



Isis-Women's International Cross-Cultural Exchange
(Re)creating Peace Internationally



FORCED TO FLEE:

Voices Of Congolese Women Refugees In Uganda

The first part of the paper discusses the importance of understanding the local context in which a project is implemented. This includes a thorough analysis of the social, cultural, and economic conditions of the community. It is essential to engage with local stakeholders from the outset to ensure that the project is relevant and sustainable.

The second part of the paper explores the challenges of implementing a project in a resource-poor environment. Limited access to funding, skilled personnel, and infrastructure can significantly hinder progress. Creative solutions and partnerships with local organizations are often necessary to overcome these obstacles.

The third part of the paper focuses on the importance of monitoring and evaluation. Regular assessment of the project's progress and impact is crucial for making adjustments and ensuring that the project remains on track. This involves collecting data, analyzing it, and reporting the findings to all stakeholders.

The fourth part of the paper discusses the role of community participation in the success of a project. When community members are actively involved in the planning and implementation of a project, they are more likely to feel ownership and commitment. This leads to better outcomes and long-term sustainability.

The fifth part of the paper concludes by emphasizing the need for a holistic approach to development. Projects should not focus solely on economic growth but should also address social and environmental issues. This integrated approach is essential for achieving sustainable development.



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About Isis-WICCE

Isis-WICCE restores hope and renews the spirits of women abused in armed conflict situations through its core programs of skills building (SYNERGY), documenting women's realities (ILLUMINATION), networking for sustainable peace and women's leadership (RADIATION), advocating for redress of the spoils of the armed conflict (ADVOCACY) and providing free reproductive health services (HEALING). Isis-WICCE's efforts are coordinated towards realizing the overall goal of creating a vanguard of women with the capacity to participate in processes that influence gender equality and women's empowerment.

Illumination

The core of Isis-WICCE's program is research and documentation, as all program activities are informed by research outcomes. The program avails information on women in situations of armed and post-conflict settings, which also directs appropriate responses from Isis-WICCE and other actors. Further, Isis-WICCE has developed partnerships with feminist academics, grounding its work in contemporary feminist theory, while providing them with information on the realities of women survivors of armed conflict that contributes to the academic field of women, peace and human security.

Healing

Isis-WICCE mobilizes resources and expertise to address the physical, mental and gynecological emergency needs of survivors of war in different parts of the world. Through Isis-WICCE's work, thousands of women and girls affected by wars have received gynecological surgeries; developed mechanism to address long term trauma management, where thousands have received counseling and treatment.

Synergy

Isis-WICCE's International Exchange Program Institute, often referred to as "The Institute", is a skills building program through which women leaders from armed conflict settings across the world meet to strategize on critical issues affecting women, share information, experiences, ideas, and acquire skills to develop new strategies to address the spoils of wars.

Radiation

Isis-WICCE continues to strengthen the capacities of the community based women's groups that it mentors. With its support, the groups have implemented various activities that have contributed to peace building, post-conflict rehabilitation and resettlement in their communities.

Advocacy

Isis-WICCE employs creative and innovative strategies under its advocacy program, to influence post-conflict reconstruction policies and programs at national, regional and international levels. Isis-WICCE profiles the voices of women survivors, highlighting their needs and concerns so as to influence international development agendas

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ACRONYMS

AAH	Action Africa Help
ACORD	Agency for Cooperation and Research in Development
ADF-NALU	Allied Democratic Force – National Army for the Liberation of Uganda
ARC	American Refugee Committee
DHS	Demographic and Health Survey
DRC	Democratic Republic of Congo
FARDC	Armed Forces of the Federal Republic of Congo
FGDs	Focus Group Discussions
GTZ	Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit
ICGLR	International Conference of the Great Lakes Region
IMC	International Medical Corp
Kgs	Kilograms
KM	Kilometers
LC	Local Council
LWF	Lutheran World Federation
MONUSCO	United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo
NRC	Norwegian Refugee Council
OPM	Office of the Prime Minister
SASA	Start, Awareness, Support and Action
SGBV	Sexual Gender Based Violence
UNHCR	United Nations High Commission on refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNSCR	United Nations Security Council Resolution
WFP	World Food Program

FOREWORD

Many countries in Africa have in the recent past experienced armed conflicts; which have exposed citizens to atrocities, human rights violations and destruction of infrastructure. In all situations, all conflicts on the continent have led to massive displacements of populations across the borders, creating the highest influx of refugees. Women and children have not only remained major victims of the worst atrocities, human rights abuses and displacements in conflict situations, but continue to experience grave humanitarian and insecurity problems when they become refugees in neighboring countries like Uganda. In present times, Uganda as a nation, centrally located in a region characterized with instability and conflict, has remained the most immediate choice of refugees and asylum seekers from Kenya, Rwanda, DRC, Somalia and South Sudan since early 1960s to date.

For about two decades, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) has experienced war and conflict which has led to massive displacement of the populations to Uganda; which shares the largest border stretch on the Eastern part of that country. Since 1997, Uganda continued to receive streams of Congolese refugees who have come at different times; especially due to the widespread nature and gravity of conflicts. Although refugees from DRC cannot be easily categorized, the majority of refugees have mainly been women and children, who in their displaced state, continue to experience humanitarian and insecurity problems.

Forced to Flee: Voices of Congolese Refugees in Uganda is one of the most recent publications of Isis-Women's International Cross Cultural Exchange (Isis-WICCE), a global women rights organization; that documents women's experiences in conflict and post conflict settings. The publication specifically brings out the voices of Congolese women refugees who fled from Kamango in Eastern DRC in 2013 and were received by Ugandan authorities at Bubukwanga Refugee Reception Centre; and later resettled at Kyangwali Refugee Resettlement Centre in Western Uganda. The publication shows that when a neighbor is in war, it inevitably spills over and puts strain on the social, economic and political infrastructures of neighbouring states. Uganda and particularly the Directorate of Refugees in the Office of the Prime Minister has had, in a very short time, to grapple with providing for the basic needs of DRC refugees like health needs, sanitation facilities, shelter and food. These needs particularly affect women; who inevitably shoulder the burden of conflict in ensuring

continuity; where everything is shattered.

The office of the Prime Minister of Uganda appreciates Isis-WICCE for taking a deliberate step of documenting DRC women's refugee experiences and providing a rare feminist analysis of women's experiences in conflict situations; which is often left out of many presentations of women's realities in conflict. The conflict in DRC has not only disrupted livelihoods of communities through massive displacements but has also opened mankind out to a rare ignominy of war where women's bodily integrity is dismembered through rape as a weapon of war. Uganda's commitment to international instruments regarding upholding the dignity of individuals and alleviate humanitarian problems that come with war and conflict has directed its refugee – friendly policy. Uganda enacted the Refugee Act (2006) and Refugee Regulations (2010), not only to reinforce the government's asylum policies but also to reinforce the spirit of welcoming refugees from neighbouring countries according to international laws; with support from United Nations High Commission on Refugees (UNHCR).

As the government of Uganda and Partners continue to undertake planned response strategies and effective programming to handle DRC refugees in Uganda, efforts of organizations like Isis-WICCE in documenting refugee experiences remain commendable. This is the only way of generating information that is necessary for continuous planning and providing effective response to refugees' needs, addressing their concerns and reviewing important actions like resettlement, integration and repatriation.

This study remains an important watershed in planning for refugees in general and more particularly involving women to participate in stimulating peace building processes; including undertaking critical and participatory humanitarian planning in situations of conflict. We believe this study will become a basis for continuous discourse on regional security, making critical response to refugees and especially enabling participation of women refugees in nurturing the boon of peace for harmonious coexistence.



Mr. Kazungu David Apollo
Commissioner – Refugees
Office of the Prime Minister

Ministry Of Disaster Preparedness and Refugees

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) has suffered a long period of conflict like many other countries in Africa born out of a “rebellion”; a fairly abused term often used to explain and perhaps attempt to justify the nature of armed conflicts that result in a change of government from a supposedly less popular one typically lead by a dictator, to a supposedly better one led by a so called revolutionary, most of whom turn out to be worst than the ones before them. The people of DRC have not experienced the lasting peace they deserve since independence. The country’s incredible wealth and natural resources have sadly attracted absurd greed, with all its accompanying ugliness. Regional instability and politics far removed from the everyday concerns of citizens in DRC have contributed significantly to the numerous complex conflicts that have continuously disrupted people’s lives in the country. The conflicts have resulted in so many deaths and massive displacements. The people who have suffered most in all these conflicts are women. The world has been made aware of the use of rape as a weapon of war in DRC; Isis-WICCE’s research has contributed to this knowledge. In 2013, Uganda witnessed the arrival of thousands of new refugees from eastern DRC. Isis-WICCE conducted a study to document the voices and reality of Congolese women refugees’ of the conflict, from a feminists’ stance that challenge the hierarchical ways of creating and distributing knowledge about women’s experiences of conflict, which often silence the voices of women. This document presents what was revealed and learned through this study.

In representing and making women’s perspectives and voices visible, the study documented the stories of women, mainly using in-depth interviews and focus group discussions involving 227 women and men in two refugee centers in Uganda, the Bubukwanga Refugee Reception Center and Kyangwali Resettlement Center in western Uganda.

The first section of this document presents the reader with solid background information to the research; the rationale and approach, as well as the study methodology. The second section of this document gives the reader a clearer picture of how Congolese refugees are received by Uganda. The third section of this document delves into the experiences of women who were forced to flee their homes in DRC to become refugees in Uganda. The fourth section brings to light the violations experienced by women and their agency in the entire situation. The report then concludes with recommendations.

