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# Arise

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## THE REFUGEE CRISIS: A WOMEN'S RIGHTS ISSUE



Refugees are men,  
women and children  
caught in the fury of  
war, or the cross hairs  
of persecution. Far from  
being terrorists, they  
are often victims of  
terrorism. Targeting the  
weakest doesn't show  
strength.

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**Angelina Jolie**

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## Vision

A just society where gender equality is a reality



## Mission

To empower women and influence legislation and policy for gender equality in Uganda



## Core Purpose

Advocacy for gender equality and equity

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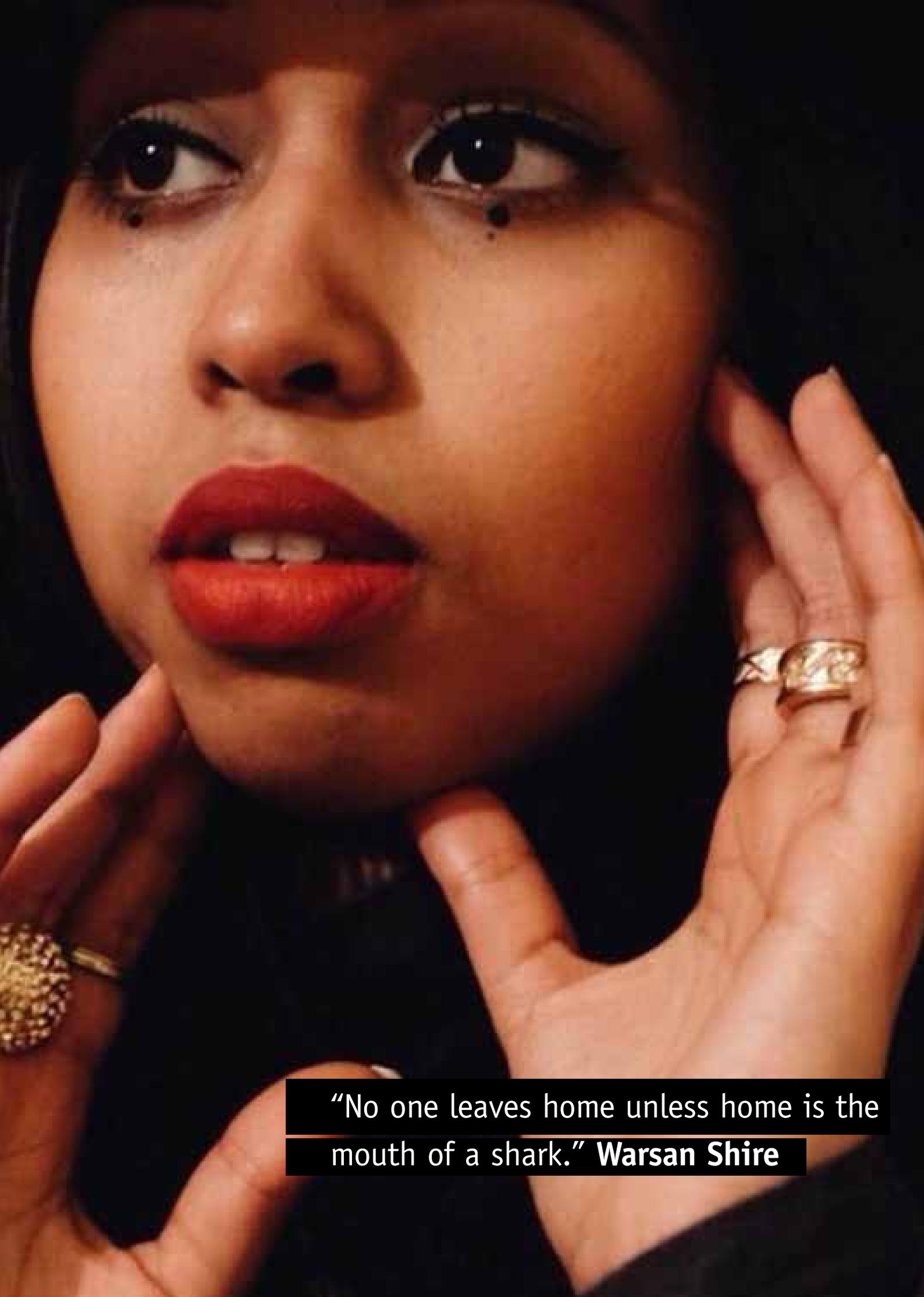
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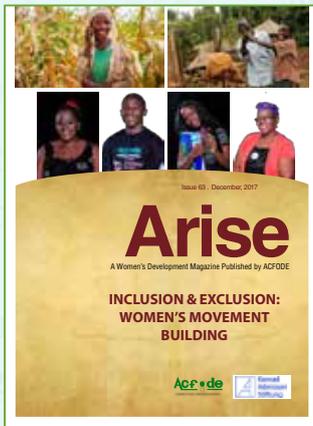
“No one leaves home unless home is the  
mouth of a shark.” **Warsan Shire**



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# LETTERS TO THE EDITOR



**Dear Editor,**

Thank you for issue 63 of the ARISE. The theme was timely in discussing the challenges that the movement faces. I was intrigued with the level of engagement by the

different writers as well as their dissection into the context of the movement. I believe this is an area that most publications on the movement have always ignored. Thank you for the insights given.

**Lucas Kamukulu- Masaka.**

**Dear Editor,**

I would love to thank ACFODE and your team for the publication well knitted. My peers and i always look forward to your publications given the different varieties of awareness on Women's Rights packaged in every issue. We request therefore that more copies are distributed to even the local scene such that more and more women's lives are changed. Thank you.

**Brenda Nalukwago- Malaika Institute**

**Hello Editor**

I loved the book selections made for ARISE 63. Peter Kimani's Dance of the Jakaranda came in handy especially in closely analyzing issues on women's plight during the beat of independence, discrimination, politics, struggle and social perceptions. Ayobami Adebayo's novel further compressed some of the commonest challenges African Women face in the face of Patriarchy and how consequently this affected their stature in society and continues to. I found these books very insightful and I look forward to the next edition's

book reviews.

**Liberty Christopher-Kwid Kabale.**

Dear Editor,

Thank you for the street talk in the ARISE Issue 63. I found the question relevant and the answers given by the different interviewees therein insightful. I have since then bench marked and reflected on the divergent views of both women and men, in fronting women and girls 'rights in Uganda. I have in fact used this issue of the ARISE to showcase to all actors, society's attitudes on the women's movement. I believe that with more feedback from the community, women rights activists, have a basis for strengthening and reshaping the movement goals as per context.

**Happy Ainomugisha-Bukoto**

**Hello Editor,**

Thank you for publishing about young peoples' challenges in building the women's movement. I personally feel that this topic is usually neglected and that though the majority of Ugandans are youth, young people are not being helped to appreciate the Women's Movement. Nevertheless, I found issue 63 strategic in bringing out most of their concerns, in addition to amplifying their voices. Ms Regina brought out significant notions that can be leveraged on by interested parties to promote the youth's participation in the movement. I am confident that with the insights shared, stakeholders have a leaf or two to pick.

**Parvin Mulokwa-Volunteer, Woman's Situation Room**

# FROM THE EDITOR



**Sandra Nassali**

Editor In Chief

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What is the common denominator between South Sudan and Myanmar? At first glance, there does not seem to be much similarity between the two countries. However, a second look reveals a worrying trend. Refugees have been spilling out of the countries into neighbouring ones and others farther afield for quite a while now. The reason: civil war in South Sudan and a relentless and egregious persecution of the Rohingyas in Myanmar. Beside these two countries, others that have become the largest sources of refugees, often due to armed conflict, are Syria, Afghanistan, Somalia, the Democratic Republic of Congo, the Central African Republic, Eritrea and Burundi.

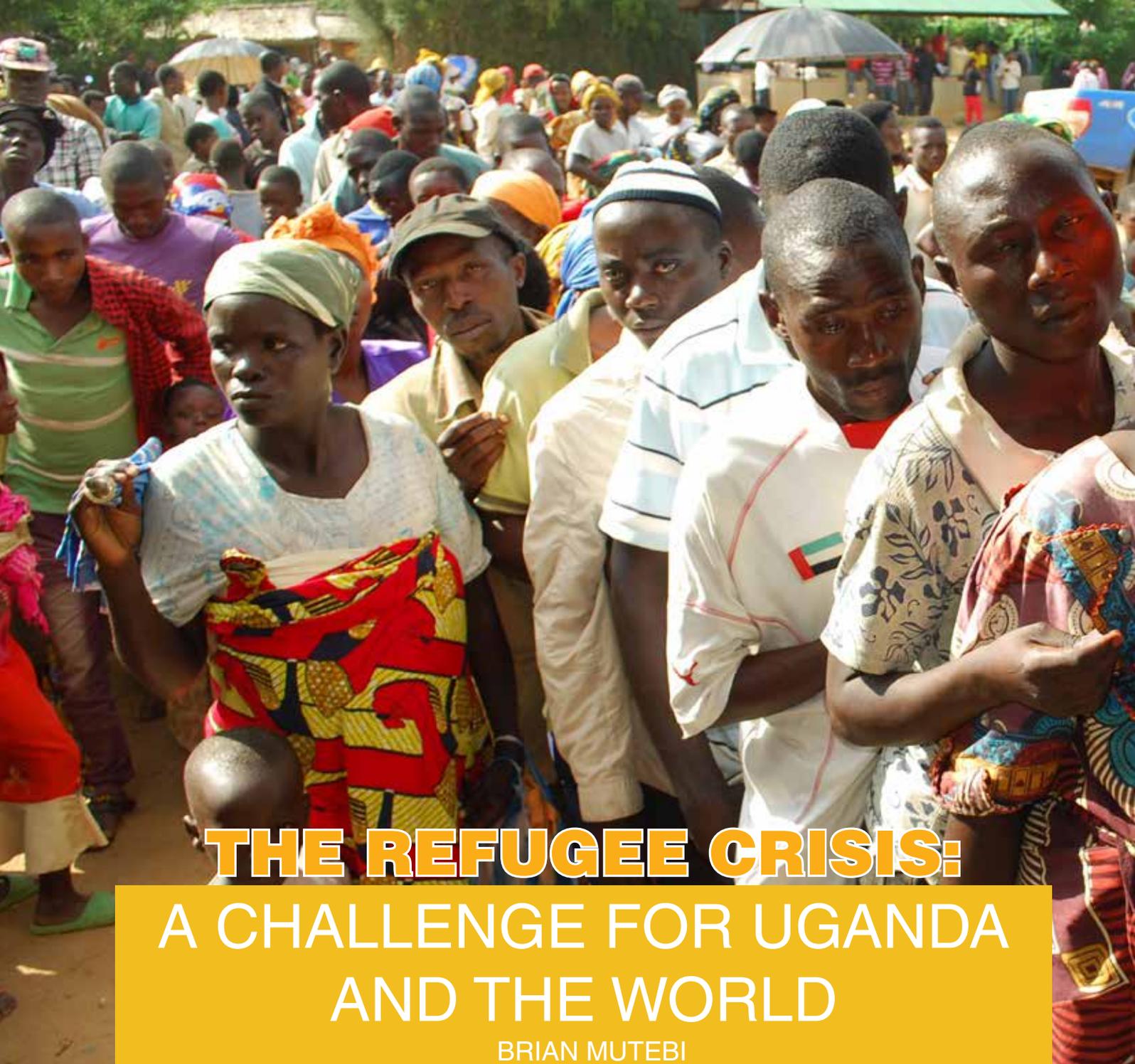
According to UNHCR and the 2016 Global Trends, the numbers are enormous: by end of 2016, there were 65.6 million refugees worldwide, of whom 40.3 million were internally displaced persons. What does this mean for the rest of the world? Hosting refugees has several repercussions, including environmental degradation and the risks of the insecurity that drove out the refugees in the first place spilling over into the host countries. Furthermore, the influx of refugees into a country ratchets up pressure on the recipient country's public social services, frequently triggering conflicts with host communities.

A survey commissioned by Amnesty International on the Refugees Welcome Index in 2016 showed the differences in the attitude of the citizens of a number of countries towards the prospect of refugees arriving at their doorsteps. Though some showed great willingness to welcome refugees, others were not too keen. Russia, for example, was placed on the bottom rung of the index.

How does Uganda and its people fare in terms of their attitude to refugees? Uganda is considered one of the most welcoming refugee host countries. It has been hosting refugees right from World War II to date and so has a long history in that sphere. It also has conducive laws, policies and practices related to refugees. However, recently a scandal broke regarding irregularities and scams in the management of resources meant for refugees that might mar the hitherto excellent reputation of Uganda as a destination for refugees.

Even at the best of times, however, refugees face lots of challenges, with the most vulnerable refugees being women, children, the disabled and the elderly. These challenges include physical assault, exploitation, sexual harassment and rape within the refugee settlements – sometimes as a result of patriarchy, sometimes borne out of the frictions and cleavages that drove the refugees away from their home countries. The situation is frequently made worse by the fact that many of the refugees would have been traumatised by horrific experiences and are, upon arrival at their new destination, in dire need of psychosocial support.

However, not all is lost. For example, in order to protect female refugees against sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV), a raft of measures have been envisaged – some of them multisectoral, and others requiring scaling up protection services, involving men in fighting SGBV, and leveraging the role of government. More succinctly, however, there are practical ways to help refugee women survive the conflict, build peace, and forge better futures. The above, and more, is what Arise 64 is about. Enjoy!



# THE REFUGEE CRISIS: A CHALLENGE FOR UGANDA AND THE WORLD

BRIAN MUTEBI

**B**y the end of 2016, the number of displaced people around the world had risen to 65.6 million, an increase of 300,000 on the year before, and the largest number ever recorded, according to the UN Refugee Agency, UNHCR. To put this large number in perspective, one should note that it is more than the population of the United Kingdom or almost twice the population of Uganda.

Of the 65.6 million, 40.3 million were people displaced within their own country (internally displaced persons), according to the UNHCR's and the 2016 Global Trends report. Refugees who fled to another country made up the next biggest group, at 22.5 million people, the highest number ever recorded. The rest, at 2.8 million people, were asylum seekers, refugees who had fled their own countries and were seeking protection elsewhere.



