Total</b> | <b>118,048</b> | <b>118,643</b> | <b>236,691</b> | <b>180,365</b> | <b>184,294</b> | <b>364,659</b> | <b>133,203</b> | <b>145,772</b> | <b>278,975</b> | <b>238,900</b> | <b>219,466</b> | <b>458,366</b> | <b>106,378</b> | <b>75,570</b> | <b>181,948</b> | <b>26,053</b>      | <b>14,942</b> | <b>40,995</b> | <b>1,561,634</b> |