There are three types of women's experiences to which this report draws attention; the attack that caused people to flee their homes in Kamago in Eastern DRC, the escape from the situation of conflict, and the difficulties faced in the refugee transit and settlement centers. While women seemed reticent about rape during their escape from conflict, Isis-WICCE's experienced researchers were certain that women suffered sexual and gender based violence during their escape from conflict. However, the limited time spent with these women did not allow trust to be built to create an atmosphere to share such intimate details of their lives.

The attack on Kamango had huge impact on the entire population, ranging from deaths and separation of family members to lack of leadership, forced displacement, trauma, loss of livelihood and gender based violence. There are no available estimates of the number of people killed during the attack, however there was huge influx of refugees with about 250 women, men and children arriving every week. The Government of Uganda has a well established mechanism for the reception and resettlement of refugees, which includes health services, education, water, shelter and food. Nevertheless, a number of issues affect the daily lives of refugees that impacts on their wellbeing. Issues such as food shortages, poor sanitation, lack of access to clean water, lack of access to livelihood and education, isolation from communities and inadequate land for cultivation.

Despite the challenges, women have taken up responsibilities to provide food and care for their families; this includes walking long distances to fetch water and firewood. Some have started small businesses like selling small items to earn money. The ability of women to exhibit and use their agency by providing protection, care and food for family members shows the ability of women to devise strategies to deal with complicated and difficult situations.

The experience shared by the women in the study clearly shows the gendered nature of flight, resettlement and reintegration. Based on these perspectives this study argues for the effective integration of the concerns and needs of women in peace building processes, including ensuring their participation as mandated by various international human rights frameworks. Most importantly, women, men, girls and boys must participate in planning designing and monitoring all aspects of emergency programs.

It is our hope that the reader will gain a deeper understanding of what it means to be a woman refugee from DRC in Uganda, and a new respect for the resilience and agency of women survivors of conflict.

1

Background

Since the end of the cold war, the nature of conflicts have changed from inter state to intra state conflicts. This change also brought about increased impact of conflict on the civilian population, majority of who are either internally displaced or become refugees in neighbouring countries. The increased number of refugees demanded for guidelines to manage the influx of people affected by conflict to ensure their maximum protection in the countries of destination.

Such movements with its roots in the displacement of several millions of people throughout Europe following the Second World War led the United Nations to develop a framework for the resettlement of refugees - the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, and established the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR). The Convention¹ defined a refugee as any person who "...owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable to, or owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country..." (UN 1951, I.1.A [2]).

However, the 1951 Convention limited the definition of refugees to anyone who was a refugee because of events that occurred in Europe before January 1951. Recognizing the limitations of the original Convention concerning this clause, the UN in 1967 approved a Protocol to the Convention. The additional Protocol expanded the definition of 'refugee' to include all people who have fled their homeland owing to a well-founded fear of persecution (Onyango 1986, p. 5). The

¹ UNHCR Handbook on Procedures and Criteria for determining Refugee Status, 1979, paragraph 34.

extension of the Convention institutionalized the international refugee protection system, including the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR).

At the African level, the sixth session of the Organization of Africa Union [OAU - now African Union (AU)] in 1969 adopted a Protocol for refugees. The OAU Protocol incorporated the 1951 UN Convention on refugees, but expanded the definition of who is a refugee to include anyone who:

“...through aggression, occupation, foreign domination, or events gravely disturbing public order in part, or in all of his country of origin, or the country of which he has nationality, is obliged to leave his usual place of residence to seek refuge outside this country.” (OAU 1969, Article 1)

The intention of the OAU definition was to extend refugee status to persons fleeing colonial domination and anti-colonial warfare, which was predominant at the time. This definition made it easy for a nation to extend immediate protection of refugee status to a large group of people at once, who were fleeing colonial oppression (Bakwesegha 1995, p.6). Unlike the UN definition, which places emphasis on individual persecution, the OAU definition concentrates on groups of people who are at risk during a conflict (Holborn 1975, p. 189). The clause providing status for those fleeing events gravely disturbing public order; has provided Africans with the most liberal definition of ‘refugee’ in the world. The Convention entered into force in 1974. To date 45 African States have signed and ratified the Convention; 4 have signed but not ratified and 5 have not signed and ratified. Uganda is one of the 45 countries that signed and ratified the OAU Convention.

In the last few years there has been increase in the number of refugees globally, most of them are being hosted in developing countries. The UNHCR annual Global Trends Report indicates that 45.2 million people were in situations of displacement as at the end of 2012 compared to 42.4 million at the end of 2011. Out of these figures, women constitute 48%. War remains the dominant cause for this displacement, as 55% of all refugees listed in the UNHCR report come from war affected countries; including Afghanistan, Somalia, Iraq, Syria, Mali, Sudan and Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). The report shows that of the 7.6 million newly displaced, 1.1 million are refugees and 6.5 are internally displaced.

This translates to a new refugee or internally displaced person every 4.1 seconds (UNHCR, 2013)²

The Democratic Republic of Congo, Mali, the Syria Arab Republic, and the border area between South Sudan and Sudan forced more than 1.1 million refugees into neighbouring countries; which has stretched emergency response systems globally for the third year in a row. An average of 3,000 people per day became refugees in 2012. Sub Saharan Africa was host to almost 2.8 million or one-quarter of all refugees globally, mainly from Somalia (799,300), Sudan (527,800) and DRC (476, 500). The outbreak of violence in DRC led to more than a million internally displaced persons and outflow of tens of thousands of Congolese into Uganda (40,200), Rwanda (17,000), and Burundi (8,000). As at January 2013, Uganda was host to 225,969 refugees and asylum seekers (UNHCR, 2013).

The history of Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) has been marred with multi-layered conflicts, which dates back to the colonial times. The colonial legacy has played a key determining role in the nature of conflict to date. Since the 19th century, Congo's vast natural resources have continually attracted violent intervention from outside the country that continued to fuel internal conflicts. The continuous conflicts in this huge country have resulted to weak governance systems that provide poor services to its people. The ongoing crisis in eastern Congo is rooted both in this history of predation and corruption, and the continuing aftermath of the 1994 genocide in neighbouring Rwanda. Most recently, even with the surrender of M23 rebels, Congo continues to struggle with an intense combination of conflicts at local, sub-regional and national levels.

Addressing the root causes of the conflict in DRC requires ensuring effective control of the territory, which will offer better protection to the population and control of wealth thus denying rebel factions means of survival through illicit trade in minerals. This will lead to the provision of basic services to the general population as well as addressing ethnic and tribal expectations that could harmonize regional and territorial demands.

2 UNHCR, 2012. Displacement: The New 21st Century Challenge. UNHCR Global Trends 2012.



Today, Congo is home to the largest and most expensive United Nations peacekeeping mission in the world, United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo (MONUSCO), which has more than 20,000 personnel and an annual budget of \$1.4 billion. The eastern part of the country is plagued by instability, as militias continue to wreak havoc on the population, this has led to increased number of refugees fleeing from the war affected regions of DRC.

There have been several efforts to bring peace to the DRC, the most common being the various peace processes that has produced multiple framework agreements that have mostly not been implemented. Most of the peace processes have focused mainly on national and regional dynamics, ignoring the local forces driving the conflict, and ensuring the participation of communities affected by the conflict (both women and men) in the peace process.

Refugee experiences of women and men are different. Women refugees have special needs, as they are more likely to be dependent spouses, have responsibility for the children, and are more enmeshed in family networks than male refugees, and may lose their traditional sources of income. During conflicts and flight periods, traditional gender roles can be affected by disruption of status and power hierarchies, geographical dispersal of kin and friendship networks, exposure to strangers with differential lifestyles, and different expectations³. These experiences are important in peace building and post conflict reconstruction processes, as they actually should help to shape actions to rebuild war torn communities and enable effective reintegration and resettlement activities. This study makes a case for the inclusion of women in the ongoing peace process for DRC in order to achieve sustainable peace and development.

By publishing this study, our aim is to raise awareness, stimulate further debate, and enhance understanding of the experiences of women refugees in order to inform the intervention processes of the various humanitarian actors. It argues for the inclusion of women's views and perspectives in peace building processes.

3 Gray, A and Elliott, S. 2001. Refugee Resettlement Research Project 'Refugee Voices' Literature Review. New Zealand Immigration Service, May 2001. www.dol.govt.nz/research/migration/refugees/refugeevoices/RefugeevoicesLiteratureReview.pdf



2

Rationale and Approach

The documentation process is women focused, examining ways in which women experience flight from conflict to seek protection in other countries and how these experiences should influence peace building processes for the DRC. This kind of analysis is important at this point as it will enable all stakeholders to understand the experiences of women during flight and how they fit into new refugee status with all its accompanied challenges. This understanding will guide interventions to address women specific concerns as well as cause the understanding of why women's participation in peace building and post conflict reconstruction is vital. To date, there has been no research focusing on the experiences of women refugees from Kamango area in eastern DRC while in flight to Uganda and at the resettlement centers.

It is a well known fact that refugees are not yet being fully engaged in peace talks, despite their knowledge and experiences, and their vested interest in resolving conflicts in their countries. Goal 5 of UNHCR's Agenda for Protection – “Redoubling the search for durable solutions”⁴ – specifically encourages states “to facilitate the participation of refugees, including women, in peace and reconciliation processes, to ensure that such agreements duly recognize the right to return and contemplate measures to encourage

⁴ <http://tinyurl.com/UNHCRAgProt>

repatriation, reintegration and reconciliation.”

At another level the United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325 include concerns that civilians particularly women and children account for the vast majority of those affected by armed conflict. It also reaffirms the important role of women in the prevention and resolution of conflicts and in peace building. It also stresses the importance of their equal participation and full involvement in all efforts for the maintenance and promotion of peace and security (Security Council Resolution S/2000/1044-A/S23/10/Res.1).