The Arab Syria Republic generated the highest number of refugees, with 5.5 million Syrian having fled the country because of the civil war. However, over the course of 2016, South Sudan became a major new source of refugees after the breakdown of peace in the country. By 2018, the civil war in Syria, in its eighth year and with no sign that it would end soon, had both internally and externally displaced people numbering a whopping 12 million.

Worryingly, the number of people being displaced continues to grow. Of the total refugee count in 2016, 10.3 million became refugees that year. Currently, Uganda is the biggest refugee host country in Africa. As at January 2018, the country had become host to 1,411,794 refugees.

#### **Reasons why people become refugees**

The most common reason why people become refugees is wars and conflicts. The largest group of refugees in the world are fleeing civil conflict in Syria, South Sudan, Somalia and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC).

People also flee from persecution, which takes religious, social, racial or political forms. Religious refugees, for example, include Muslims persecuted in Myanmar, Christians in the Central African Republic (CAF) and Hindus in Pakistan.

In Uganda, displacement of people, other than that caused by the two-decade LRA war in northern Uganda which ended in the mid-2000s, has largely been due to natural hazards like landslides and consequences like hunger, which can also be attributed to climate change. Though officially climate change is not yet a valid reason for an asylum claim, it is increasingly becoming a cause of displacement of people. It is estimated that in the next 83 years, a stunning 13 million coastal dwellers could be displaced because of climate change.

In Uganda, according to the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC), 61 disasters brought on by natural hazards were reported between 1980 and 2010 and almost 5 million people were affected by incidences including floods, earthquakes, landslides, drought, epidemics and livestock diseases.

#### **Challenges of hosting refugees**

Hosting of refugees comes with challenges such as environmental degradation during the process of setting up camps and/or settlements where trees are felled and ecosystems disrupted. There are also risks of insecurity spill-overs from the conflict in the country of origin. The government of Rwanda, for example, has always feared that the conflict in the DRC might spill over into Rwanda, which partly explains the restrictions on access to Rwanda for refugees from the DRC.

Refugees put pressure on public social services such as education, water and health, which often cause conflicts with host communities. Recently, conflicts developed between refugees in Kyangwali Refugee Settlement in Hoima district (Western Uganda) and the host communities over water point sources.

There are huge economic challenges in hosting refugees. A UN study in Jordan, one of the biggest refugee host countries in the Middle East, estimated the cost of hosting Syrian refugees in 2013 and 2014 at USD 5.3 billion. The Jordanian government and the UN had estimated that the cost of hosting refugees in 2014 would amount to only USD 2.1 billion.

In 2017, Uganda and UNHCR hosted the Uganda Solidarity Summit on Refugees, hoping to raise USD 2 billion for humanitarian assistance for the over 1.4 million refugees in the country. The majority of the refugees from South Sudan and the DRC, two of Africa's biggest refugee source countries, are hosted in Uganda. By December

”

“I would not mind the resources that Uganda spends on refugees, but my challenge is that we also have Ugandans who are in worse situations than these refugees and therefore need more or less the same help.  
George Katongole.



2017, Uganda was host to 986,626 and 236,406 South Sudanese and DRC refugees respectively. This definitely puts a strain on the national economy.

“Do we really have the potential to host refugees?” poses journalist George Katongole. “I would not mind the resources that Uganda spends on refugees in refugee settlements,” argues Katongole, “but we also have people in this country who are in worse situations than those refugees. There are people – even in Kampala – who cannot afford to feed themselves.”

The influx of refugees often impacts on the politics and governance of host countries. In 2017, in Holland, after the elections that produced no decisive winner, splits over refugee policy among political parties that needed to form a coalition government left the country with no government for three months. In Germany, Chancellor Angela Merkel’s open-door policy towards refugees in Germany was highly criticised by her political opponents. This was a risk to her party, the Christian Democratic Union, which almost lost the 2017

elections.

The issue of refugees has also been one of contention within the European Union (EU), with some member countries divided over the matter. Countries like Hungary, for example, refused to take in their quarter share of refugees entering Europe, arguing that it would strain her economy. The number of people seeking asylum in Europe reached a record high of 1.3 million in 2016. Most of the refugees came from Syria, Afghanistan and Iraq. The EU was forced to sign a refugee pact with Turkey. In the highly criticised deal, Turkey agreed to take back migrants who entered Greece, and send legal refugees to the EU. In exchange, the EU agreed to give Turkey 6 billion euros, and to allow visa-free travel for Turkish citizens by the end of June 2016.

“At the onset of a massive refugee crisis, a refugee influx into a country can cause a significant overload on a country’s resources, social services and infrastructure,” notes David Kigozi, programme manager, Sudan, at the International Refugee Rights Initiative. Kigozi however says this happens if the refugee management system is totally based on “care-and-maintenance” programmes which pay no attention to the empowerment of refugees to take responsibility for their own livelihoods,

at least partially, if they wish to do so. “In protracted situations, however,” Kigozi argues, “where the planned response focuses on the development of both refugees and hosts in an environment that is supportive of refugee rights, it would be far-fetched to consider refugees as a burden.”

There is evidence of the positive impact that refugees make. They supply needed skills, as the case is in Germany, or create employment, as the case is in Kampala, with some Somali refugees operating restaurants and fuel petrol stations, among others. The refugee crisis, therefore, is perhaps a challenge that has no explicit conclusion but one that ought to be handled on a case-by-case basis basing on when it occurs.

**Top 10 source countries of refugees**

1. Syria
2. Afghanistan
3. South Sudan
4. Somalia
5. Sudan
6. DRC
7. CAF
8. Myanmar
9. Eritrea
10. Burundi

# GLOBAL REFUGEES WELCOME INDEX 2016

The 2016 Refugees Welcome Index, the first ever such index, showed several variances. Refugees Welcome Index measured levels of acceptance for refugees for the very first time. The index was based on a global survey commissioned by Amnesty International carried out by strategy consultancy firm, GlobeScan.

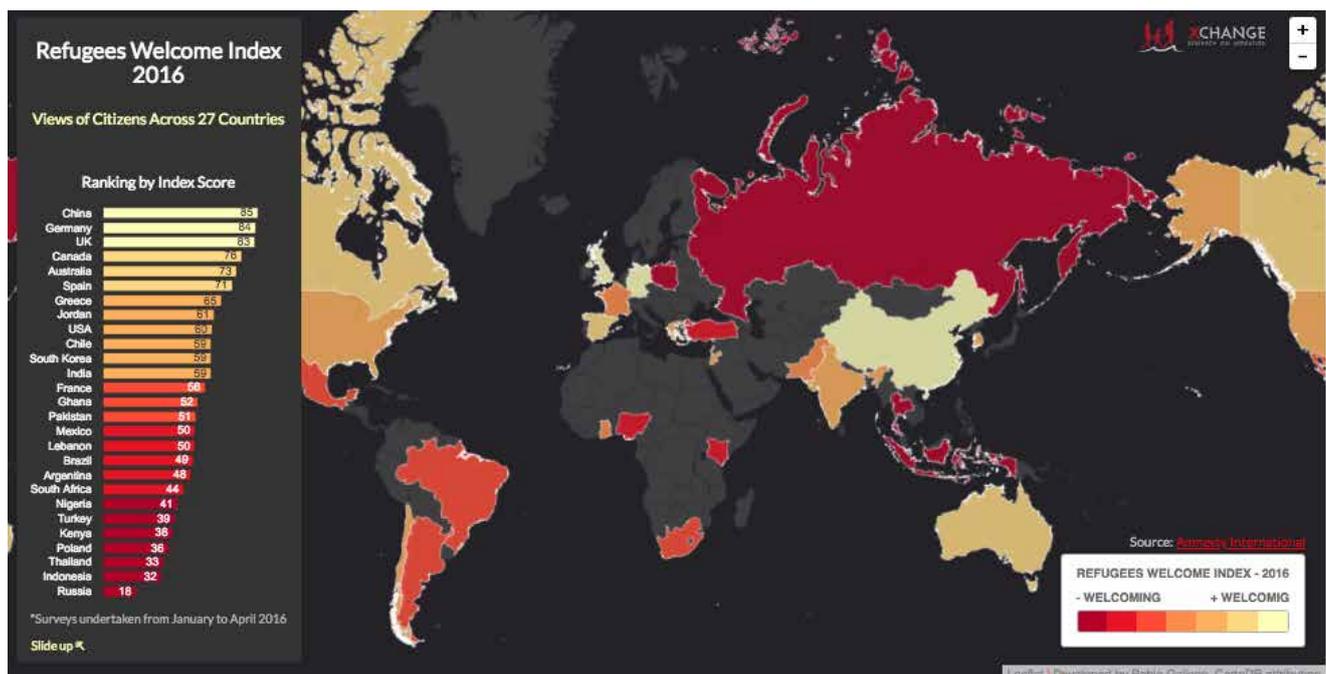
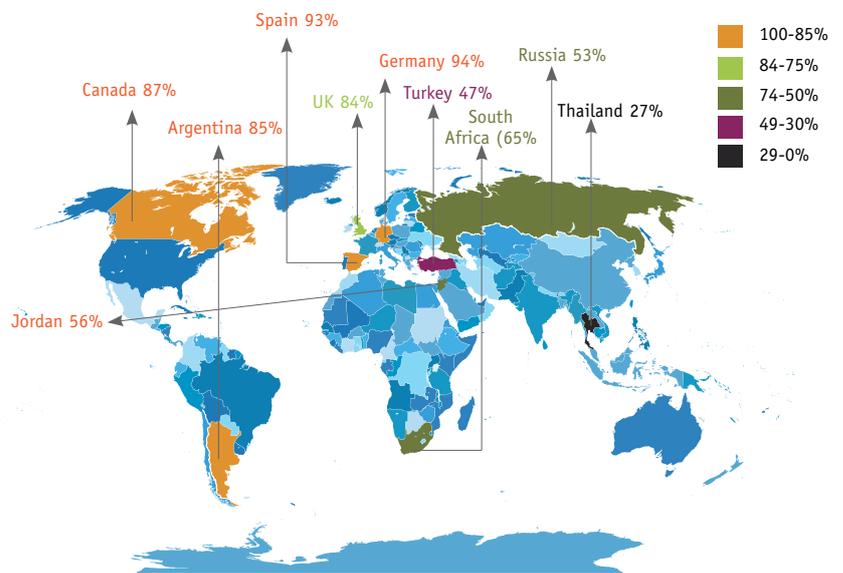
The Refugees Welcome Index ranks countries on a scale of 0 to 100, where 0 = all respondents would refuse refugees' entry to the country and 100 = all respondents would accept refugees into their neighbourhood or home.

The Refugees Welcome Index was prepared by asking 27,000 people in 27 countries three questions:

Should people be able to take refuge in other countries to escape from war or persecution? This sought to get people's views on access to asylum.

Seventy-three per cent of people agreed that people fleeing war or persecution should be able to take refuge in other countries while 25% disagreed. Support

## SUPPORT FOR ACCESS TO ASYLUM



for access to asylum was particularly strong in Germany (94%), Spain (93%), Canada (87%), Argentina (85%) and the UK (84%), and lowest in Thailand (27%), Turkey (47%), Russia (53%), Jordan (56%) and South Africa (65%). Overall, slightly more women than men (74% vs 72%) agreed that people should be able to take refuge in other countries to escape from war or persecution.

How closely would you personally accept people fleeing war or persecution (refugees) in your home, neighbourhood, city/town/village or country, or would you refuse them entry to the country altogether?

The vast majority of people (80%) would welcome refugees with open arms, with many even prepared to take them into their own homes. China (85), Germany (84), UK (83), Canada (76) and Australia (73%) topped the index while Russia (18), Indonesia (32), Thailand (33), Poland (36%) and Kenya (38%) scored lowest.

### Top 5 most and least welcoming countries

	WELCOME IN THE HOME	WELCOME IN THE NEIGHBOURHOOD	WELCOME IN THE CITY/TOWN	WELCOME IN THE COUNTRY	NOT WELCOME	I DON'T KNOW
CHINA	46%	28%	14%	6%	6%	1%
UK	29%	47%	6%	5%	11%	2%
GERMANY	10%	57%	21%	9%	3%	1%
RUSSIA	1%	3%	9%	19%	61%	6%

### Global outlook

	WELCOME IN THE HOME	WELCOME IN THE NEIGHBOURHOOD	WELCOME IN THE CITY/TOWN	WELCOME IN THE COUNTRY	NOT WELCOME
GLOBAL	10%	22%	15%	33%	17%

Overall, under-35s are more welcoming of refugees in their country. Over-65s express greater acceptance of refugees in their household or neighbourhood, compared with other age groups. The higher the education and income levels, the greater the level of acceptance of refugees. City-dwellers are more accepting of refugees generally than those living in villages.

### Should your government do more to help refugees fleeing war or persecution?

Across the globe, 66% say their governments should do more to help refugees. Agreement is highest in China (86%), Nigeria (85%) and Jordan (84%) and Germany (76%) – two of the countries that already welcomed huge numbers of refugees – but is particularly low in Russia (26%) and Thailand (29%).

Agreement with increased government action increases with education (68% for those with a high level of education vs 63% for those with a low level of education).

Agreement also increases with income (64% amongst lower-income respondents vs 70% for those with a very high income).

Those living in cities have the highest level of agreement (69%) while those living in towns have the lowest (59%). Men are slightly more likely than women (31% vs 29%) to disagree that their government should do more to help refugees fleeing war or persecution.

### The results of the research pleasantly surprised key stakeholders as seen from the following comments

“We did not expect to see such strong levels of solidarity with refugees, but the results reflect the inspiring human compassion people feel to those fleeing war,” said Amnesty International Secretary General, Salil Shetty. “They want to do what they can to help, not turn their backs. People seem to be more committed to principles set down in international law than many of their governments, who are increasingly tearing up or ignoring commitments that have stood for 65 years.”