The most recent UNSCR 2122 specifically “recognizes the need for consistent implementation of resolution 1325(2000) in its own work and intends to focus more attention on women’s leadership and participation in conflict resolution and peace building, including by monitoring progress in implementation, and addressing challenges linked to the lack and quality of information and analysis on the impact of armed conflict on women and girls, the role of women in peace building and the gender dimensions of peace processes and conflict resolution”⁵ .

Engaging refugees in peace talks can strengthen the peace building process in three ways. First, refugees can contribute to the development of peace agreements that more comprehensively address the causes and consequences of conflicts. Second, the participation of women refugees will ensure the inclusion of women’s specific needs in post conflict reconstruction. Thirdly, refugees can assist in implementing peace agreements.

5 United Nations Security Council Resolution 2122(2013), adopted by the Security Council at its 7044th meeting on 18 October 2013. S/RES/2122 (2013). Available at <http://unscr.com/files/2013/02122.pdf>

2.1 Women's participation

Conflict affects women differently from men, depending on religion, caste, class, ethnicity, location, political affiliation and a variety of overlapping factors. On the other hand conflict also reveals a certain commonality in women's experiences. Women experience the particularly gendered forms of violence, of rape, the fear of rape, of body searches and the persistent threat of other sexual violence, as well as the social stigmas that afflict women who have been the targets of sexual violence (Rajasingham-Senanayake, 2004).

The absence or minority presence of women in discussions about conflict resolution, or the implementation of outcomes of such discussions, has a bearing on the long-term viability of solutions to issues that invariably represent deep-seated local or regional social dissent. Despite the reality that women account for the majority of conflict victims as objects of rape, assault, abduction, sex slavery, and forced human movement as is the case with DRC, 'the concerns and priorities of women in conflict resolution are ignored in most peace talks as well as in the development of most post-conflict reconstruction programs.'

The most obvious and arguably effective way for expressing women's concerns and priorities is for national governments and international bodies alike to take measures to ensure that women; including women refugees, are directly involved in formal conflict resolution processes, rather than continuing to remain as powerless community members.

This study analyzes DRC refugee women's experiences as they flee their homes to seek protection in Uganda. Given that women refugees are different from men and they experience conflict differently, how do we use these experiences to advocate for women's participation in peace building processes.

2.2 Objectives

The main objective of the study is to document the experiences of DRC women refugees as they flee from their homes and settle in camps in western Uganda and to draw lessons that can inform the on going peace process between the government of DRC and rebel groups.

Specific objectives

More specifically, this study aimed:

- To document women's experiences during flight to refugee resettlement centers in Uganda.
- To examine how the conflict has impacted on their daily lives.
- To identify women refugee specific needs and provide some of their emergency needs.

3

3.0 Study Methodology

3.1 Study Area and Design

The study was conducted in Bubukwanga transit centre in Bundibugyo District and Kyangwali refugee settlement in Hoima District. These two sites were deliberately selected. At the time of the research Uganda was dealing with three simultaneous refugee emergencies: people fleeing from the Kamango area and people fleeing fighting between Armed Forces of the Federal Republic of Congo (FARDC) and M23 rebels in DRC, and those fleeing ongoing instability in Jonglei State, South Sudan. The research therefore focused on people fleeing the Kamango area. The UNHCR and the Refugee Commission of the Office of the Prime Minister indicated that refugees from Kamango area were being received at Bubukwanga Transit Centre in Bundibugyo and are being settled at the Kyangwali refugee settlement. This therefore informed the selection of the two sites.

The Bubukwanga Transit Centre was selected in order to obtain first hand information on the current situation in the affected area, and to determine the frequency of refugee arrivals. The Kyangwali Resettlement Centre was selected to provide an in-depth understanding of refugee experiences and their current re-settlement challenges. Study participants were drawn from a broad category of women and men. Specific attention was paid to young, elderly women and women with disabilities.

3.2 Study Design

The study design was cross-sectional, employing feminist methodology that takes women as active participants in the analysis of the situation. The study assesses the current situation of women through their personal stories, highlighting the differential impact of refugee experience on women. To achieve this the study employed a combination of qualitative and quantitative approaches. The quantitative data provided a description of the study participants; while deeper explanation and reflections are drawn from qualitative data.



3.3 Sample Selection and Size

The participants in the study were purposefully selected to represent refugees who arrived in Uganda from July 2013 to October 6th 2013. The study was carried out in four sites, the Bubukwanga Transit Centre in Bubukwanga; and three selected villages in Kyangwali Resettlement Centre. The villages of Kentomi, Marembo 1 and Marembo 2 were selected in consultation with the camp leadership. A total of 227 people, consisting of 161 women (77%) and 47 men (23%) participated in the study.

The study sample included adult females and males (35 years and above); young females (14 to 35 years) and women with disabilities. The study team made deliberate effort to include different categories of women in order to draw conclusions from their experiences. Ten (10) Focus Group Discussions of 10-15 participants were held; where most of the FGDs had same sex groups.

The in-depth and key informants' interviews involved government officials (2), the police (1), local leaders (6), women leaders (1), civil society organizations (4), and international development partners (2).

Thirty-two oral testimonies were recorded from participants chosen from the Focus Group Discussions. The respondents for oral testimonies were selected based on the richness of the stories and the willingness of the women to share their personal experiences and engage in lengthy discussions with the study team. Using an oral-testimony approach enabled the study team to explore a range of women's experiences.

The study team consisted of a lead researcher, five research assistants, a photographer and a driver. The team worked together in each of the sites with support from the Local Council Chairperson.

3.4 Study Methods and Tools

Study methods included:

1. Key informant interviews and in-depth discussions.
2. Focus group discussions with selected women and men.
3. Oral testimonies of women to capture their voices and real life experiences of their flight from their homes to the refugee center in Uganda.
4. Community meetings
5. Literature review and analysis, involving a wide range of relevant documents such as research reports on women refugees and impact of conflict on women, international and national humanitarian laws and policies on refugees.

The use of multiple methods and tools enabled the study team to better understand the experiences of women refugees as they flee their home for safety in refugee camps. The various methods complimented each other, enabling the study team to select emerging issues from the experiences of women as refugees.

In undertaking the fieldwork, research assistants were recruited to assist in data collection and interpretation. Three of the research assistants were Congolese refugees from Eastern Congo currently living in Uganda.

3.5 Meeting the immediate needs of refugees

An important aspect of the study was to ensure that research participants have a sense of fulfillment in sharing their stories. In research situations, participants always want to know how you will use their information. But for women refugees we met during the research, it was all about helping to meet their basic needs. This is understandable as in most refugee cases, flight is not planned. Therefore, most refugees lacked basic hygiene items for cleaning their bodies, and for women this becomes particularly very challenging. Earlier interaction with women refugees in Uganda enabled Isis-WICCE to identify some of the basic materials that most new arrivals in refugee camps lack.

We were aware that the refugee resettlement efforts mostly focus on supplying food items, while non-food items, which are usually needed by women are not usually prioritized. We therefore distributed items to research participants and the general population we met in the settlement centers.



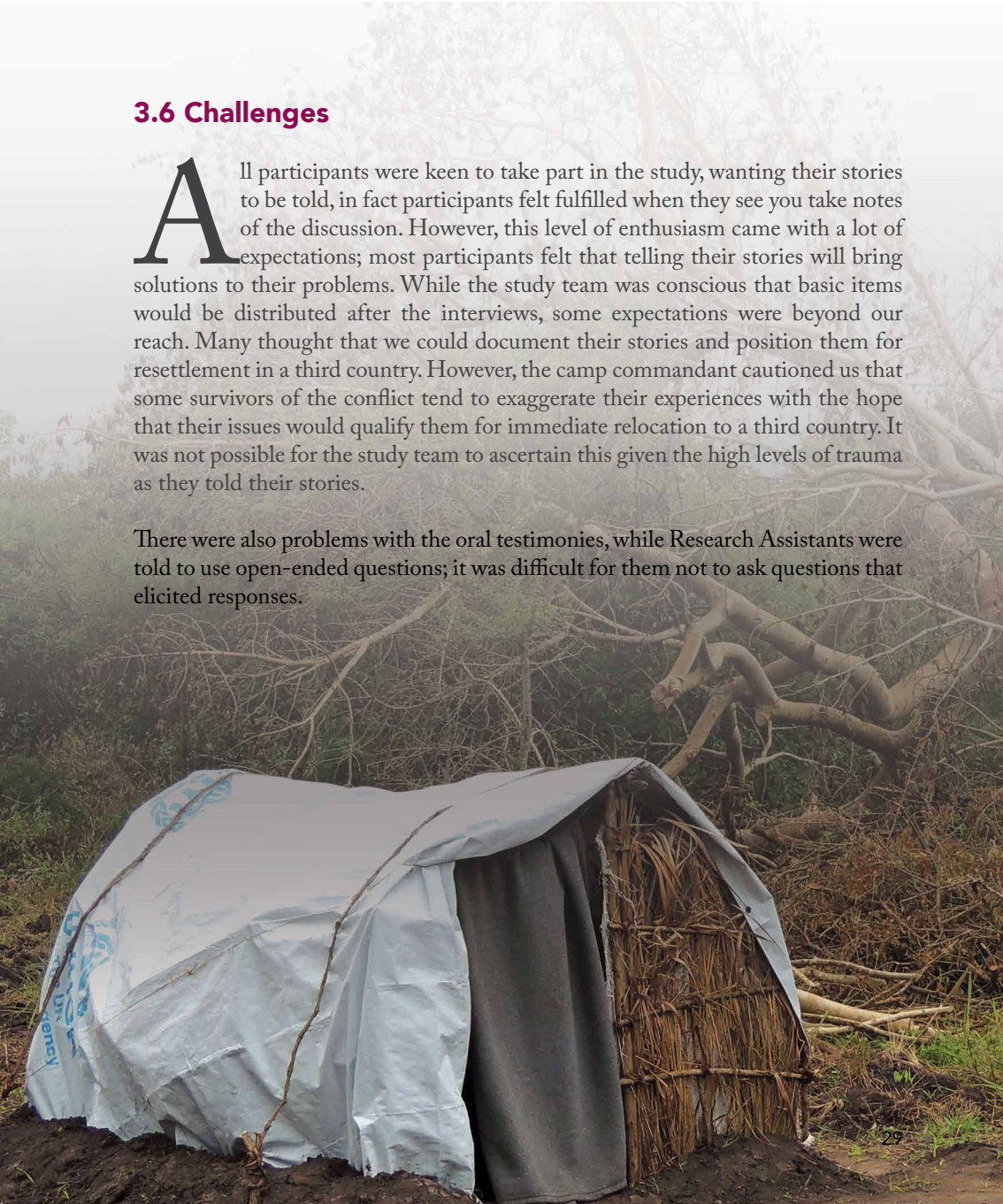
Table 1: Description of participants

	PARTICIPANTS	RECEIVING CENTRE	KYANGWALI REFUGEE CAMP				
		Bubukwanga	Administration	Kentomi	Marembo 1	Marembo 2	
1	Key informants						
	Camp commandant	1	1				2
	Women Leaders		1				1
	Camp LC Chairman		1				1
	Village Chairpersons			1	1	1	3
	NGOs	5	1				6
	Police		1				1
2	Focus Group Discussions (number of participants)						
	Young women			12	10	11	33
	Older Women			11	12	12	35
	Mixed group of women	9		12		10+9	40
	Men only group			12 x2		10x2	44
	Community meeting				61		61
3	Oral testimonies	5		7	13	12	37
	Total	15	5	69	80	58	227

3.6 Challenges

All participants were keen to take part in the study, wanting their stories to be told, in fact participants felt fulfilled when they see you take notes of the discussion. However, this level of enthusiasm came with a lot of expectations; most participants felt that telling their stories will bring solutions to their problems. While the study team was conscious that basic items would be distributed after the interviews, some expectations were beyond our reach. Many thought that we could document their stories and position them for resettlement in a third country. However, the camp commandant cautioned us that some survivors of the conflict tend to exaggerate their experiences with the hope that their issues would qualify them for immediate relocation to a third country. It was not possible for the study team to ascertain this given the high levels of trauma as they told their stories.

There were also problems with the oral testimonies, while Research Assistants were told to use open-ended questions; it was difficult for them not to ask questions that elicited responses.



4

4.0 Refugee Situation

4.1 Management of Refugees in Uganda

Uganda is one of the leading refugee host countries in the world. As early as 1942, Uganda hosted 7,000 polish refugees mainly women and children at Nyabyeya (present day Masindi) and Kojja in Mukono district.⁶ Presently, Uganda host about 40,000 refugees, where the recent influx of refugees from the DRC must have changed this figure dramatically.

The Department of Refugee at the Office of the Prime Minister was established in line with Article 189 of the 1995 Constitution of Uganda, which reserved the refugee protection functions to the central government. The Commission's role is to manage the response to refugees by assuring their welfare and protection within the framework of the national policy, and international laws and standards that Uganda subscribes to⁷.

In Uganda, refugees co-exist with nationals in the host areas, where they share the infrastructure and services provided by the government. The current settlements include Kyaka2, Nakivale, Kiryandongo, Paralonya, Rhino Camp, Imvepi, Madi Okollo, the integrated camps in Adjumani and Kyangwali camp. In 2006, the government of Uganda revised its refugee law to allow freedom of movement for refugees, which has allowed many refugees to re-settle in urban areas.

6 GoU 2010, The Uganda Refugee Policy. The Directorate of Refugees, Office of the Prime Minister

7 The 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees; the Organization of Africa Union (OAU) Protocol for refugees and the UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on women, peace and security.

4.1.1 Bubukwanga Transit Centre

The Bubukwanga Transit Centre is located in Bundibugyo District, 25 Km from the Uganda DRC border. The Centre was established in July 2013 with support from the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), to respond to the massive influx of refugees from eastern Democratic Republic of Congo particularly people from the Kamango area. The refugees spend a maximum of two weeks in the Transit camp before they are moved to the various resettlement camps.

The facility provides tents for temporary shelters where as many as twenty families occupy each tent. During the time at the Transit Centre, the OPM with support from UNHCR collect data on each refugee and allocates numbers and cards that provides every refugee access to basic items distributed such as; food, buckets, Jeri cans, cooking utensils, blankets and washing soap.

On arrival, refugees undergo general health medical screening to ascertain their health status and receive immunization against communicable diseases, such as diarrhea and tuberculosis. The camp management noted that due to the weak state system in DRC and limited health care services, most refugees might not have received any form of immunization at their point of origin. The study team observed that no form of reproductive health screening was available, making it difficult to record any forms of sexual violence at the point of entry. This also means that if some women experienced sexual violence, they are unable to receive emergency treatment against HIV infection and pregnancy.

The Transit Centre has facilities that include an information collection center, pipe borne water, health center, a school and a kitchen that provides food to the refugees. The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and Save the Children provide early childhood education for children, as they would only be in camp for few weeks; however, the interaction helps to deal with children's war trauma. United Nations World Food Program provides water and sanitation; the International medical Corps supports health care delivery; and Lutheran World Federation and ACORD addresses issues of sexual gender based violence. It is significant to note that the protection of women from sexual violence is being addressed by NGOs.



This questions how United Nations entities have streamlined the provisions of UNSCR1325 into their refugee response mechanisms. Other organizations working at Bubukwanga Transit Center include the World Vision, the American Refugee Committee, GTZ, and Norwegian Refugee Council.

The demarcation of land and mounting of tents are done by OPM with the support of UNHCR. The International Committee of the Red Cross supports refugees to track lost family members, and in partnership with UNHCR supports unaccompanied minors to get surrogate families. The Transit camp is close to a health center, which provides services to both refugees and locals. It is important to note that the influx of refugees puts pressure on the local health systems. We observed that the health center receives about 300 patients on a daily basis with two doctors. This means that most people often have to return the next day. As a result of the high doctor/patient ratio, patients spend a long time waiting to be treated.

The Transit Camp is managed by a refugee welfare council, responsible for receiving complaints from members living within their constituency. The Refugee Welfare Council reports directly to the Settlement Commandant, who in turn reports to the Refugee Desk Officer in the Office of the Prime Minister (OPM).

According to official figures, by October 6th 2013, over 60,000 refugees had transited through the Bubukwanga Transit Centre. Unfortunately, this data is not disaggregated by gender, making it is difficult to estimate the number of women compared to men. According to the Assistant Camp Commandant at Bubukwanga Basikanya Armitage, this influx has put pressure on the government of Uganda to meet the numerous needs of refugees.

Most of the refugees have since been settled at Kyangwali Resettlement Center about 200 kilometers away. Once registered, a refugee cannot decide to return to her/his country of origin, until a tripartite meeting is held between the Government of Uganda through the OPM, the Government of DRC and UNHCR to determine if the conditions in the country of origin are conducive for return.

In Bubukwanga Transit Centre we interviewed the camp commandant, 5 women refugees, 5 NGO staff and held one Focus Group Discussion (with 9 women).

The focus group discussion with women sought to understand their current situation at the Transit Centre. The discussions brought out a number of issues that affect the refugee population; including food shortages, poor sanitation, lack of access to means of livelihood and lack of education, which contributes to domestic violence.

The Department of Refugees must be appreciated for the role they have played in receiving the refugees in getting them settled within the shortest time possible. However, the Transit Centre does not meet the basic standards of living. With most Refugees sleeping on floors, many participants reported leaking roofs, according to one of the participants:

‘.....we are packed together in a large tent. A tent contains about 20 families with children. Most times we sleep on the floor, with leaking roofs. On the days it rains we have to sit up all night as mosquitoes will not let us sleep. Life is really difficult here. We don’t have privacy in the tents. As families we cannot discuss without our neighbours hearing us. In the place where we come from, families live alone in their own houses. We have lost all these because of the war. The most painful part is that in the midst of all these men also want to have private moments with their wives in such a public space’.

The Transit Centre has poor sanitary conditions that expose refugees to malaria infections. In the same vain, the over-crowded nature of the tents would facilitate the spread of disease, particularly for younger children. 80% of those interviewed reported food shortages as one of the major challenges. Many complained about being given one kind of food. The situation in the Transit Centre does not allow refugees to cook for themselves but they can freely go into the main town to buy cooked food.

“We arrived at the Transit Centre on July 14th 2013. When we arrived, we went through medical screening and thereafter we were registered and given ration cards. We use the card to eat. The problem we are having is that most of us, especially the children are used to eating rice but now we don’t get rice to

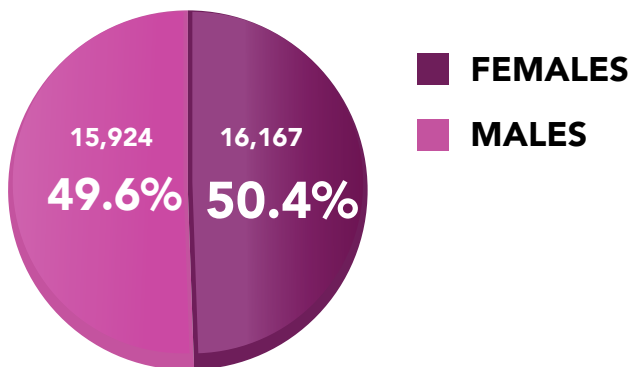
eat; it is only posho⁸ and beans.