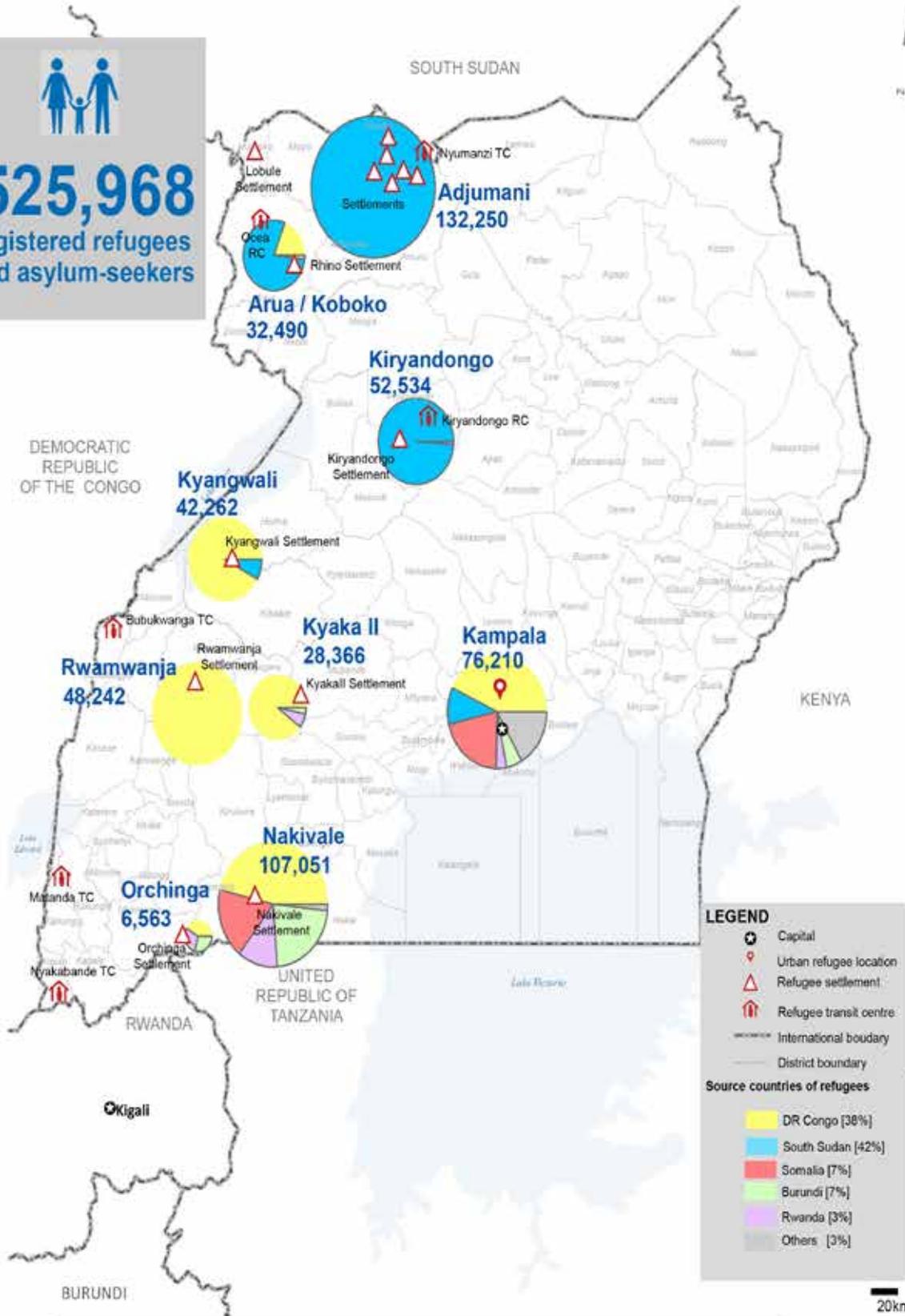
“We designed the survey and index to reflect the complexity of the refugee issue. People are grappling with multiple political and emotional arguments and we wanted to get their views as humans responding to a humanitarian crisis,” said Caroline Holme, Director at GlobeScan.



We did not expect to see such strong levels of solidarity with refugees, but the results reflect the inspiring human compassion people feel to those fleeing war,” said Amnesty International Secretary General, Salil Shetty. “




**525,968**  
registered refugees  
and asylum-seekers



Source: Uganda Government, Office of the Prime Minister (OPM), Refugee Information Management System (RIMS).  
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# GENDER AND THE REFUGEE CRISIS: WHO FEELS THE BRUNT

JANET NAMAYENGO



An October 2017 UN Women Brief on the Rohingya Refugee Crisis Response in Bangladesh, East Asia, painted, in detailed and grim exposés, the gender dynamics in this refugee crisis. The Rohingya, an ethnic group a small percentage of whom are Muslims, face one of the most terrible humanitarian crises today. The UN High Commissioner on Human Rights described the situation as a textbook example of ethnic cleansing.

“Almost every woman and girl in the Balukhali makeshift settlements (which make up approximately 65% of the refugees) in Cox’s Bazar is either a survivor of or a witness to multiple incidents of sexual assault, rape, gang rape, murder through mutilation or burning alive of a close family member or neighbour. Women and girls have experienced sexual and gender based violence, perpetrated by both the Myanmar army and by Rakhine locals,” UN Women reported.

In October 2016, violent conflict began in Rakhine State. Between August and October 2017, an estimated 537,000 Rohingya refugees had crossed the border into Cox’s Bazar, Bangladesh. The distressed and traumatised displaced population – approximately 51% of whom are women and girls – live in terrible conditions, lacking basic

necessities like adequate food, water and sanitation.

The crisis, which is yet to be resolved, disproportionately affects women, girls and the most vulnerable and marginalised Rohingya refugee population groups by reinforcing, perpetuating and exacerbating pre-existing, persistent gender inequalities, gender-based violence and discrimination.

The situation is not any better for the biggest refugee crisis facing Europe since the end of World War II, the Syrian refugee crisis. Now in its eighth year, the Syrian civil war has led to a mass influx of refugees into the European border countries of Turkey and Greece, as well as Germany. The refugees have also fled to the U.S. and Canada. Syria's Asian neighbours, Lebanon and Jordan, have not been spared the refugee influx either. Europe also receives refugees from Africa who brave the dangerous crossing on the Mediterranean Sea, mainly from the Libyan coast into Italy.

The infographic published by the Child Protection Hub for South East Europe looked at the demographics of the refugee population arriving in Europe with a special focus on women and girls. It summarised key problematic areas that make refugee women's and girls' experience tougher owing to the gender perceptions.

In June 2015, the percentage of people arriving in Europe who were women and children was 27%. Five months later, in November, it increased to 40%, and then shot up to 55% in January 2016. This means war or conflict displaced more women and children than men. Yet despite this sharp rise, Child Protection Hub for South East Europe noted: "The specific needs and risks of girls and women, who are more vulnerable to matters such as sexual

assault and exploitation, are not taken into consideration sufficiently."

For the Rohingya refugees, UN Women reported that many women whose sexual assault resulted in conception are reported to have sought out abortions after arriving in Bangladesh. "This is a frightening reminder that sexual and gender based violence are among the most horrific weapons of war, instruments of terror most often used against women," UN Women stated.

In Uganda, as at 31 December 2017, the country was hosting 1,336,898 refugees and asylum seekers. Of these, 689,049 (52%) were females and 647,849 (48%) were males. Gender-based violence is often rife in crisis and fragile settings and women and children suffer most. UNHCR coordinates all sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) interventions in refugee settlements in Uganda in coordination with the Office of the Prime Minister (OPM), UNFPA, UN WOMEN, UNICEF and partners.

In its 2017 report on SGBV, UNHCR stated that 5001 new incidents (4,487 females, at 90%) were identified, managed, documented and reported from 12 refugee settlements in Uganda. The most prevalent were physical assault (1,640, at 33%) followed by psychological/emotional abuse (1,210, at 24%), rape (1,035, at 21%), denial of resources (551, at 11%), sexual assault (308, at 6%) and forced/early marriage (257, at 5%). The reported incidents occurred in both the country of origin and the country of asylum.

In January 2018, UNHCR reported that reductions in food assistance in place since August 2016 for refugees who arrived prior to July 2015 have led many refugees, including children, to cope by eating one meal a day and by foregoing essential nutrients. This

is the same time when reports of economic and sexual exploitation of girls and women refugees have been massive, particularly the exchange of food for sex.

There have also been human trafficking and sexual slavery involving women and underage girls. In a media interview with the Daily Monitor newspaper, Bornwell Kantende, the UNHCR Country Representative in Uganda, lamented the existence of such incidents. "These are serious issues which touch on the dignity of refugees, and we do everything we can to address them, so the victims can keep reporting them," he said. He, however, stated that measures are being implemented to address the problem: "The allegations are taken seriously and we do have a very strict regime in dealing with them. We have a zero tolerance for sex abuse and exploitation."

Funding is a strong factor in humanitarian action. But while funding can be a game-changer, there are disparities in funding that specifically address gender issues in crisis settings. According to women's rights advocacy organisation, Women Deliver, in 2014, less than 1% of aid to fragile states targeted gender equality significantly. In 2017, Uganda held the Uganda Solidarity Summit for Refugees to try to raise money to respond to the growing refugee crisis. Though USD 358 million or USh.1.2 trillion was pledged, what percentage of this would specifically address gender factors, no one knows. It also remains to be seen how the world and Uganda will effectively address or respond to the growing refugee crises where gender disparities are apparent.



# HOW PHYSICAL ASSAULT, EXPLOITATION AND SEXUAL HARASSMENT FOLLOW WOMEN INTO REFUGEE SETTLEMENTS

GILLIAN NANTUME

Late in 2016, a heavily pregnant Anna Lakong fled the civil war in South Sudan. Her husband belonged to one of the fighting groups, so he escorted her to the border. He did not continue with the journey into Uganda but returned to South Sudan, to fight.

“I was relocated to a refugee settlement in Adjumani (district) and assured that I would deliver my baby in a health centre,” Lakong says. She adds, “When my husband sneaked across the border for a visit, he complained that I was getting too comfortable in the settlement and feared that Ugandan men would steal me from him.”

The next time Lakong saw her husband, she had just given birth two weeks prior. He came with his gun, entered the settlement, and commanded her to follow him to a lodge. Since she had arrived alone and pregnant, Lakong had been allocated a shelter with other refugees. “He demanded to have sex with me. I told him that I was not ready, since I had just delivered. He did not listen but forced me to have sex rapidly until I was totally shattered.”

After the ordeal, Lakong felt so degraded and scared at the same time, yet she could not tell anyone. “In our culture a woman cannot say no to a man,” she says. It took her three weeks of agony before she could get in touch with a social worker to confide in. “At that point,



life was totally meaningless,” she says. “I wanted to commit suicide.”

#### **Patriarchal society partly to blame**

In war situations, women and girls are vulnerable to sexual assault, exploitation and limited access to protection. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) reported in January 2017 that rape and sexual abuse of women and girls were some of the primary reasons for many South Sudanese to flee their country to Uganda.

The Uganda Refugee Act, 2006, stipulates that refugees are entitled to equal enjoyment and protection of all human rights and fundamental freedoms in economic, social, cultural, civil or any other fields as provided for in the constitution and other relevant laws in Uganda. According to a Joint Submission by the Lutheran World Federation in 2016 to the UN

Universal Periodic Review, a number of refugee women still experience domestic or gender-based violence (GBV). Close to 78% of refugee women experience domestic violence, mostly at the hands of men.

#### **Sexual harassment**

Isaac Etoku, a psychosocial support officer with Uganda Red Cross Society based in Adjumani, says sexual harassment occurs when women go to the bushes to collect grass as building materials, or to collect firewood, or go to the well or to the garden to till the land. Women, who are the main tillers of the land in this part of the country, suffer sexual harassment, particularly during the rainy season. Then, Etoku explains, the number of rape cases increases because the grass in the fields is tall and hence provides cover to the rapists.

Kennedy Apenyo, a senior clinical officer with Pagirinya Health Centre III in Pagirinya Refugee Settlement (Adjumani district in Northern Uganda), says every month 10-15 cases of defilement are reported. Most of these involve children who arrived unaccompanied from their country of origin.

Etoku says forced marriages are rampant despite the fact that local NGOs sensitise the masses on the dangers of such a practice. “Families are more concerned with getting dowry than protecting their daughters,” he says. “They do not report cases and if a social worker identifies one such case, parents claim the girl is above the age of consent.” He notes that in the absence of birth certificates as proof of age, the cases reported to the police and prosecuted in court are usually lost.



### **Economic exploitation**

Although details are scanty, social workers in refugee camps or settlements have reported an increase in the 'sex for food' phenomenon. UNHCR reduced the rations it offers to the refugees because of the increasing numbers of new arrivals, coupled with underfunding. This mainly affected women. Contracted service providers in economically superior positions tend to prey on women and girls, extracting sexual favours in exchange for food.

Pascal Pio Alor, commandant of Ayilo II Refugee Settlement in Adjumani, says other cases of GBV are caused by economic strife. "People have no means of earning a living in the settlement. They mostly depend on UNHCR for food. We allocate plots of land which women till. At harvest time, they take the produce to the markets. However, this causes violence in some homes because it is unimaginable for a woman to have money when her husband is penniless."

Jean Asipkwe, the Executive Director of Community Empowerment for Rural Development (CEFORD), a local community organization based in West

Nile, adds, "Economic exploitation of women also occurs when a partner decides to sell the food ration meant for the family and then, spends the money on alcohol. The family staves and misunderstandings arise, which sometimes results into conflict and violence."

Peter Eceru, an Advocacy Officer with the Lutheran World Federation, says the prevalence of strong patriarchal cultures fuels the assaults on and exploitation of women. Refugees come with cultures some of which permit teenage marriage and domestic violence. In the case of South Sudanese refugees, while the majority of the men return to South Sudan to fight, the few who stay on in the settlements reinforce these cultures. These men, Eceru says, accuse social workers of spoiling their wives by teaching them about human rights.

### **Women denied their health rights**

Rachel Angucia, a 35-year-old mother of six, has never used a family planning method because among the Madi, giving birth to a small number of children is considered a curse. "I have to keep on producing children to justify the number of cows he paid for my bride price," she states.

"I always go to the health centre to listen to the social workers talk about family planning," laments Angucia. "But my husband does not allow me to use any method. Recently, the health workers invited the men in the settlement to talk about the number of children one should give birth to. My husband was one of only seven men who turned up."

Angucia, who is six months pregnant with her seventh child, can only hope that her husband heeds to the family planning message he received. Or at least that her daughters will not suffer fates, such as rape, that many girls have suffered, but instead grow up in a world free from all forms of violence against women.

Like Angucia, many South Sudanese refugees do not enjoy their sexual and reproductive rights. Use of contraceptives, for example, is not considered a priority because women must keep producing children to replace people killed during the war. It is a demand imposed on them by their husbands and culture.