We need a better life, eat better food and also be able to do some work and earn money. We wish we can be resettled. This will provide us chance for a better life.”

4.1.2 Kyangwali Refugee Settlement Camp

Kyangwali Refugee Settlement Camp is located in Hoima District in Western Uganda on the shores of Lake Albert. The Settlement occupies 91 square kilometers of land, approximately 80 kilometers from Hoima town⁹. About 32, 091 refugees are currently living in Kyangwali compared to 10 years ago when there were only 6,852¹⁰, indicating a 78% increase.

Of the 32,091 refugees, 15,924 are males and 16,167 are females as indicated in the chart below. However, the figures obtained did not indicate the number of children, this made it difficult to ascertain their numbers.



⁸ Mingled Maize flour

⁹ Refugee Law Project; 2002. Refugees in Kyangwali Settlement: Constraints on Economic Freedom. Refugee Law Project Working Paper No. 7

¹⁰ Ibid

The table below indicates the origin and population of refugees in Kyangwali Settlement Camp:

COUNTRY OF ORIGIN	REFUGEE POPULATION
Democratic Republic of Congo	29,004
South Sudan	2,769
Rwanda	256
Sudan	24
Burundi	18
Somalia	7

On arrival at the Kyangwali Settlement Centre, refugees undergo another quick medical check-up and registration by the OPM and UNHCR, despite the fact that they had already been checked at the Bubugwanga Transit Centre. Each family is given a ration card that contains a tracking number. They also receive a family attestation card that has pictures of family members, which is used for collection of food and non food items. Families then receive cooking sets, farming tools, a tarpaulin and blankets. Each family is allocated a plot of land and building materials¹¹.

The method of allocating land to families has been found to be problematic for women who are single parents or widowed by the war, and child headed households. Some of them have to obtain their individual family status to qualify for land and building materials. For most of the single mothers and widows, they are unable to construct their tents or houses. However, the Local Council Chairperson John Bosco Kabera, explained that such families are supported by relatives or Action Africa Help (AAH), a humanitarian organization that support people to erect houses particularly the most vulnerable¹².

The land allocated to refugees range from 100 x 50 square meters to 50 x 50 square meters. However, the allocation of 50 x 50 meters land size to new arrivals was

11 Interview with Local Council Chairman, October 12, 2013

12 Interview with Local Council Chairman, October 12, 2013

found to be small, considering that they had to erect their houses and use the rest for cultivation. This has since been revised to at least 100 x 50 square meter plots for each family.

Refugees receive food items on a monthly basis, which include 11.7 kgs of maize flour; 1.8 kgs of beans; 0.9 kg of cooking oil; 1.5 kgs of soya porridge; salt and soap, which are received only on arrival¹³.

At Kyangwali Settlement Camp, refugees face numerous challenges. The most obvious are: having a sense of dependency, cultural adaptation and access to land. The physical conditions in the Settlement Camps as in the Transit Centers are deplorable due to poor sanitation and lack of access to clean water. Most refugees suffer from segregation from the host population. The fact that they have to live within an enclosed area makes life difficult, and this constantly reminds them of their refugee status. This gives the refugees a sense of dependency, and a clear sign that they have limited status, and are being controlled.

The lack of access to land is also prominent in the Kyangwali Settlement Camp;

“The problem started when most of the new arrivals harvested crops from the farms of members of the host community. This caused a lot of problems, since many thought they were entitled to the crops in their land. However, when the people who planted the crops came for collection, they found the refugees had taken them. This angered the host community. However, the camp management have moved refugees to new locations and allocated them land. At the time of the study; allocated plots were being opened in anticipation of the new arrivals” (LC Chairman, Kyangwali Settlement Camp, October 12,, 2013).

13 Interview with Local Council Chairman, October 12, 2013

4.2 Camp governance

The Settlement has 14 villages with each village composed of 14 blocks; where a Block consists of 25 families. Each of the 14 villages has representatives at the Settlement Council. The Settlement operates a bottom up approach to leadership with a democratically elected Refugee Welfare Council.

Each block has a Chairperson and an eight-member committee including a Vice Chairperson, secretary for women affairs, health, water, defense, youths and 2 local councilors. This structure is replicated at all levels of leadership in the Settlement. At the Refugee welfare levels, additional posts like production and environment, finance, people with disabilities and 2 advisors are included¹⁴.

The Settlement leadership is responsible for orientation of new refugees; sensitization about available services, responding to security needs, and support Settlement service providers. All leadership positions have a time frame of two years, with a provision for 40% representation of women¹⁵.

14 Interview with Camp Commandant, October 17th, 2013

15 Interview with Local Council Chairman, October 13, 2013

5

5.0 Refugee Women's Experiences

This chapter analyses data collected from Bubukwange Transit Camp and Kyangwali Settlement Center.

5.1 The Attack on Kamango, Eastern Congo

On July 11th 2013, an unknown rebel group attacked Kamango town at dawn. The Chief of Kamango was one of the first targets. He and his family were executed publicly. This form of targeted killing is a war tactic employed to instill fear and forcefully displace the population. The rebels gave the population a three-hour ultimatum to the community to vacate the area. The situation created panic and the population left without any belongings.

Most participants claim that the rebels who attacked and displaced them belong to the Allied Democratic Front in conjunction with the National Army for the Liberation of Uganda (commonly called ADF-NALU), a Congolese based Ugandan rebel group. Some participants reported that the rebels spoke in Luganda and Arabic; pointing to recent security briefs about the ADF-NALU's affiliation to Al-Qaida.



I live near the mosque where I saw the rebels enter the mosque. Then they headed to the Chiefs home, brought him outside his home, stripped him of his clothing's, and killed him, along with his wife and two children.

When this happened, I decide to move to Uganda with my family. After all, all the people were being forced to move out of the area. I travelled with my husband and three children to Uganda. For my family, we were lucky to come up to the Settlement Camp because those who remained behind are being forced by rebels to go to the bush with them and be part of their group. At that time, there was indiscriminate killing and abduction of men.

Even before we started to run, we as a whole village knew that the government soldiers were also running with us. They could not stand up and fight as they were outnumbered and poorly armed.

From Kamango, we moved for about one day until the vehicle for Red Cross and UNHCR took us to Bubukwanga where we stayed for one month and a half. Then we were brought to Kyangwali where I now have spent two months. (Kayendo Martha, Kyangwali Settlement Camp)

There are no available estimates of the number of people killed during the attack. However, refugees continue to flow into Uganda at the rate of 250 people per week. Evidently, the conflict continued with little or no security, many refugees indicated the lack of government forces to provide protection for the civilian population. By the time of the attack, Kamango had seven poorly skilled and ill-equipped government soldiers. The lack of provision of security for the community contravenes the basic human rights principle of the right to life contained in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1947 and Articles 8(c) and 9 of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 that calls on all actors to ensure the protection of and respect for human rights of women and girls, and respect fully international law applicable to the rights and protection of women and girls. It also contravenes the International Conference of the Great Lakes region Peace Pact, which calls for territorial security and the protection of civilians.

At the time of the attack, Kamango town had only seven soldiers, who fled with the population during the attack. The manner in which the Chief was humiliated

and killed forced many villagers to vacate the area. The attack on the Chief was strategic as it was an attack on the culture of the people. In the absence of an effective governance system like it is in most parts of eastern DRC, the Chief is a key uniting and governing figure in the area. The nature of attack seems to suggest that the rebels were expanding their operations in the region.

Since Kamango is about 10Kms from the Uganda border, most refugees were able to reach Uganda within 12 hours. Refugees who had resources specifically money, or those who have relatives in neighbouring Ugandan villages resettled independently in communities in Budinbugyo district, while others preferred to live near the border to continue monitoring their gardens with the hope to return back home only those who had no option were transferred to Bubukwanga Transit Centre by the Government of Uganda with support from UNHCR.

5.2 Flight Experience

The July 11th attack on Kamango town led to massive displacement of people. Many participants reported loss of loved ones. For more than seven years, Kamango had been peaceful; until few months preceding the attack when the security situation deteriorated leading to loss of lives and property.

Loss of a child to a meaningless war

My name is Evadesi Nkawukimba I am around 35 years and my name Nkawukimba means perseverance. I was born in Buusegia village, just outside Kamango, North Kivu Province, Eastern Democratic Republic of Congo. I never had the opportunity to go to school.

Even if I didn't go to school, when I was young, life was good but now it is tough. It was when I had two kids that trouble began. The most recent trouble was in July when rebels came and attacked Kamango, my hometown. Before the attack, we would hear stories that rebels were hiding in a forest nearby and once in a while we would hear of abductions.

They would kidnap people, they would take away vehicles from them but we didn't expect they would take over Kamango. Although the rebels started the assault at around 5 am, we didn't leave until 9:00 am.

We didn't take anything; we ran and carried our children until Bisunga. Most people fled, while those who remained were slaughtered like goats! We reached Bisunga at 1:00 pm and after one night we were taken to Bubande.

We spent three nights at Bubande before we were transferred to Bubukwanga Transit Camp. While at Bubande I suffered the greatest loss. I had managed to bring my children to safety and left behind all our belonging. But on the second day, my first-born son decided to go back home. I thought he was out playing with other children. Since he was 12 years old, I wasn't bothered when he didn't come back to the place where we were sleeping.

I later learnt that he had tried to go back home to look for food. Together with his friends- five of them; they had tried to go back to our home but they

didn't make it.

In the evening, I was told by relatives that my son had been killed. You know they didn't even use bullets! They killed my son like a goat. They beheaded him. Why would you kill such a young boy like that? Life has not been the same.

Since we arrived the authorities have treated us well. They gave us soap, some wrapper, and at the settlement; women were given underwears' too, but very few of them.

When the bus came to move refugees from Bubukwanga transit camp to Kyangwali refugee settlement, I was one of the first to board. I have two children left, two daughters. I am not going to give a chance to rebels or anyone to take away these children I am left with!

My husband is sickly so I do most of the gardening for the family. We have access to some healthcare facility. My husband who is asthmatic had chest pains before the attack and he was given medicine; but he can't do much work. It is tough to be in a new environment and be the only one to provide for the family.

We refugees have problems with the locals. The authorities gave us gardens when we reached here but some locals were evicted. Once in a while they return and if you are in the garden they threaten you when you are digging. If you don't run, they can harm you.

Tell my government that we don't want rebels in our home. We have lost livelihoods. I don't have beddings here and my children don't eat well.

As ordinary people, such rebel issues are beyond our control. We don't know if our area will ever be peaceful but it must be our leaders to ensure that. It had been 15 years since I last saw any war in my home and we all thought we had got lasting peace but here we are! We didn't know that the rebels would come back and force us to be refugees for the second time.

Evadise's story is representative of the majority of the women refugees interviewed. All the 37 women interviewed that they witnessed various violations including abductions and killings. The attacks by the rebels were uncoordinated and were not reported to the authorities.

The resurgence of ADF-NALU in Kamango area after almost a decade of relative peace is a manifestation of the weak governance system of the Congolese State, and also the limitation of international efforts to end the conflict in eastern DRC.

The testimonies from refugees show the lack of protection by the Government of DRC, despite signing UNSCR1325 and developing a national action plan for its implementation.



5.3 Impact of the attack

The attack on Kamango like many other attacks had a huge impact on the entire population, ranging from death and separation of family members to lack of leadership, forced displacement, trauma, loss of livelihood and increased gender based violence.

Death and Disappearance of family members

Many people were killed in the attack although no agency or authorities have reported even the estimated numbers. Many families lost the head of household through forced abduction and killings; while other family members were lost during flight, particularly those who returned to pick a few items from their homes. Young girls and boys died during the trek from Congo to the Ugandan border before they could get help from the government, Red Cross and UNHCR.

Horrific killing of a man in the presence of his wife

My name is Tonina Antoinette. I am about 30 years old (not very sure) with eight children. I come from Kamango town; where my husband and I were peasant farmers. Here in Kyangwali, I have 5 of my children with me, two are still in Bubukwanga and one child, who is 12 years old is studying in Beni.

The day everything started, the rebels came to our home at about 9.30pm in the evening and forced the door open. We had already slept and my husband woke up and asked who it was that was coming into our house by force. They were several men armed with guns. They then held my husband and asked him where his wife is. Then he called me. As soon as they saw me, they started beating him with gun butts. He asked them why they were beating him when he had done nothing wrong to them.

Then one of the rebels brought out a panga and cut off his neck. They asked me to bring the children to see the body of their father so that they can inform others. After I had brought the children; who were actually awake and terrified, they told me to move out of the house with the children without touching anything and to go away lest they also kill me like my husband.

Then I walked until I reached the home of our area chairman whom I told that people I do not know have killed my husband and ordered me to move out of

the area. The chairman immediately realised the danger, and he put us in the car and took us to Bundingoma – near Nyahuka border area.

At Bundingoma, I decided to join the rest who were going to Bubukwanga. At Bubukwanga, the other two children who had stayed behind joined me and we started this life. Life was good at Bubukwanga and we were getting enough food until we were shifted to Kyangwali. Although we are suffering here, I do not want to go back because there is still war. The torture I was subjected to is enough and I do not want to face it again. I will only go back if I am told that there is peace in the area and everyone is going back home. Then I will join the rest and go back.

I have no beddings; no clothes to put on, even my children are naked although we get food. I hope there will be a way that the leadership here will solve most of our problems and needs.

We need to have peace. I want our leaders to ensure that there is peace in our area and we can go back to our homes. Sadly, we even hear that those who went back are suffering especially women who are being raped and those who can contact us by phone say that we remain here because it is unsafe to go back.

You know some people decided to go back home from Bubukwanga and what they are experiencing shows that we should remain here.

Harrowing waiting for a disappeared husband

My name is Janet Butibwa, I am 30 years old and a farmer. My husband and I have always worked together to raise our five children. We grow cassava, rice, bananas (matooke) and beans that we sell at the border markets to earn a living.

We had peace. My husband and I were living happily. We didn't have any conflict in the home. I even delivered all my children at home with the help of a traditional birth attendant.

Two months ago, we were forcefully displaced when rebels attacked Kamango. With our five children, the eldest 13 years and the youngest barely two years, we rushed in the wee hours of dawn to leave Kamango after hearing persistent

gunshots.

My husband was in another room picking whatever property he could. A few minutes later, the rebels were at our doorstep.

They spoke to us in Kiswahili, ordering us to pack and go to Kyangwali as they began to shoot. They then forced my husband into a car boot and drove off. That was the last time I saw him.

I had no idea where Kyangwali was but I didn't have time to think so I ran with my children. They didn't do anything to the children and I. They only took my husband and shot in the air.

The next day, we managed to make it to the Ugandan border after hours of walking. At the border, we found several other hundreds of people who had also fled but not my husband.

Since July 14, I haven't seen him and no one has told us they saw him. I asked all the neighbours and people from Kamango and they have no answers. I think he is dead. I talk about him that he is dead because it is useless to hope. It is impossible they could have released him.

All am waiting for now is the bus to the settlement as it seems it will take a long time before our home becomes safe again. I have to concentrate on raising my children because their father must have been killed the very day we left.

The pain embedded in these stories is evident and some how, the women resolved on their own to move on. This type of agency does not take away the pain completely, but it provides a starting point for healing to take place.

Due to the spontaneous nature of the flight, some families fled together, while others were separated leading to family disintegration. Some of the refugees like Janet by the time of the research were yet to hear from the disappeared family members.



Lack of leadership

The attack on Kamango devastated the community at personal, family and community levels. It also led to loss of leadership and fear, which made people worry about their welfare and governance of the community. Once the Chief was killed, it meant that the rebels had taken over governance of their community, and since the essence of the killing was unclear, people ran for their safety. This killing of the area leader has long-lasting effects on organized leadership since the leader was a hereditary one.

Forced displacement

As Kamango fell, people in the town and surrounding areas were forced into displacement. They had limited time to carry along basic items, which added to the hardship they experienced away from their homes. Before the attack the majority of the population were peasant farmers or had small businesses they managed. Most did not have time to plan their escape and were not prepared for the journey. They never anticipated their future in a camp; they simply wanted to get out of harm, and little thought was given to the consequences of the flight. The lack of basic items worsened their experience as many lived in very harsh conditions in the refugee camps, increasing their poverty levels. For many adults, this was not the first time they have been forced to flee their homes into Uganda. For some elderly refugees, it was their third time to flee.

Refugee widow struggles with life at camp

My name is Peninah Masika, 33 years old. I have been married for 15 years, and have three children who were all going to school before war came knocking on my door.

I lived in Kamango town about 10km from the Uganda border. I was a farmer and used to sell my farm produce and use the money to send my children to school. The economy of Kamango is not too different from that of neighbouring Ugandan districts. Most people took part in production of plantain (commonly known as gonja), potatoes, rice and bananas.

Before the war, we lived peacefully in Kamango trading centre until one morning at 5am, my children and I were woken up by gunfire at a near by barracks. I didn't wait to be told what was going on. Kamango had been peaceful for the last 10 years and this had to be something more than a fight

between the seven soldiers that lived with us.

My husband had been killed about a month before as he returned from Wicha hospital and there were rumours that the assailants were rebels. So I didn't want to wait any minute longer. I knew we had to flee.

Luckily for me, my children are between 12 and 16 years of age and I did not have to carry any of them. We fled with many other residents towards the Ugandan border, and arrived by midday. At the Ugandan border we were taken to Bubukwanga refugee camp by agencies supporting refugees.

I have been living at the refugee camp for close to two months. In the Camp, there is really not much as many of us live in one tent that houses about five families. I am not sure I want to move to Kyangwali Settlement Camp, because things will be tough for me. I can't do much work as I had complications while delivering two of my children and I have been advised not to do hard labored work like digging. Without my husband, I find life in the camp quite tough. We don't get any special help if you are a widow. In the settlement I am not sure I can dig for a living.

My biggest problem is how to start life here. I am also worried about how I can educate my children. I wish to stay here in the Transit Camp with the hope that the situation at home will stabilize for us to go back.

This is not the first time I have been displaced and living as a refugee. In the 1990s, I was internally displaced when the ADF rebellion was at its height. At that time I lived with my parents in Beni where we lived for six years.

I was 10 years when that war came. Most people crossed the border to Kyaka refugee settlement but my family managed to flee to Beni. When we came back, all our houses had no roofs, and everything had been looted. We had to start afresh.

Apart from occasional rebel abductions, Kamango has been in peace and even the government soldiers at Kamango were okay.

Masika was still at Bubukwanga transit camp at the time of the interview but she was close to accepting it might be more years before she goes back to her home in eastern Congo.



Trauma from war experience

There was a huge sense of loss amongst the refugees. Many had a sense of guilt over family members who died, particularly those who had returned to pick items from their homes. In these cases, many felt they should have stopped their family members from trying to return home. For children who had tried to sneak back home, their parents particularly felt they could have protected them better.

This sense of guilt has the tendency to cause trauma and could affect the lives of such individuals and families, particularly their behaviors towards others. The loss also created a sense of emptiness especially for mothers who lost their children and for families who lost heads of households. Shimene recounted her experience:

My name is Shimene, 22 years old and married. I stopped my education in Senior two.