# PROTECTING FEMALE REFUGEES AGAINST SEXUAL AND GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

ARISE REPORTER

Sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) is endemic among the refugee communities, largely because of the patriarchal society they come from. The January 2018 statistics from World Vision Uganda's West Nile Refugee Response Situation showed that 82% of South Sudanese refugees in Uganda are women and children, and because of their disadvantaged position in society, they face more risks of abuse than their male counterparts.

The high numbers of registered cases of GBV, besides being alarming, indicate that the culture of remaining silent in the face of abuse is reducing.

Bul Garang, the commandant of Baratuku Refugee Settlement, Adumani says that the cases of GBV, once reported to social workers, are given appropriate response. "The women receive medical treatment and in the case of defilement and rape, the police take up the cases. They conduct investigations, arrest the perpetrators and prosecute them," says Garang. The survivors are also given psychosocial support.

## Multisectoral approach to GBV

Tackling GBV requires a multisectoral approach.

Refugees need access to information about services, rights, laws, protection and opportunities. This is in addition to adequate funding from mainly the government and the international community since refugee crises extend beyond borders.

Refugees require social services. "When we had just come to the settlement, UNHCR used to provide, to satisfaction, food requirements of refugees," Mr Garang says. "However, now, with a 50 % cut in rations, the government needs to come up with ways to help households with income-generating activities to supplement the food rations." Economic empowerment does not only restore the refugees' dignity but also improves the overall economic status of households and reduces instances of economic exploitation of women and other forms of GBV.

Survivors of GBV may also be relocated in case the perpetrator is a husband or parent.

## Increase protection services

Inadequate manpower is hampering police work. For instance, Agojo Police Post in Agojo



Refugee Settlement in Ciforo, Adjumani is run by three police officers, who are supposed to follow up on criminal cases in the 8,000-people strong settlement. The deputy in charge of the police post, Special Police Constable Sarah Agenia, agrees that her challenge is manpower.

“To address this challenge, we always sensitise refugees, especially women and girls, to move in groups to avoid abuse. We have also introduced community policing using the refugee welfare council systems to ensure that SGBV cases are identified and addressed.”

To address the capacity challenges, the Office of the Prime Minister (OPM) and UNHCR have provided some police posts with vehicles and motorcycles to enhance their patrol capacity within the settlements. However, more needs to be done. There should, for example, be timely mobile court sessions within the settlements to deal with cases of violence.

### **Involve men in fighting GBV**

Engaging men in the fight against all forms of GBV is crucial because statistics from UNHCR show that most of the cases of GBV (almost 80%) are caused by men. If men are the main perpetrators, then their role in the fight against GBV is important.

According to Eceru, humanitarian agencies working in refugee settlements have male champions selected through participatory processes. Their role is to raise awareness about GBV and its consequences. This ought to be extended to host communities to involve community and religious leaders, businessmen and politicians, to speak out against GBV.

Social workers need to continuously create awareness about the dangers of SGBV both to the survivor and the entire community.

“There is need for concerted efforts and an integrated approach from all stakeholders to commit to gender-responsive safeguards for all women and girls from all forms of GBV. This requires placing gender factors at the centre of all interventions and/or services in the settlements and host communities.” Irene Kagoya, the Country Manager, advocacy and influencing, Plan International Uganda

Irene Kagoya, the Country Manager, advocacy and influencing, Plan International Uganda says, “There is need for concerted efforts and an integrated approach from all stakeholders to commit to gender-responsive safeguards for all women and girls from all forms of GBV. This requires placing gender factors at the centre of all interventions and/or services in the settlements and host communities.”

Referral mechanisms for the management of SGBV also need to be strengthened to ensure that survivors receive appropriate response and care services. They should receive counselling both individually and in support groups to develop resilience and positive coping mechanisms.

### **The role of government**

Under international law, refugee women are entitled to protection from any form of violence and discrimination and the State has an obligation under several human rights instruments to adopt measures towards the elimination of violence against refugee women.

Uganda ratified the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees and the 1967 Optional Protocol of the Convention, which states that refugees and asylum seekers are entitled to the

enjoyment of the rights enshrined in the International Human Rights Conventions. Chapter 29 of the Refugee Act, 2006, stipulates that refugees are entitled to free and just treatment without discrimination on the grounds of race, religion, sex, nationality and ethnic identity.

Uganda together with UNHCR, in 2016 developed a 5-year SGBV Interagency Country Strategy premised on the vision of ‘a community free from SGBV’. On October 3, 2016, the UN General Assembly that Uganda had chaired for two years, made a declaration, the New York Declaration that stated among others, “We will ensure that our responses to large movements of refugees and migrants mainstream a gender perspective, promote gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls and fully respect and protect the human rights of women and girls. We will combat sexual and gender-based violence to the greatest extent possible.”

On December 13, 2016, Uganda participated in the UN Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) High-level pledging conference to support people displaced by conflict and natural disasters. Hon. Sam Kuteesa, the Foreign Affairs minister represented government. Uganda is thus obliged to take deliberate efforts to stop GBV against women and girls through among others strengthening the referral mechanism in refugee settlements, bringing services, such as, sexual and reproductive health services closer to the people and enhancing the capacities of the community protection committees in refugee settlements to prevent and respond to GBV cases.

# TRAIL OF TEARS: THE HARROWING PLIGHT OF SUDANESE FEMALE REFUGEES

Our writer, Brian Mutebi, undertook a field trip to Bidibidi Refugee Settlement in Yumbe district, at the Uganda-South Sudan border. The settlement is home to thousands of refugees from South Sudan who fled their country after the outbreak of civil war. In this article he compiled the harrowing stories of refugee women in the encampment.



## Mothers in refugee settlements need good feeding – Asozo

My name is Asozo Lilli. I am 26 years old. I am a South Sudanese refugee in Uganda. I currently live in Bidibidi Refugee Settlement. I fled my country due to the outbreak of a civil war. Many people were killed, especially men. My brother was killed. I had to flee for my life. We jumped over dead bodies on the way.

I was pregnant and did not have energy yet there was no one to help me. I had to keep walking nevertheless. I arrived in Uganda on August 27, 2016. The situation wasn't any better. I had to fetch water and collect firewood by myself, in addition to cutting grass to build my house (hut).

Here (in the refugee settlement), we depend on food rations supplied by an NGO (Action Against Hunger), which is never enough. We receive one and a half kilograms of beans, eight kilograms of maize grains and a litre of cooking oil a month. Since I never have money on me, to make ends meet, I sell some maize grains supplied to me to pay for grinding to make maize flour; otherwise what else would I do? It means, though, that the food ration given to me reduces. It is a difficult life for a mother.

Women refugees need good feeding, and for expectant and breastfeeding mothers, they need good nutritious food so they can get strength and be healthy. The lack of food also leads to conflict in the homes. My husband quarrels every time he finds no food at home. Women like me need money. What will make me happy is having money and starting a business so I can earn an income. If I had money, I would not be quarrelling with my husband over food. I would not hear that nonsense from my husband. I would not be stressed.



## Living with HIV as a refugee is terrible – Candia

My name is Rose Candia. I am 47 years old. I am a South Sudanese refugee in Uganda. I stay here in the camp (refugee settlement) alone, very helpless. The events that happened in South Sudan prior to leaving my home are horrible. There were gunshots all over and people were killed.

I am disabled and I was staying alone. When the war broke out, I had to run for my life or I die. It was terrible! I scampered into the bushes. After moving through the bushes for days, I heard the sound of a motorcycle. I pushed myself near the road. I stopped the boy who was riding it and pleaded with him to take me to Uganda. That's how I arrived at the South Sudan-Uganda border at a place called Elegu. Later, other refugees and I were transferred here.

Every day I depend on food rations given to us by (humanitarian) organisations. One and a half kilograms of beans, eight kilograms of maize grains and a litre of cooking oil is what is given out for a full month, which is never enough.

It is difficult to feed on maize every single day, so I sell part of the grains to be able to buy some other food and change the diet. And being disabled with no one to help me out, I am unable to fetch firewood, so cooking is difficult. I only crawl around collecting sticks that I use to cook. I am only lucky that a borehole is found just across my compound; otherwise I would not be able to cook at all.

The problems I have are several. If you look into my house (hut), there is no mattress, but a mat. I sleep on a mat with nothing to cover myself. The walls (covered by a tarpaulin) have holes as is the roof; so when it rains, I get wet. When the rain is too much, I have to get up because everything on the floor becomes soaked in water.

There is no door on my house (hut), so it is not possible to lock it at night. Drunken men come at night and rape me. And what can I do about it? I am helpless! I told my neighbours about my horrible experiences but they could not help me. The solution probably was to go to the complaint desk but it is three kilometres away; I am unable to move over that long distance.

That is the same scenario concerning access to ARVs. I gave my book (patient records book) to my neighbours and asked them to bring me ARVs but the service providers want me to go there by myself. I am unable to walk, so for the last three months (interview was done 5 April 2018) I have not taken my medicine.

If someone was to help me, maybe life would be better. I had children and sisters but as we ran from South Sudan for our dear lives, the children dispersed in different directions. I settled at a place called Pagirinya from where other refugees and I were forced by the (Uganda) government into this camp (refugee settlement). During that scuffle, my sisters too went in different directions. I do not know where they are. I am here alone – a poor woman, living with HIV and feeding poorly. Sometimes I feel I should cease to exist.



### **I take soil for food and drink water – Adiyé**

My name is Regina Adiyé. I am a refugee from South Sudan. I fled my village of Moli when fighting in the area became unbearable. I walked on foot in the bushes. After many days of walking, I got on the road and that's when I saw a car moving in the direction of Uganda. I stopped it and begged the driver to take me to Elegu at the Uganda checkpoint. It was from there that I was transferred here.

I did not come with anyone. In my home back in South Sudan, I was staying alone. My job was to collect firewood and sell it in the market. That is the same work I tried to do when I got here but it is not easy getting firewood here. Besides, I am very old (doesn't know her age). Sometimes I force myself to go cut firewood to sell in the market but it is very hard.

Life is very difficult here. Getting food is a major problem. The food rations are small. I go for days without anything to eat. I resort to prayer, praying that the following day my neighbours will have mercy on me so that when I beg for food, they will give me something to eat. When that doesn't happen, I take soil for food and then drink water.

I also have problems with my sight. Because of old age, my sight is almost gone. You can imagine the trials of an old blind refugee woman! My situation is exploited by some men who rape me. I do not have any idea of who is responsible; I am a helpless old woman!

I have many problems. I do not even have utensils, except one bowl and a small saucepan. My prayer is that I will have a proper house and money so I can buy firewood or charcoal and food.

I wish someone was here to help me out. I had one daughter but we were separated at Pagirinya. We took different directions. If there was a vehicle, I would board it and go and see my daughter. I heard she was sick but still alive, somewhere. But when I contemplate that, I wonder how I can possibly make that journey when I do not even have clothes to wear.



### **Soldiers cut my cousin's belly open before my eyes – Amana**

My journey from South Sudan in August 2016 was dreadful. I was moving in a group of three persons, two men and me. We fell into the soldiers' ambush. The two men were killed. They were slaughtered using a knife. The soldiers do it openly, they fear nothing. They said if I make noise they would slaughter me too. Fear gripped me.

The soldiers commanded me to return home. When I got home, my mother and sisters decided that we flee in the direction of Uganda. All the days we walked towards the Uganda border, we did not eat anything. There was no food. Yet I had a child, and so did my mother. My girl was five years old. It is difficult to walk while hungry.

There were many cases of violence I witnessed with my own eyes. Many women were raped and others killed. The soldiers either rape or kill you. What then do you choose – rape so you can spare your life? Yet even rape is no guarantee that you will be spared. My cousin sister was killed. Her death was horrible. She was heavily pregnant. They raped her and then cut her belly open and removed the baby. They put the baby on her chest and both mother and baby were left to die. Who does such a thing!

Somehow, we managed to reach the Ugandan border. That's where UNHCR picked us up and brought us here to Bidibidi Zone 1, village 14, cluster T. We came with nothing though, not even utensils.

Here in the settlement it is a little safe but by the time I got here, I was so traumatised. I almost ran mad. I used to get nightmares and run about wildly in the night. I almost committed suicide, but through prayer, God has helped me recover. Several women go through similar experiences. Women and girls who have experienced or witnessed atrocities need psychosocial support.

Many women are widows. They need economic support and education for their children. Fortunately for me, a sympathiser took my child so she can go to school. There are many things one may want to do but one is unable to. It is stressful. Life has not been easy.

**SURVIVING MAYHEM:**

# 10 PRACTICAL WAYS

**TO HELP REFUGEE WOMEN SURVIVE  
THE CONFLICT, BUILD PEACE, AND  
KNIT FOR A BETTER FUTURE**

**ARISE REPORTER**



Rosemary Amana, 25, a refugee from South Sudan witnessed horrific cases of violence against women as they fled to Uganda after the outbreak of civil war in South Sudan.

“The soldiers either rape or kill you,” she recounts. “Many women were raped and others killed. I lost my cousin sister. Her death was horrible. She was heavily pregnant. They raped her and then cut her belly open and removed the baby. They put the baby on her chest and both mother and baby were left to die.”

Rosemary managed to reach the Uganda border, with nothing however. “Life was not easy. We came with nothing, not even utensils,” she says. However, she did not choose to wallow in despair and self-pity. She did not want to sit and lament over her situation. She set up a business, which is making her less dependent on, say, food rations supplied by the UN and other humanitarian agencies operating in the settlement.

“I came with 50,000 shillings, part of which I used to buy chickens. The chickens laid eggs and hatched many chicks which I sold and started my business,” she says. Amana sells small fish, onions and other vegetables, sugar, biscuits, soap, cigarettes and household items. “For the 25 kilograms of sugar that I buy at 75,000 shillings, I make a profit of 10,000 shillings in three weeks. I also sell other items, of course. My business is now worth 280,000 shillings and if it was not for using part of the profit to buy food, my business would be bigger.”

In the same settlement is Margaret Kangaze, also a refugee from South Sudan. In her household is her daughter, two sisters and a diabetic husband whom she takes care of. It is a female-headed household. She runs a small stall selling sugar and household items. “In a day, I make sales worth 40,000 shillings. In two or three weeks, I make a profit of 15,000 shillings on sugar alone,” says Kangaze.

Amana and Kangaze are case examples of surviving the mayhem. They are women who, despite facing adversity, have picked up the pieces of their lives and decided to build something – not something for themselves alone but their entire households. Both women have set up businesses in Bidibidi Refugee Settlement. They have not let misery and the immense difficulties of being a refugee define their lives.

There are no universal formulae, but here we list 10 practical ways for refugee women to outlive the conflict, build peace and knit better lives while living as refugees:

1. Take courage. “Do not allow the difficulties you have gone through define you,” advises Amana. “Take courage, you should survive the

hard circumstances.”

2. Pray and trust in God. Author Khaled Hosseini asked Hassan, a Syrian refugee in Jordan, how he would survive without cash assistance amidst many basic needs. Hassan answered, “God is here.” It is important to believe and trust in God.
3. Watch your back. Settlements and camps being communities of people from various backgrounds, are bound to have people with unbecoming behaviour. Cases of violence are likely to happen. It is important that you take precautions. If possible, avoid walking alone at night, for example.
4. Seek help. There are information and response centres in camps or settlements with professionals to handle your situation. Do not suffer in silence; silence may be your biggest enemy.
5. Avoid crime. Endeavour to be law-abiding. Try not to find yourself on the wrong side of the law. This is especially important for urban refugees where a lot goes on in the city, and some activities may be good to indulge in but not necessarily legal.
6. Look for employment or work. Uganda has favourable refugee laws and policies that allow refugees to work. If you know English, for example, you can work as a translator/interpreter in the community. Do not be consumed with self-pity or lament the loss of lives and property you may have suffered in your country of origin or as you trekked to the host community, but find something that will give you an income.
7. Enrol for study. In Uganda you can study when you are a refugee. Among other opportunities, you can take advantage of the refugee

scholarships. It is important you learn a skill.

8. Ensure unity in the home. You may want to avoid family break-ups. If you found yourself in the host community with some family members, relatives or friends, it is advisable that you keep those relationships for support and defence, among other purposes.
9. Possess good communication skills. It is important that you communicate with people around you. Develop good communication and interpersonal skills. It is advisable that you learn the local language so that you can easily communicate with the host community. The community may be important in supplying food, water or psychosocial support.
10. Make peace. This is especially important in case your eviction from your homeland was due to a civil war and you find yourself in a host community with members of a community/tribe on the opposite side of the conflict. Remember you are all in a foreign land so never attempt to revenge but make peace with everyone. It is also important that you make peace with yourself. Do not blame yourself for, say, lost children, or a lost husband/wife.

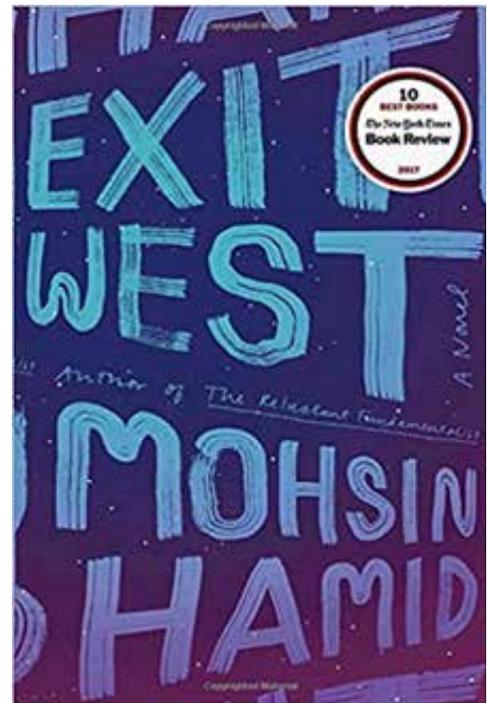
# BOOK REVIEWS

TITLE: EXIT WEST

AUTHOR: MOHSIN HAMID

DATE OF PUBLICATION: MARCH 7TH 2017

PUBLISHER: RIVERHEAD



*"I can understand it," [Nadia] said. "Imagine if you lived here. And millions of people from all over the world suddenly arrived."*

Mohsin Hamid's new Man Booker nominated novel, *Exit West*, centers on Saeed and Nadia — two young working professionals in an unnamed city. Nadia and Saeed live separate lives in a country shuddering under a militant religious civil war. Their lives are difficult. He is an observant Muslim dedicated to the protection of his mother and father. She is a secular woman willing to skirt the oppression of religion and bigotry in private but in public chooses to wear the hijab as protection.

Saeed is attracted at first to the hijab she wears, but the attraction builds when he discovers she is not the obedient observant woman she appears at first to be. In the midst of an increasingly terrifying war a liberating romance develops between them. As the bombs and the destruction move closer, they look for ways out. They learn of hidden doors that transport a person instantaneously to any other place, linking apartments and schools in countries of suffering and oppression

with mansions and rooftops in places of peace and abundance. The challenge for Saeed and Nadia is to find a door. Nadia and Saeed eventually make their way to London, only to find it's not the safe haven they expect it to be, there is hostility between the migrants and the native-born, including attacks and mob rule. The migrants are eventually sectioned off in a ghetto with minimal food and electricity called "Dark London". The book explores the couple's struggle to acclimatize to their new 'home'.

With the 'doors' Mohsin Hamid in *Exit West* creates a powerful metaphor that helps us make sense of the changing world we see around us today. There are no descriptions of life-or-death journeys in the backs of lorries or on flimsy vessels. No middle passages. Just the cognitive shock of having been freshly transplanted to a tough new environment. Whether you live in London or Kampala, you encounter people who are different and who are in difficult circumstances. Some may be migrants from war-torn countries with different skin color, language, food and religion. Others may simply be homeless who have lost their income, their housing and any sense of direction.

The experience of Nadia and Saeed made me reflect on the refugee situation in Uganda. The country currently hosts almost 1.4 million refugees, with more than 1 million who fled South Sudan. Beyond this massive displacement into northern Uganda, many settlements in the southwestern part of the country are also seeing steady influxes of refugees from the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Burundi and Rwanda. Refugees across Uganda and the world face similar challenges, women and girls, frequently mentioned experiencing disease, poverty, assault, sexual violence, and intimidation, and hostility from the host communities.

Hamid's writing, at times poetic, is sparse yet captivating, and this work is a quick read. The magical realism, is used well, fleetingly and adds to the main message of the story, one's situation is not permanent, a sudden change in circumstances could make one a refugee or migrant and we should remember to treat all people with basic humanity, regardless of their origin and circumstances.

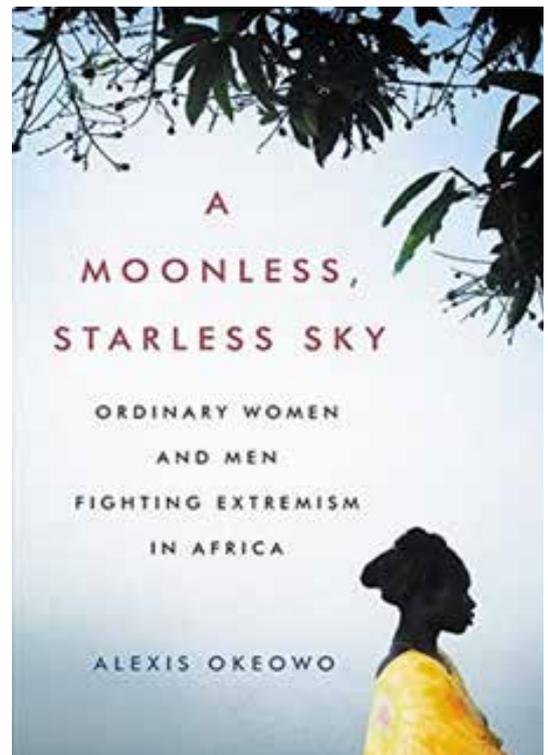
# BOOK REVIEWS

**TITLE: A MOONLESS, STARLESS SKY:  
ORDINARY WOMEN AND MEN FIGHTING  
EXTREMISM IN AFRICA**

**AUTHOR: ALEXIS OKEOWO**

**DATE OF PUBLICATION: OCT/3/2017**

**PUBLISHER: HACHETTE BOOKS**



In *A Moonless, Starless Sky* Alexis Okeowo weaves together four narratives that form a powerful tapestry of modern Africa: a young couple, kidnap victims of Joseph Kony's LRA; a Mauritanian waging a lonely campaign against modern-day slavery; a women's basketball team flourishing amid war-torn Somalia; and a vigilante who takes up arms against the extremist group Boko Haram. She effortlessly weaves together stories, detailing atrocious experiences with frankness, simplicity, and above all humanity. She showcases the courage and resilience of everyday people, painting a picture of countries we usually only hear about through a very imperialistic lens.

## **Uganda**

This is the story of two people who were abducted by Joseph Kony's Lord's Resistance Army as teens. After fifteen-year-old Eunice was abducted, she was forced to marry nineteen-year-old Bosco. What happens to these forced unions if the abductees escape and why do so many of these couples choose to stay together? How are the children of these marriages affected? Okeowo also explores the difficult relationships between the former child soldiers and the communities they may have been forced to harm.

## **Mauritania**

Mauritania became the last country to abolish slavery in 1981, but the government did little to actually eradicate the practice. Okeowo explains how slavery became such an accepted part of Mauritanian society and how demographic divisions contributed to its endurance. This section focuses on abolitionist Biram Dah Abeid's fight to end slavery in Mauritania, a crusade that has put him and his family in peril. What makes someone stand up for others, even at great risk to themselves? In this story we learn how slaveowners are able to enslave people without chains and about the obstacles that arise when adjusting to sudden freedom.

## **Nigeria**

In recent years, Boko Haram has terrorized northern Nigeria and kidnapped thousands of boys and girls. Rebecca Ishaku was one of the hundreds of girls abducted from a boarding school in Chibok, Nigeria. This is an account of one young woman's risky escape and the enduring effects of terror. Okeowo also interviews a government clerk who refused to stand idle while his community was being relentlessly attacked by Boko Haram's members. Elder became a unit commander for the Civilian Joint Task Force, a volunteer group that sought to reclaim their communities from the terrorists when

the government failed. This story of ordinary citizens fighting Boko Haram is remarkable.

## **Somalia**

Aisha received her first death threat from terrorists when she was thirteen. Her supposed crime? Playing basketball. Somalia went from having one of the best women's basketball teams in the region to a place where it's unsafe for women to play sports at all. This is the story of young women who continue to play the game they love despite the risks.

These accounts of ordinary people trying to live their lives freely are both distressing and inspiring. Rebellion doesn't come without sacrifices and many of these people endured death threats, survived harrowing escapes, and/or remained steadfast against relentless outside pressure. In the face of adversity, these people stand firm in their beliefs and manage to preserve their autonomy. The individuals may not make the choices one would expect or that are easy for outsiders to understand, but they're all doing the best they can to live their lives of their own free will and/or cultivate a society where everyone can live freely.

## UNDERSTANDING PUBLIC ATTITUDES TOWARDS REFUGEES AND MIGRANTS IN UGANDA

Understanding public attitudes towards refugees and migrants within their host communities is becoming an increasingly important task for those working on refugee and migration issues. This includes governments, international and national NGOs, academics, think tanks and civil society. Although there is evidence that refugees and migrants can contribute significantly to society if given the opportunity to do so (Pantuliano, 2016), public attitudes have a significant bearing on their prospects. Whether organisations and/or governments are trying to raise funds, disseminate work, or advocate on behalf of refugees and migrants, their success hinges on how refugees and migrants feature within public attitudes. Hence, our street talk for this issue of the Arise primers the drivers influencing public attitudes towards refugees and migrants in Uganda, and what they mean for the government and other key stakeholders working on refugee and migration issues.



**Pauline Salamula**  
Publishing manager

I am very glad that as a country, we are able to welcome and host refugees who would have, otherwise, not had anywhere else to go. It is a good initiative. However, on the part of the citizens, there is a fear that the resources that might have been used to develop the country are channelled to cater for the needs of refugees. If the resources that are supposed to come to us as nationals are split, how can we get the services we need? Remember that some of these resources are coming from our taxes. As a developing country, I do not believe that we can afford to spend so much money on hosting a large number of refugees. At the end of the day, some of these refugees do not have the desire to return to their countries of origin even when war ends.



**Hendricah Nabukwasi**  
**Researcher**

As a country, I do not think we have the capacity to host all the refugees that we host today. Having refugees is not just about keeping them within our borders. You need to empower them economically, mentally and socially. Currently, this is not possible because the country is not even empowering its own citizens. So, we just have people who are stuck in refugee settlements always waiting for UNHCR to provide them with food. If a country is going to host refugees, it should have policies and programmes in place to empower these people. It is not just a matter of opening up your borders to anyone to walk through. The refugee settlements should also have conditions that are habitable so that the refugees can live a sustainable life until such a time as they are ready to return to their country of origin.

**Shakira Ndagire**  
**Sex worker**

I stay in Kimombasa zone of Bwaise. When I first came here six years ago, it was only Ugandan women working here. Today, however, there are several non-Ugandans encroaching on our market. They do not live here; they just come to work and then return to their homes. I have been told that some of them are Somali girls and since they are brown (light-skinned complexion) I have reason to believe what I have heard. I am not against Uganda hosting refugees because as women, we are the most affected by war. Women suffer abuse and rape by soldiers in war situations. However, the employment situation in Uganda is bad and some of us are sex workers because we failed to find formal jobs. It is very unfair for someone who is getting relief food or money to invade our territory.