I was running a small restaurant in my village Kamango. On Thursday 11th July 2013, I heard gun shots and my husband went out to find out what was going on. Upon his return, he told me that they were rebels who have come out of the forest and were speaking a Kiswahili which was different from that spoken in Congo. He forced me to take our two children and flee.

Along the way, I spent two days in the bush with my family, without food, without anything to cover myself. This situation was unbearable for my children.

I remember one of my children fainted because of hunger when we were in the forest.

When I came out of the forest, people told me that the rebels had murdered my aunt. I was unable to walk because I was badly hurt by this information. I spent more than a week on the way from Kamango to Butongo. We spent a week in Butongo before we were taken to Bubukwanga.

At Bubukwanga, we were given some basic things we needed. I spent one month in the transit centre before being transferred to Kyangwali.

In Kyangwali settlement, life is very hard. Firstly, I am not used to staying idle without working. I wish I had some money to start some work. For my

immediate needs, I want my children to go to school, and I also would like them to give us clothes and soap.

Besides, various NGOs should assist us more in providing us with living and non- living items. I've heard of MONUSCO but they did not support me when I was leaving my country

Along the way, my child was injured and my daughter got sick while I had no medication. The experience was so traumatic. I don't wish to have such experience in my life again. We want peace; we are tired of war.

Loss of livelihoods

The forced displacement led to many losing their means of livelihood. Prior to the attack, people earned income from various activities. Once the population left, the source of income ceased to exist. Many also recounted how their Ugandan neighbours prevent them from crossing over to check on their farms. This has been interpreted to mean that such neighbours would rather have them move further into Uganda so they could harvest some of our farm produce across the border.

Some refugees who managed to pack some properties as they fled, lost them on the way, either because they could not continue carrying them or they were lost in transit. Kavira's story brings out clearly the issue of livelihood:

My name is Kavira Mulekya, 28 years old, and a mother of three children, one boy and two girls. We are from Kitimba Wicha, but my husband is from Kamango, he is dumb. I did not get a chance to go to school.

Three months ago, we ran away from our country, precisely from Kamango located in North Kivu Province. It was around 6:00 in the morning when armed men in military uniforms killed our grandparents and then we decided to leave.

Before that, we were living in peace and safety before these same killers "killed" Mr. Bulya, our traditional village Chief and then fired a lot of bullets. That created a great panic in the area.

Here in the Settlement, life is hard. We live with some Banyoro who disturb

us, because we are occupying some land which they can use themselves for cultivation. We do not have means of livelihood because we do not have enough land to dig. We even have difficulty accessing health care because there is a big host community around us and we do not communicate well with the nurses because of language barrier.

I fled with my mother-in-law who helped me along the way. There is security here and we are trying to get on well with the Banyoro people. However, we are going through hard time with food, especially the maize flour. We used to earn income from our farm and small businesses, but here it is very difficult to get money to take care of our family needs and ourselves.

MONUSCO has not helped us; on the contrary the peacekeepers disturbed us as they were helping the rebels.

I wish security would be enhanced in our area because my primary need is to go back home to cultivate and carry on our small businesses. Meanwhile, we would like to be transferred to the Nobili settlement.

Increased care burden for women

In situations of conflict and forced migration, women have to care for sick family members and sometimes take over guardianship of children whose parents died during the escape to a more secure place. In cases of widowed women, life is extremely tough as they have to assume roles of father and mother.

In many cases, women from Kamango area had to take up guardianship of children they found alone during the escape. Such children remained the responsibility of the women who arrived in Uganda with them.

My name is Haisa Mukabukwely, 25 years old and a widow with three children.

On the morning of Thursday July 11th, 2013, we heard the gun shots throughout the village.

Although we were grieving for my husband who had died of sickness; we were compelled to interrupt the funeral ceremonies and run away because we felt in danger from the shootings.

At that time, there was no way to pick any items. I only took my children and we fled to Kalera, which at the time was a safe zone for us.

We spent 2 days in the forest and then 4 days in Kalera from where vehicles brought us to Bubukwanga.

We spent one month in Bubukwanga before we were taken to Kyangwali where I live with my three children, one boy and two girls. We are well settled here.

When we arrived, the UNHCR gave us: 2 saucepans, 1 basin, 1 hoe, 1 machete and food. ADRA, a humanitarian NGO, also helped us to build and gave us poles for building our shelters. But for us widows whose children are still small and with health problems, we really experience too many difficulties, despite the aid provided by NGOs.

Although our security is guaranteed here, but we want the leaders to ensure there is peace in our country. I feel very far from home yet I wish I could dig, work in my farm and grow food for my children, especially now that my health has become fragile. Sometimes, we are given drugs that are not relevant to our sufferings because of the language barrier.

My husband died of AIDS and I am also infected. But I thank God because my children are not sick. The challenge for me however is caring for them. Back home, you can get help from relatives, which is not possible in the refugee camp where everyone is surviving on their own.

In the new environment, women have taken up responsibility to provide food and care for their families. This includes walking long distances to fetch water and firewood, which increases their workload. On the other hand men's work at the Kyangwali Resettlement center was mostly in gardens, which everyone in the family participates in including the women.



Lack of education

The displacement and refugee status created by the war makes it impossible for children to access education. Although Save the Children, UNICEF and UNHCR provide education services, accessing school is difficult because of the distance particularly for child headed households. Tumusiime's story below shows experience of child headed households:

Tumusiime's story

I am 17 years old and I come from Gawa. When the war started, we all as a family ran to Bundingoma. Due to the hardship we experienced, after five days in Bundingoma my parents decided to go back to Gawa to collect some of our items. Unfortunately, when they reached Gawa, the rebels arrested them and killed them on 4th August 2013.

I have now remained with my two brothers who are younger than me. In Gawa, we were all going to school and I was in senior 5 but now I cannot go to school here. As a result, I am going to miss a crucial stage in my education, now that I am in a refugee camp and my parents are dead. Worse still, I am now heading a family of my siblings.

When we reached Bubukwanga, we settled in a bit till they brought us to Kyangwali. Just as children, we do not know what to do because we did not carry anything with us. We do not know where we can go to get assistance. We need a school where we could study so that we do not lose the opportunity to study.

I want peace in our country and for us who have lost our property to be compensated. I also want government to ensure that schools are near enough for us to attend.

Increased Domestic Violence

The attack, escape into Uganda and finally resettling in Kyangwali increased the likelihood of domestic violence. The forms of domestic violence reported during the research included rape, incest, wife battering, economic violence and psychological abuse, among others. The next chapter deals with this in more details.

6

6.0 Sexual and Gender Based Violence

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR, 2003), estimate that 80% of all refugee women experience rape and sexual abuse. The issues of sexual violence against women came into the limelight as a result of the documentation carried out by the women's movement particularly organizations working in the area of women, peace and security such as Isis-WICCE. In the last 16 years, Isis-WICCE has documented the war experience of women in Uganda, South Sudan, Liberia, Nepal and Kashmir. The findings of these various studies indicate high levels of sexual violence against women with devastating impact on the mental, physical, social and reproductive well-being of women war survivors. Rape is the most common form of systematic torture used against women in the conflict in DRC.

The interviews revealed that the rebels who attacked and took over Kamango, carried out no acts of sexual violence as has been the case with other attacks in eastern Congo. This though strange within the context could be attributed to the fact that the two weeks of the research did not enable time the study team to build rapport and trust with the refugee women that would allow them open up and share their experiences of sexual violations. In most cases, survivors of sexual violence conceal such information due to the shame and stigma they may suffer from sharing their experience. This finding further questions the reasons rebels rape women. It could also mean that the particular group was more

concerned with taking over the village and ensuring that the population moves out and less interested in raping women. The fact that rape was not used to threaten the community brings a new debate and perspective to the conflict in DRC. The lack of occurrence of sexual violence could also be attributed to the short distance travelled from Kamango to the Uganda border. As indicated in an interview with service providers:

“This particular rebel group was not involved in rape unlike the case of refugees from Goma where rape cases were rampant. The short distance between the part of Congo they come from and Uganda probably did not allow time for sexual violence, although other forms of violence were widespread”

However, women indicated that they experienced domestic violence back home in DRC. The account below shows a refugee woman's experience of domestic violence:

I am Kahindo Valeria. I am 22 years old, married with one child who is 6 years old. Before we came to Uganda, I experienced domestic violence and when we arrive here in the camp, the situation became worse.

One day, my husband who was from the market met me coming from fetching water and he started beating me. It seems he was drunk. He had removed and sold the roof sheeting we were given and used some of the money to buy beer; yet he had told me that he had stopped drinking.

When I reached home, my child told me that his father has taken the roof sheeting and sold it in the market. When I asked him about the roof sheeting, he told me that he got into problems after fighting with some people and had sold the sheeting to pay for those problems.

He beat my child and chased us away, and we now live with my sister and her husband. Before we started living together, I had a son for another man, although I was not officially married to him. My current husband hates the child, yet he knew I had this child before he married me.

Although he came to my sister's home to ask me to go back home; I will not go back to him, as he has always promised to stop beating me, only to continue. I have reported the case to the camp leaders, who have tried to counsel him, but

he has continued beating me.

I used to be a big person but you can see I have become so slim and small because of the beating and suffering. In addition to suffering as a refugee, the beating from my husband has made me suffer double. He does not want me to talk to neighbours or any man. If he sees me talk to a man, he will accuse me of dating the man. His attitude is making life unbearable.

Because of that I have decided to be on my own. I have request the camp management to provide me with my own card (for me and my son), and other basic items so that I can construct my own home and have my own land to farm.