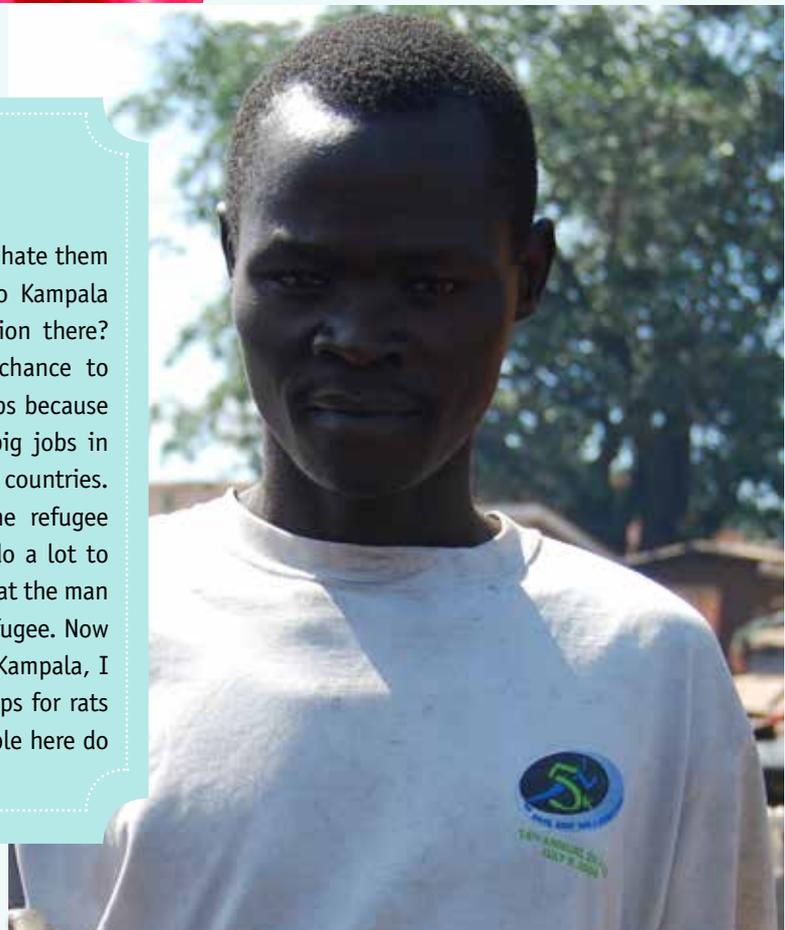


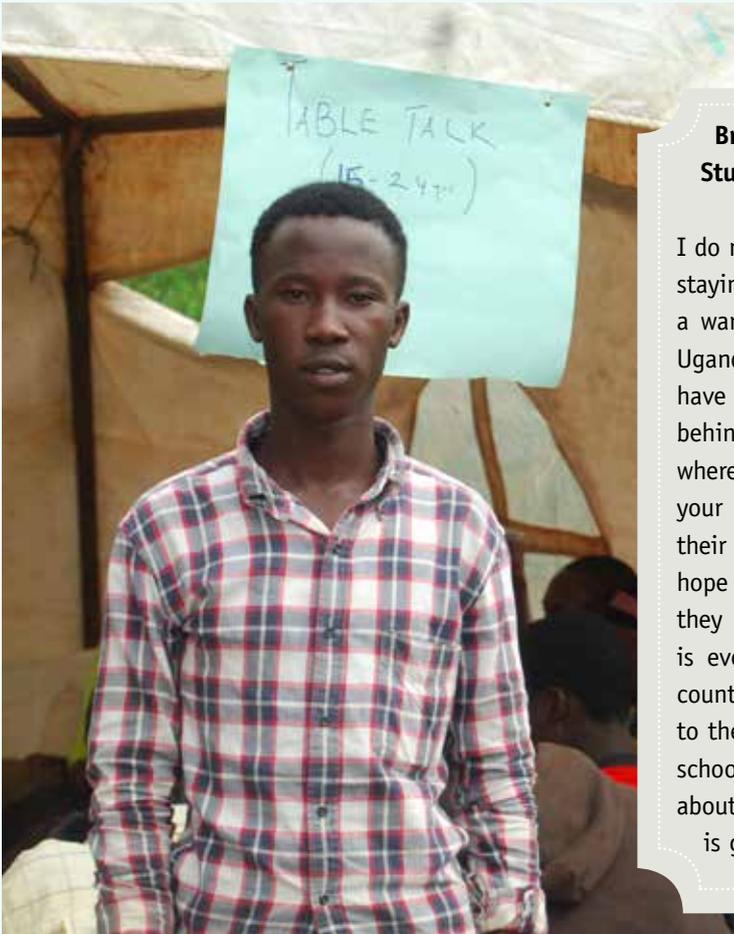
**Salima Nakiyemba**  
**Farmer**

There are things this government is doing that are wrong. It does not care about us. I am a subsistence farmer in Iganga district but encroachment on my land by sugar cane companies is increasing. In fact, recently, my husband leased our six acres of land to a factory at 100,000 shillings per acre. I never saw that money because he hid it. I decided to form a women's group with my fellow women in this village (Busowobi) so that we can target the women empowerment funds. But to-date, after many applications, we have never been given any funds. Our children are not going to school. I get angry when I hear about the amount of money that has been earmarked to help refugees from South Sudan yet we, the citizens, are struggling to get basic needs. Why do so many refugees come to this country? Why can't they go to other countries?

**Marvin Odong**  
**Itinerant trader**

I do not mind refugees or migrants. How can I hate them when I also migrated from Moroto district to Kampala because of the economic and security situation there? Refugees and migrants should be given a chance to compete with the citizens for the available jobs because some of these refugees had businesses and big jobs in their countries before wars erupted in their countries. Why do people want them to remain in the refugee settlements yet if given a chance, they can do a lot to improve our economy? I have heard rumours that the man who owns Gapco petrol stations was once a refugee. Now he employs many Ugandans. When I came to Kampala, I failed to get a formal job. I started selling traps for rats to feed my children. The problem is some people here do not trust people from other regions.



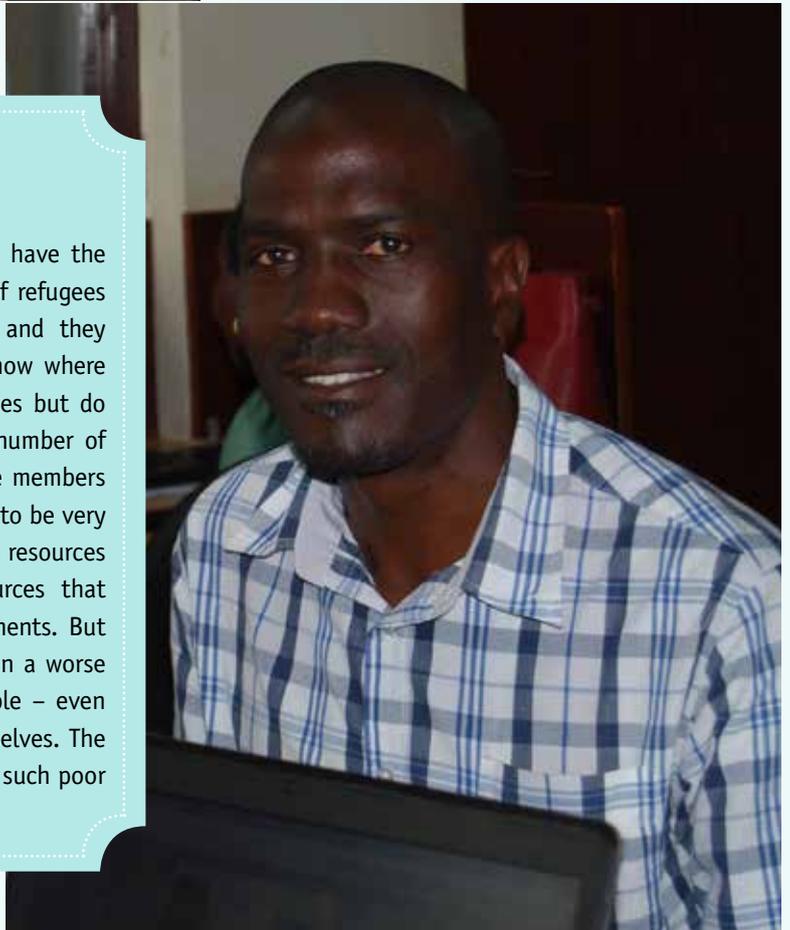


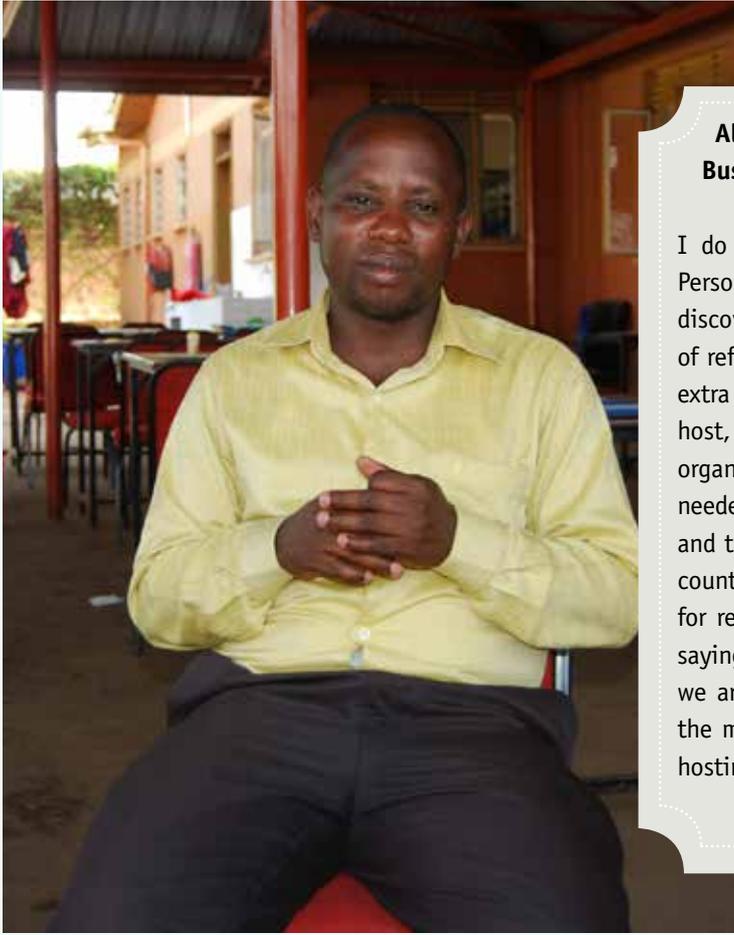
**Brian Tenywa**  
**Student**

I do not mind refugees coming to this country and even staying here permanently. I can imagine if there was a war in Uganda, other countries would be welcoming Ugandans who are running for their safety. We need to have compassion for refugees. It is not easy to leave behind everything you own and run to another country where the people have very different cultures from your own. Some of these refugees were students and their education was disrupted because of war. I really hope they get a chance to pursue their education while they are still here because in this world, education is everything. By the time they return to their home countries, they should have the expertise to contribute to their development. If Uganda government is building schools for refugee children, why should I be angry about that? I believe that what our government is doing is good

**George Katongole**  
**Journalist**

I think the question should be: Do we really have the potential to host refugees? There is a group of refugees wasting away at Old Kampala playgrounds, and they have been there for a long time. I do not know where they came from. It is not bad to host refugees but do we have the potential to keep such a large number of people? Some of these refugees are good, like members of the Somali community who are now proving to be very astute in business. In fact, if we had enough resources as a country, I would not mind the resources that Uganda spends on refugees in refugee settlements. But we also have people in this country who are in a worse situation than those refugees. There are people – even in Kampala – who cannot afford to feed themselves. The projects targeting refugees should also benefit such poor Ugandans.





**Aloysious Tabu**  
**Businessman**

I do not mind Uganda hosting refugees or migrants. Personally, I think the authorities in this country have discovered an important secret in playing host to a number of refugees. It is basically a way for the country to earn extra income. The way I see it, is the more refugees you host, the more you attract dollars and non-governmental organisations (NGOs). These NGOs bring in the much-needed jobs for social workers and other professionals and this relieves some of the unemployment burden this country is facing. I believe Uganda is a friendly country for refugees, but that is secondary. This whole thing of saying we are hosting so many refugees just because we are friendly is a hoax. The more refugees you host, the more dollars you attract because the advantages of hosting refugees are enormous.



**Refugees are not terrorists. They are often the first victims of terrorism.**



# IS UGANDA'S REPUTATION AS A REFUGEE PARADISE AT STAKE?

BRIAN MUTEBI

UGANDA HAS HAD A LONG HISTORY OF HOSTING PEOPLE WHO ARE FLEEING UPHEAVALS IN THEIR COUNTRIES. IN THE 1930S AND EARLY 1940S, THE COUNTRY HOSTED IN NYABYEYA, KOJJA AND ARAPAI REFUGEE CAMPS EUROPEAN AND ARAB REFUGEES DISPLACED BY WORLD WAR II, INCLUDING ITALIAN PRISONERS OF WAR, WHO WERE HOUSED IN ENTEBBE.

In 2013, 27-year-old Kasereka Kahamba fled his home in Rwanguba, Goma in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) after militants attacked his home. Alone, he walked to Nyakabande Transit Centre in Kisoro district.

“Life was very hard for me. I was alone. I did not know what had happened to my parents and brother,” he narrates. “I still do not know where they are.” Kahamba was eventually settled in Rwamwanja Refugee Settlement in Kamwenge district, western Uganda. “In the settlement, I realised I was the only member of the Nandi tribe. Most of my neighbours belonged to the tribe that attacked our home. It was distressing.”

He could have chosen to wallow in despair and self-pity, but Kahamba picked up the reins of his life. Back in Goma, Kahamba worked in a factory making walkie-talkie covers.

Relying on the memory of the knowledge he had acquired, he began making leather products for sale.

Kahamba would later enrol at a university. “In 2015, an advert for scholarships passed around calling upon those who were able to apply for scholarships at Bugema University. I applied and I got the scholarship to study Disaster Management.” Today, Kahamba is in his final year at university. He is one of the over one million refugees and asylum seekers who call Uganda home.

## **A history of hosting refugees**

Uganda has had a long history of hosting people who are fleeing upheavals in their countries. In the 1930s and early 1940s, the country hosted European and Arab refugees displaced by World War II in Nyabyeya,



Kojja and Arapai refugee camps as well as Italian prisoners of war, who were housed in Entebbe.

Prompted by the influx of Sudanese refugees in 1950, the colonial administration enacted the Control of Refugees from Sudan Ordinance in 1951. This was soon followed by the Control of Alien Refugees Act, 1960, to cater for all refugees regardless of where they came from.

On 27 September 1976, Uganda ratified the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees and the 1967 Protocol of the Convention which stated that refugees and asylum seekers are entitled to the enjoyment of the rights enshrined in the International Human Rights Conventions, placing the responsibility of protecting refugees directly on the shoulders of host countries.

Uganda has since hosted refugees from Rwanda, Burundi, Sudan, the DRC, Eritrea, Ethiopia and Somalia, among other countries.

Conducive laws, policies and practices  
As at 31 January 2018, according to the United Nations High Commissioner for

Refugees (UNHCR), Uganda had hosted 1,411,794 refugees and asylum seekers, making Uganda the largest refugee hosting country in Africa. “Despite a slowing economic growth, poverty, rapid environmental deterioration, domestic difficulties in the sectors of energy, education, health and water, and limited access to financial services, Uganda has kept its borders open to refugees,” says Duniya Aslam Khan, UNHCR Uganda spokesperson.

Uganda has been praised for having the most progressive refugee laws and policies in the world. The Refugee Act, 2006 and the 2010 Refugee Regulations, for example, provide for the protection and integration of refugees and asylum seekers so that they can access the same public services, such as education and health care, as the host community.

Chapter 29 of the Refugee Act, 2006, stipulates that refugees are entitled to free and just treatment without discrimination on the grounds of race, religion, sex, nationality and ethnic identity, and that a refugee shall be accorded the same protection as is accorded to the nationals of Uganda, in respect of the protection of intellectual

property rights, including industrial inventions, patents, designs, trade names, copyrights and other artistic and scientific works.

In 2009, Uganda passed the Urban Refugee Policy, which designated urban areas as legitimate places where refugees can enjoy their rights. Also, in the second phase of the National Development Plan (NDP II), the government included refugee management and protection through the Refugee Settlement Transformative Agenda.

It is important to note that perhaps the enactment of the refugee-friendly policies would have been in vain had the host communities been hostile. Khan says the hospitality of Ugandans is laudable.

#### **Uganda, the refugee haven**

Upon arrival, refugees go through entry and settlement phases, and then, something unique to Uganda, they are integrated in the communities. According to John Paul Magezi, from the Department of Refugees in the Office of the Prime Minister (OPM), refugees are free to move around the country and pursue economic opportunities.



“They are not confined to camps but live in settlements and are allocated land for subsistence farming. They have a right to education and other social services. Some Ugandans in Kampala are employed by refugees who fled their countries but were able to start all over again by building petrol stations and restaurants. Because of the conducive environment, refugees can own and register both formal and informal businesses.”

With such a policy environment and welcoming host communities, it is no wonder that Uganda is considered a haven for refugees.

#### **Reputation at stake?**

Hosting of refugees, however, comes with challenges such as environmental degradation and spill-over insecurity from the conflict in the country of origin. Refugees also put pressure on public social services such as education, water and health.

Currently, Uganda is also facing accountability questions over monies received for refugee humanitarian assistance. In February 2018, allegations of gross mismanagement

of resources for refugees, including the inflation of refugee numbers, came to light. In March 2018, the national press carried undercover reports of sexual exploitation and trafficking of refugee children and women.

The long-term repercussions of these scandals could be determined by how well and pragmatically the government handles them. The State Minister for Refugees, the Hon. Musa Eweru, said the government would thoroughly investigate the allegations and bring the culprits to book. In fact, officials implicated in the mismanagement of resources at the OPM have since been suspended and put under investigations. However, there is fear that these scandals could besmirch the image of Uganda as a paradise for refugees. Already, at the Uganda Solidarity Summit on Refugees held in June 2017, UN officials were sceptical about how the money collected would be used effectively to benefit refugees.

The Hon. Angel Mark Dulu, the Member of Parliament for Adjumani East, says the scandal may not have a big impact on Uganda as a country, because the management of refugees is a preserve of

the UN, not the host country. However, she notes that it is the refugees who may feel the pinch. “Already, we have been approached by refugees who are worried that this scandal has affected their food rations. Since UNHCR cut the rations it offers to refugees to half, refugees complain that the food they get is not enough.”

Officials at the OPM were hesitant to comment on this matter, given the sensitivity of the current refugee scandals rocking the country. With conflicts in the neighbouring countries, however, showing no sign of ending, it is needless to say that Uganda won’t stop receiving more refugees. The country absolutely needs funding to respond to humanitarian situations. The question is whether or not the emergency response and support mechanisms won’t be ruined should partners and agencies lose trust in Uganda’s accountability systems.

However instead of losing interest key stakeholders should support the government in its efforts to address the weaknesses.



**COMMENTARY: REFUGEES ARE HUMAN, NOT A PASSIVE HELPLESS BURDEN. THIS SIMPLE FACT SEEMS TO HAVE BEEN FORGOTTEN**

DAVID KIGOZI

Uganda has been commended internationally for hosting thousands of refugees from neighbouring countries. Today, the majority of refugees in Uganda come from South Sudan, at 73%, and the DRC, at about 19% of the total number of refugees. The remaining percentage consists of Burundians, Somalis and others. As at January 2018, the total number of refugees in the country was 1,411,794. The Government of Uganda has also announced that it “is considering a request” from Israel to relocate at least 500 African refugees, mostly Eritreans and Sudanese, from Israel to Uganda.



Apart from a fairly open refugee welcoming environment, Uganda's refugee law and refugee management practice are also lauded as being progressive and refugee-friendly. This does not mean that they are perfect and there are still opportunities to make the refugee environment better in terms of legal/policy frameworks and practice. However, improving the refugee management system should not be difficult in a country where there is a reasonable amount of goodwill towards refugees and where a lot has already been done to provide them with space, protection and assistance at standards that are above those of many other countries.

In 2015, in a report entitled "South Sudanese refugees in Adjumani District, Uganda: Telling a new story?" the International Refugee Rights Initiative noted: "While Uganda law recognises that refugees should have freedom of movement, it states that this will be

subject to reasonable restrictions. In practice, this means that refugees are required to obtain permission before they are allowed to move outside of the camps. While in practice this requirement is not always enforced and refugees are able to move around with relative freedom, the law should be reformed to no longer require the obtaining of permits, thereby guaranteeing the right of freedom of movement in both law and practice."

In addition to the requirement that refugees possess movement permits, freedom of movement is also subtly and indirectly curtailed by providing humanitarian assistance only in refugee settlements. Besides, by maintaining people in camps, their right to work is also curtailed as there are very few job opportunities in camps.

Today there are reports of violations of basic refugee rights in Uganda. Refugees are human beings with rights, including the right to food. However, reports from some refugee camps seem to suggest that some officials distribute food to

refugees in exchange for sex, while others, exploiting the vulnerability of refugees, are involved in trafficking them. There are also allegations that some refugees have to give money in order to be accepted officially as refugees and to get a refugee identity card. More allegations indicate that some refugees have been locked up in police cells simply because they have fought for their rights. There are also many refugees who have been denied employment because of sheer ignorance by employers that refugees in Uganda are entitled to work. In addition, because of the ignorance surrounding refugee rights, some employers have entrenched the practice of underpaying refugees because they consider it a great service and a favour to employ them.

Refugee rights in Uganda are guaranteed by various legal frameworks – national, regional and international. In its introduction, Uganda's Refugee Act, 2006



describes itself as an “Act to make new provision for matters relating to refugees, in line with the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees and other international obligations of Uganda relating to the status of refugees. The Act makes reference to the Geneva Convention (the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees and the 1967 Protocol); the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, 1981; the Convention on the Rights of the Child; and the African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights.

Apart from the right to remain in Uganda as a refugee and not to be subjected to refoulement, the rights of a refugee in Uganda, enshrined in Article 29 of the Refugee Act, include being issued with an identity card (free of charge); entitlement to fair and just treatment without discrimination; property rights; the right to transfer assets to or from Uganda; freedom from discrimination of any sort; the right to education other than elementary education; recognition of foreign

certificates, diplomas and degrees; the right to engage in agriculture, industry, handicrafts and commerce; the right to establish commercial and industrial companies; the right to practice one’s profession (if the qualifications are recognised by Ugandan authorities); and the right to have access to employment opportunities and engage in gainful employment.

Refugees are entitled to having the same rights as citizens with respect to practising their religion and to the religious education of their children. They also have the right of association as regards non-political and non-profit-making associations and trade unions; and free access to courts of law, including legal assistance; and they are entitled to protection regarding intellectual property rights.

At the international level, all displaced persons are entitled to basic protections codified both in customary international law and in a number of international human rights conventions, such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR); the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR); the International Convention on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR); as well as conventions protecting specific vulnerable groups such as children, the aged and women.

These are legal instruments that guarantee the rights of refugees. Any practices to the contrary are not only unacceptable but illegal. It is important, however, to emphasise that Uganda is not the only country where the rights of refugees are violated by ignorant officials and xenophobic citizens, among others. Refugees and human rights campaigners fight for refugee rights all over the world. Indeed, away from the scandals currently embroiling the country’s refugee humanitarian

assistance system, Uganda is a fairly safe haven for refugees. Current global reports on refugees contain sad revelations. Discrimination and sexual abuse, for example among Syrian refugees and Myanmar’s Rohingya Muslim refugees, make unpalatable international news headlines despite the fact that there are international (and national) refugee protection frameworks and instruments in place.

Conventional thinking believes that massive numbers of refugees are “a burden” on resources and it is recognised that at the onset of a massive refugee crisis, a refugee influx into a country can cause significant overload on a country’s resources, social services and infrastructure. However, refugees cannot be a burden if the refugee management system is based on the empowerment of refugees to take responsibility for their own livelihoods, at least partially, if they wish to do so and not focused on refugee “care-and-maintenance” programmes which pay no attention to refugee empowerment. It is a fact that in protracted situations where the planned response focuses on the development of both refugees and host communities in an environment that is supportive of refugee rights, it would be far-fetched to consider refugees as a burden.

#### **About the author**

***David Kigozi is the programme manager, Sudan, at the International Refugee Rights Initiative. He has worked in senior international roles with various civil society and humanitarian agencies in the Great Lakes Region for over 15 years.***

# THE VOICES AND EXPERIENCES OF YOUNG REFUGEES IN UGANDA

This article explores the needs and vulnerabilities of young refugees, who through sharing their experience have revealed an overwhelming interest in continuing their education, a desire to work, and willingness to learn new skills.

ARISE REPORTER



## Maria Nyabieu Taker

I am a South Sudanese and a Nuer. I came to Uganda in 2007 and live with my step-mother. When the war broke out in 2013, I was already in Uganda but still it affected me. For example, the source of income for my parents whom I left in South Sudan was disrupted. So, sometimes I would lack school fees and miss out on classes. I would also lack money to cater for my daily needs.

Uganda is a peaceful country and the climate is favourable and the education is good and so are the people, though not all of them. You will find really polite and loving people but not everyone is like that. Some people on the streets call us South Sudanese, fighters, names like that. Some rob and beat up our boys on streets.

I think it is the responsibility of the Ugandan government to protect us. And for the local people to stop calling us names. Why should you call me black when you are black, too? If you call me a South Sudanese and I call you a Ugandan, it would not make sense. Let's call ourselves human beings. Or you introduce yourself to me, and I will do the same. That is a way of building friendships. Because if you were to cut me, I do not think my blood would be orange and yours red, no! We are all the same. It is just because we come from different origins and speak different languages, but we are all the same.



### Theresa Nyalony Gatwang Riak, 19

I came to Uganda in 2007. Before that, my parents and I were refugees in Khartoum because of the civil war in the south. I started school in 2007 in Primary One. I was eight. Currently I am at Cavendish University studying information technology. My maternal uncle who works with government in South Sudan pays my school fees. That in itself is a problem because when you work with the government, other people see you as their enemy. As if that is not enough, Riak Machar is my grandfather, which qualifies us to be enemies of the government.

The situation in my country is terrible. Almost every day I hear reports about so and so being dead. These are sad stories. It is distressing. Life in Kampala is not that easy either. There is a belief that refugees who live in Kampala are well-off but that is not true. We rely on support from others. I have to wait for my uncle, for example, to send me money and when that does not come through, I have to go to the camps in West Nile to get food. That is a long distance!

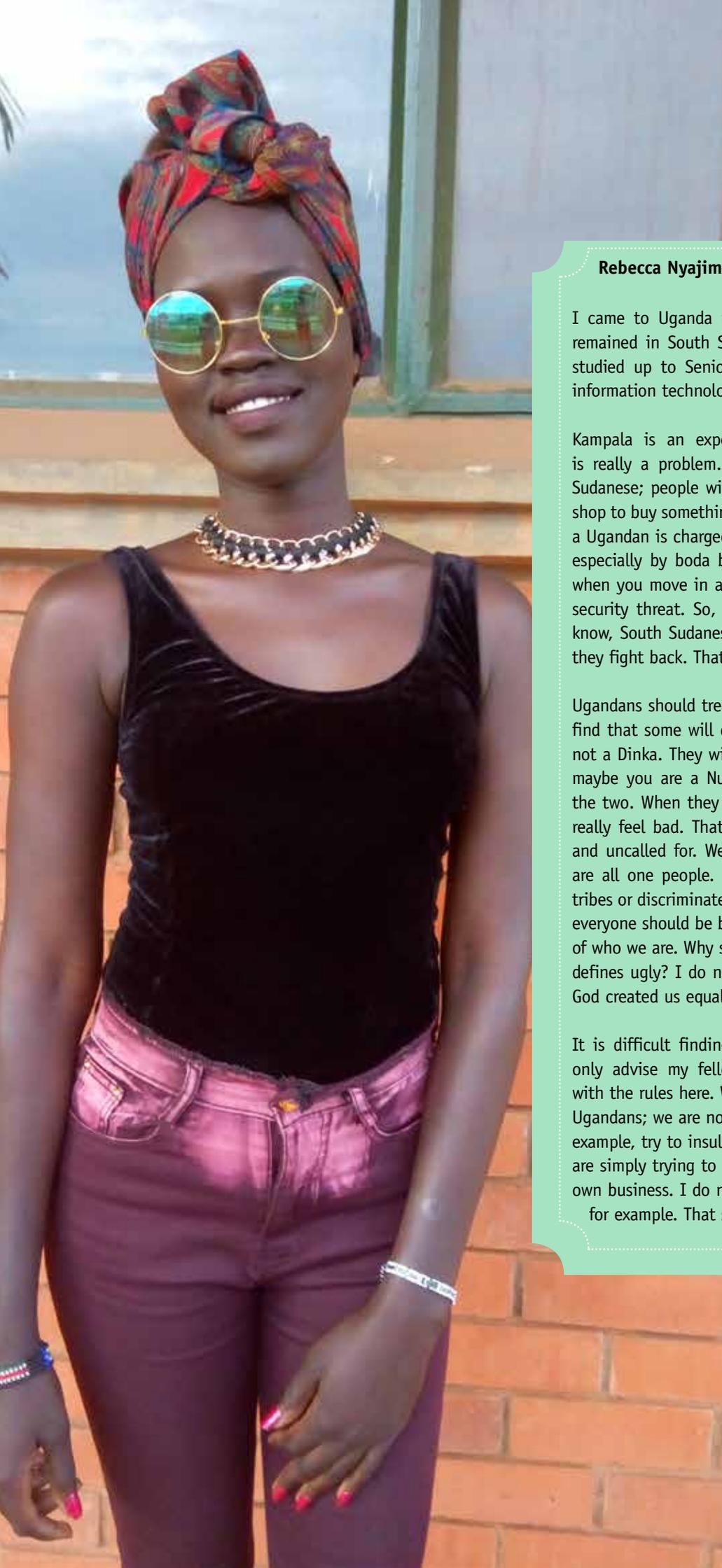
One can go for days without food. Yes, Uganda may be a paradise for refugees, but I will tell you refugees are suffering in Uganda. The reality is the people supposed to distribute food to refugees take some of that food for themselves or ask for money from refugees. I will not mention names. But what I will tell you is there is something wrong in the system.

There is discrimination. You will find a Ugandan and they will ask you what it is you are doing in Uganda, why you cannot go back to your country. Very few refugees can find work. People do not want to employ us. They claim Ugandans are mistreated in South Sudan – the reason we should not be treated fairly here. Yet there are Ugandans comfortably working in South Sudan.

The discrimination is also in schools; and when you try to make your case, they say violence and war are in your blood. Hosting refugees is a big challenge. Currently over a million South Sudan refugees are here, so I understand the challenge. Perhaps if it were South Sudan hosting such a big number of refugees, we would also be having similar challenge. But still, something positive needs to be done.

During campaigns, they told us that if a particular presidential candidate won, every foreigner was going to be forced to leave Uganda, so we lived in fear.

I would not build castles in the air. But what I think should be done is streamline food distribution centres to bring such centres closer to the people in the city because travelling to the camp to get food is cumbersome.



### **Rebecca Nyajima Manyang Gatwech, 20**

I came to Uganda with my brother in 2007. My parents remained in South Sudan. My father later died in 2011. I studied up to Senior Four and enrolled for a diploma in information technology.

Kampala is an expensive city. For example, house rent is really a problem. The other problem is being a South Sudanese; people will always isolate you. If you went to a shop to buy something, they will charge you more than what a Ugandan is charged. We are also disturbed on the streets, especially by boda boda men. It is difficult because even when you move in a group, some people may regard you a security threat. So, some men will confront you and, you know, South Sudanese can be aggressive when disturbed – they fight back. That is what causes fights.

Ugandans should treat us well. They call us names. You will find that some will call you a Dinka when actually you are not a Dinka. They will yell at you, “Hey, you mudinka!” Yet maybe you are a Nuer, but Ugandans do not differentiate the two. When they call you a Dinka and you are not, you really feel bad. That is why some react. This is really bad and uncalled for. We are all black; we are all Africans. We are all one people. No one should call the other by their tribes or discriminate against you on the basis of colour. Not everyone should be brown, for example. We should be proud of who we are. Why should someone call you ugly? And who defines ugly? I do not think there are ugly people anyway. God created us equal.

It is difficult finding a solution to such instances. I can only advise my fellow South Sudanese to try to comply with the rules here. We cannot afford not to cooperate with Ugandans; we are not in our country. If boda boda men, for example, try to insult you, ignore them, for sometimes they are simply trying to play around with your mind. Mind your own business. I do not find myself in conflict with the law, for example. That said, home always remains the best.



### **Kuol Arou Kuol**

I came to Uganda in 2008 to study. It was all well until 2013 when war broke out back in South Sudan, just two years after we got independent. That disrupted my education. My family members were displaced by the conflict, disrupting my only source of school fees. I did not have money to continue my education.

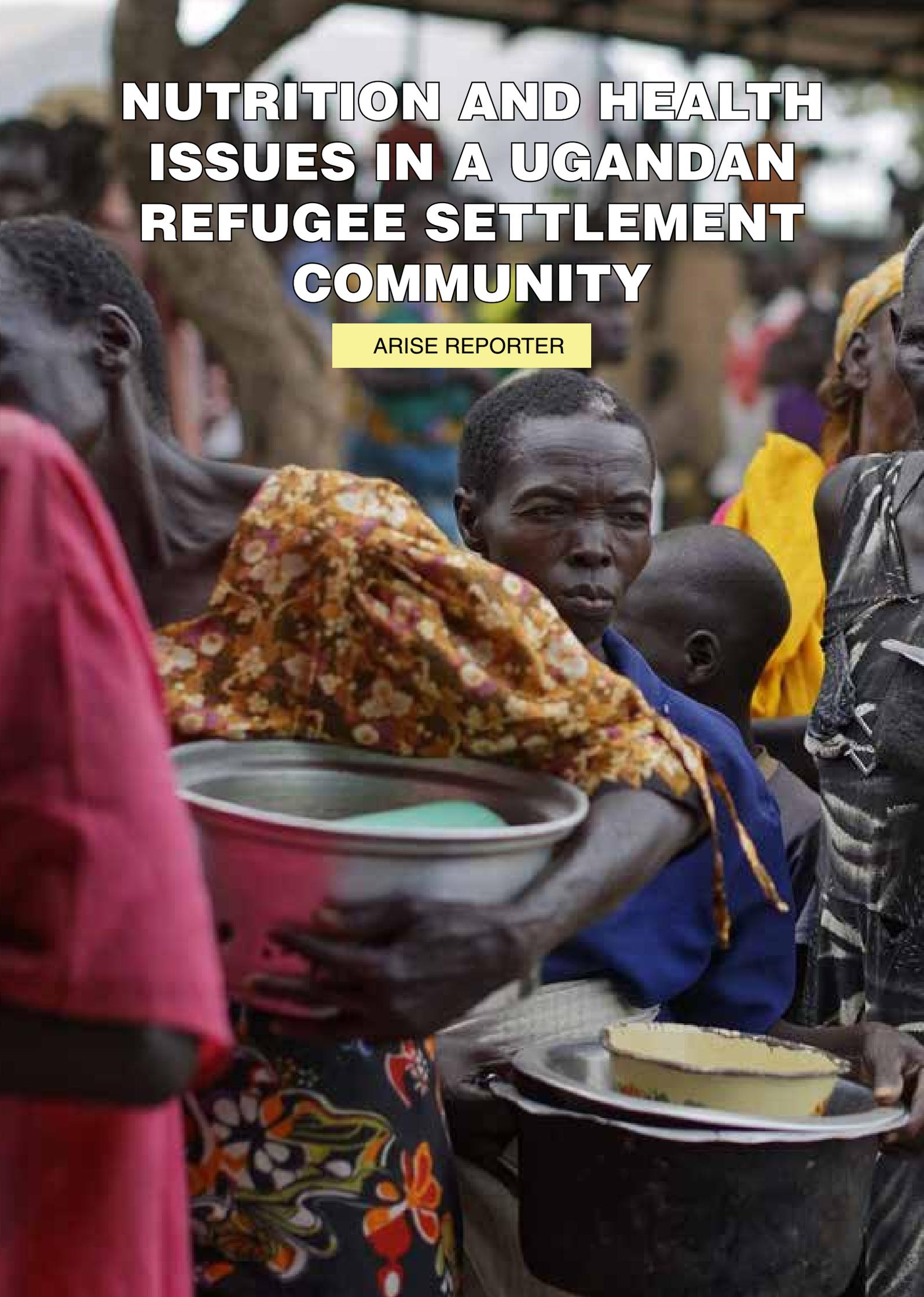
In 2014, I went and started living in a refugee camp in Koboko where I started working as a volunteer. That is where I got a sympathiser who offered to pay my school fees. He was my father's friend. He said I was a bright young man who deserved an education. That is how I returned to Kampala and resumed my studies. I graduated in 2017 with a bachelor's degree in procurement and logistics.

I have not yet got a job. I decided to enrol for another course in software engineering. Kampala is not the friendliest place to be when you are not working, when you do not have money and you are a refugee. Things are not easy to come by. You can get sick and simply lie in your bed with no medical help. It is a hard life to live. One time I was terribly sick and I did not have money to go to hospital. I stayed in my room for eight days. I tried calling my sponsor but calls to his telephone numbers were not going through. I stayed there helpless. Somehow, he called later and sent me some money. That is how I managed to get treatment.

My desire is to do something meaningful for my countrymen. Recently I started an organisation called Sports 64 where through sport I want to bring together the children of South Sudanese living in camps in Uganda. The war in South Sudan is tribal, so bringing together all children regardless of their tribes is significant. Sports 64 comes from the idea that we have 64 tribes in South Sudan, so we seek to bring together children from all tribes so they can sit, play together as brothers. Children should not inherit the hatred from the older generation. We want it to be inclusive. So far, we have managed to bring together 18 tribes.

# **NUTRITION AND HEALTH ISSUES IN A UGANDAN REFUGEE SETTLEMENT COMMUNITY**

ARISE REPORTER





According to the United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR), there is a clear link between nutrition and public health. Communicable diseases brought on in part by malnutrition are responsible for millions of preventable deaths each year. Mass population movements can result in high rates of malnutrition, sickness and death.

Shortage of food also makes people more vulnerable to sexual abuse and exploitation. Poor quality diets and vitamin and mineral deficiencies contribute to delayed childhood development, causing irreparable damage. Additionally, for those who live with chronic illnesses, such as HIV/AIDS, adequate nutrition is vital in maintaining the immune system.

In this Q&A interview, Ms Claire Kamazooba a Nutritionist with Action Against Hunger, a non-government organization working in Bidibidi refugee settlement talks to us about the nutrition needs of refugees.

**What is the importance of the concept of nutrition in relation to refugee women and children?**

When populations cannot access adequate nutritious food for prolonged periods, they get malnourished and lives may consequently be lost. The impact of malnutrition on mortality and health are immediate, particularly among the most vulnerable groups (children, women and the elderly). Poor nutrition during pregnancy can lead to maternal mortality. Malnutrition can also worsen the health situation of people living with HIV as access to medication, healthcare and essential nutrition is interrupted. Poor nutrition can cause irreversible damage to a child's growth and development and in the long term affect the entire generation of children where they are not able to reach full potential which leads to low national economic growth and development.

**In what state do you find South Sudan refugees as far as nutrition and feeding requirements are concerned?**

In humanitarian crises, changes are very rapid with people in need of nutritional support and food security. This is why malnutrition is a common consequence of conflict, emergency and fragile settings, affecting most the vulnerable groups (children, pregnant and lactating women). Long days and months of journeying to a peaceful location compromises the nutrition needs of refugees as there is no access to food, healthcare and safe water. The body uses up its reserves putting one at risk of malnutrition, infections, opportunistic diseases, serious public health threats and death due to reduced immunity. Action Against Hunger nutrition program in emergency situations aims at preventing malnutrition in the most vulnerable groups and treating acute malnutrition.

**Any case examples of refugees you have worked on that quickly comes to mind?**

In September 2016, we received a mother, Nensa Jama Suzan with her baby, Princess Christine. They were refugees from South Sudan. Nensa had lost her husband in the conflict and her first baby to an unknown medical condition. During the conflict, the situation in South Sudan became worse every passing day. She decided to flee. On arrival at Kiri border, after 10 days in transit, they were very hungry, feeling sick and tired.

Princess Christine was only 8 months old on arrival. Tests were done on both the mother and baby and both turned out positive. They were enrolled on treatment. The baby was diagnosed with Malaria and Severe Acute Malnutrition. She was immediately admitted into Inpatient Therapeutic Care for about two weeks. She was later discharged to Outpatient Therapeutic Care.

During the follow-ups, the mother reported that her baby vomited every after feeding. She was readmitted with severe Pneumonia and Severe Acute Malnutrition. The baby weighed 4.2kg. After close to three months of treatment and care, she weighed 6.6kg, a great improvement! She was breastfeeding and taking bean soup and porridge that we provided. Today she is



healthy, has good appetite and plays with other kids. She weighs 19.3kgs at 28 months. Nensa enrolled for adult learning and has been supported to start her own business selling cassava pancakes in the local market.

The second case is Dina Kape's, a mother of four including twins, Timethoe and Fastino. When war broke out in South Sudan, Kape was 7 months pregnant. Her husband decided they flee to Uganda. They spent close to 14 days moving with long hours of no food and water. On arrival at the Bidibidi reception center, Kape was immediately rushed to Bidibidi health center III maternity ward. Her twin babies were born premature. Timethoe and Fastino weighed 1.7kg and 1.3kg respectively and needed close monitoring. Kape was malnourished and complained that she did not produce enough breastmilk and that the babies could not suckle well.

The babies were put in intensive care. The mother was admitted for close to two months in our Infants and Young Child Feeding Corner. She received supplementary feeding rations on top of the general food ration provided to refugees. She also received postnatal care and education and counseling to relieve her of emotional stress,

which had affected her breastmilk production. We also gave her water and sanitation items such as washing and bathing soap, basin, cups, plates, sanitary towel among others.

After three months, Kape and her babies were discharged. Her nutrition status had improved. The babies got immunized before they were discharged. Today Kape and her children are healthier and continue to benefit from the Maternal Child Health/Nutrition Program for all children under 2 years. Timethoe and Fastino currently weigh 10.5kg and 11.3kg respectively. She grows some food such as maize and beans in her small garden around her home.

**What challenges do you face in meeting nutrition and feeding needs of refugees?**

Language barrier, internal migrations of clients on treatment where refugees move from one zone or settlement to another, which disrupts our interventions in terms of follow up. We also lack enough funds to effectively implement projects.

**What practical remedies do you think should be done to improve the nutrition and feeding situation of refugees?**

This requires a multisectoral approach. On the part of government, there should be integration of nutrition guidelines and policies into the healthcare services provision. For example, every healthcare facility should have baby friendly facilities and services. Host and refugee communities need more knowledge on nutrition, maternal and child health. Such programs can be spearheaded by Civil society Organizations. Refugees should adopt healthier behaviors to avoid preventable diseases. They should for example embrace family planning as a way of improving child health and nutrition. And practices such as child marriages ought to be ended. The host communities should provide a friendly environment for refugees and share local resources. The UN and other donors should increase funding to sustain these programs.





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