The study team followed up this case with the police, camp management and the American Refugee Committee, who promised to ensure that the woman is resettled.

Prior to the attack, the women of Kamango experience various forms of gender-based violence, due to the social formations within the clans and the unequal gender power relations¹⁶. Earlier researches indicate that the prevalence of domestic violence is a problem in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) (Peterman et al, 2011). Domestic violence is so prevalent that it is considered normal and includes physical and verbal abuse, abuse of young girls by their male relatives and guardians, as well as sexual violence. An analysis of the DRC's 2007 Demographic and Health Survey (DHS) indicate that intimate-partner sexual violence is the most pervasive form of violence against women and it occurs with "extraordinarily high" frequency, making it a "particularly large problem in the country." Women refugees who participated in the study blame the increased domestic violence on the weak governance structure in DRC. According to the staff of one of the NGOs providing services in the camp:

"There is no rule of law in DRC, sexual gender based violence (SGBV) is normalized and this has been transferred to Uganda. More so women are viewed as property and treated with disrespect."

16 Interview with Service Providers, October 6, 2013

The 2006 Constitution of the Democratic Republic of Congo indicates government's commitment to eliminating all forms of discrimination against women and to combating all forms of violence against women in the public and private spheres (DRC 2006b, Art. 14). However, there is no mention of domestic violence in the DRC's Penal Code (ibid. 1940), amended in 2006 (ibid. 2006a), or its Family Code, amended in 2003 (ibid. 1987). In its combined sixth and seventh periodic report to the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women in 2011, the DRC recognized the existence of physical and emotional domestic abuse, but does not mention any legislation against such violence (DRC 20 Dec. 2011). This shows that more attention is paid to sexual violence; and further normalizes the occurrence of other forms of violence. Such practices have been transferred to refugee camps in Uganda¹⁷.

As argued by feminists, wars do not change gender power relations. It only puts it on hold for some time and it manifest itself once conditions are improved and people begin to adjust to situations they find themselves either as refugees or as people formally settled.

A number of organizations established their presence in the Bubukwanga Transit Center specifically to address sexual and gender based violence. They include ACORD and the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) working specifically at the Bubukwanga Transit Center; International Medical Corps (IMC) and the American Refugee Committee (ARC) working at the Kyangwali Settlement Camp.

17 Interview with staff of Lutheran World Federation, October 6, 2013

6.1 The nature of violence

The nature of violence is determined by the culturally accepted norms and values of communities where refugees come from, most refugees reported high incidences of domestic violence in their communities. Although most people interviewed denied any incidences of rape; most staff of NGOs at the Transit Centre were of the view that even when women are raped it is difficult for them to report, due to shame and stigma attached to rape. Medical records at the health center showed that only one patient had reported rape since the Refugees from Kamango arrived at the Transit Center.

The study team observed that the way the camp registration was structured makes it very difficult for a woman who was raped to talk to health personnel about it. The spaces are often too open and the manner of registration is more or less mechanical and does not allow for intimate conversation such as discussing sexual violations, as many people waiting to be registered will hear such conversations. From Isis-WICCE's experience of working with sexual violence survivors, most women who experience sexual abuse require counseling to heal the mind and spirit and get to the level of accepting what had happened before the medical treatment can take place.

Between July and September 2013, the Lutheran World Federation in Bubukwanga Transit Centre recorded 4 defilement cases, 1 rape case and 80 domestic violence cases. Domestic violence is the most rampant form of violence, although generally, there is silence around such violence.

According to staff at LWF:

'The silence over domestic violence has led to many deaths as most women do not report when they are beaten. They only access health care when the pain becomes unbearable, most times due to internal injuries'¹⁸.

Cultural practices allow anyone to marry at any age. There are no laws on early or child marriage; as most 14 year olds that we have seen have one or more children' (October 6, 2013).

¹⁸ Interview with staff of American Refugee Committee, October 12, 2013



Reaffirming the increased rate of domestic violence, one of the research participants recounted her experience:

‘Here in the camp there is domestic violence, although we don’t talk about it. For instance, last night, I heard a woman screaming for help. I don’t know what happened to her, maybe the village head will know as they monitor such cases. For us we hear the cries, but we cannot do much to help such women. We also have instances when men sell off the items the family has received from the authorities and use such money to buy alcohol, get drunk and beat their wives, when they ask any questions about the items. The violence we see is not only committed by men; women are also committing violence against men. Sometimes women go to host communities to sell sex for money. However, for women, they do not drink with money earned like the men, but use such money to supplement family income’ (FGD Participant, October 10, 2013).

Faisi shares her experience working as a volunteer:

My name is Faisi Asimwe. I left Timba on July 11th, 2013 with my husband and our 10 children (4 boys and 6 girls).

That same day, the FARDC soldiers fled because they were less numerous (they were just around 7 of them) and this added a bit of panic. I was so scared because my husband is a demobilized soldier and we had to leave at all costs.

Besides, Mr. Bulya, our village chief had just been killed. That also increased our fear. The same day, we reached the village of Lamera Butogo where we spent three days before being ferried to Bubukwanga Transit Center by UNHCR.

I spent one month with my family in Bubukwanga after which we were transferred to Marembo where we spent another month. Now we are in Kyangwali where we have been for the past three weeks.

In Bubukwanga, we were given some mats, blankets, 2 saucepans, salt, jerry cans and hoes. Due to the several stop overs, our tarpaulins are already worn out and torn and we have no more salt nor soap.

In Bubukwanga Transit Centre, I worked as a volunteer in the camp in the gender based violence (GBV) department. During the period, I helped two girls who were raped; one of them was 13 and the other one was 15 years old. Men from outside the Transit Centre, most likely from the host community raped them. Most times these are not discussed.

I wish our leaders could fight those rebels and allow us to go back to our country. We need to work on our farms and do our usual businesses. In our church, I was leading the women department, so I want to go and carry on my ministry again.

6.2 Response Mechanisms

Between August and September 2013, ACORD recorded 27 cases of domestic violence. However, at the time of the research, there had been significant reduction in number of cases reported. This could be attributed to the establishment of the SGBV Taskforce by ACORD. The taskforce carries out sensitization and awareness raising activities. Each zone at the Bubukwnaga Transit Centre has a taskforce that consist of 8 people, 4 women and 4 men, amongst whom are 2 youths (one female and one male). The taskforce are initially trained on understanding SGBV in order to identify the various types. This enables them to make required references and document the cases. The referral pathway includes the health centers, NGOs and the police. At the health facilities, evidence of violence is documented and treatment given, while the police arrest the perpetrators and take them to court. Such cases are treated using the Uganda legal system¹⁹.

All NGOs working on SGBV hold monthly review meetings with the SGBV Taskforce members; where new cases are reported and old ones reviewed.

At the Kyangwali Settlement Camp, the American Refugee Committee (ARC) is the lead organization responding to SGBV. ARC's main areas of focus are prevention and response. The prevention aspect of their work includes the use of SASA methodology to prevent the occurrence of violence. The main activities include monthly sensitization and awareness raising on SGBV. The strategy adopted includes male involvement and the use of sports events. ARC also provides counseling services to survivors of SGBV. Counseling helps survivors to make decisions on whether they want to pursue justice or not. In many cases women do not want to pursue justice due to fear of being called names. However, as an organization, ARC records the case in the Police as most times such violations re-occur²⁰.

19 Interviews with ACORD and LWF staff at Bubukwanga Receiving Center, October 6, 2013

20 Interview with ARC Staff, Kyankwali, October 12, 2013



7

7.0 Women's agency

Conflicts create changes in social relations that further marginalize women. During and after conflict, women take up new roles such as being household heads, providing food and security for the family while men are at war, or refuse to work in the displaced peoples' camps. Women hardly receive recognition for their contributions as providers and 'carers'; let alone their roles as social organizers (Goldblatt and Meintjes, 1998).

The study found that in the midst of fear and flight, women were able to take their families to safety. Despite the pains and the trauma women experience, they are able to flee with their children to refugee camps. In Bubukwanga Transit Centre some women have begun to sell small items in the local market to earn money to look after their families. However, they have faced challenges as local authorities expect them to pay tax.

Women refugees have had to take up roles and jobs usually performed by men:

I left Bundwasana with my children on July 11th 2013 when the rebels came and killed our village chief.

We arrived in Busunga where we spent 3 days. I was alone with the children. One is 4 years old and the other one is 4 months. This was hard as I was still recovering from sickness; after an operation during delivery.

After 3 days in Busunga, we were transferred to Kyangwali where we live now. Life here is not so easy but at least we get tarpaulins and food. I may wish to grow something but I do not have enough strength to do so. My baby is still small.

Here there is security because the Ugandan government sent police to secure the settlement. Although the UNHCR tries to help us with food, still there are challenges because we do not have clothes. More so it is very cold here, and for us widows, we have challenges to build our shelters, what is not easy but we have managed.

The ability of women to exhibit their agency by providing protection, care and food for family members shows the ability of women to devise strategies to deal with very complicated and difficult situations. It is based on this understanding that feminists argue for women to be at the peace table to bring such agencies into the peace building process, a plea that has not been given full attention even with the UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on women, peace and security. Most peacebuilding actors and institutions have found it difficult to incorporate women's voices and their concerns in peace processes. This is exactly what is happening with the ongoing DRC peace process.

7.1 Women's specific needs

War impacts on women and men differently. This differential impact is related to roles women and men play in a specific setting. Women interviewed stated that the camp operations were not sensitive to their specific needs. While they appreciate the system for responding to their needs such as provision of food and farming tool, there was little or nothing on items for cleaning and personal needs.

My name is Rabeca Kyomigisha, 19 years old from Nabil- town in North Kivu Province. I am married with 2 children, one of them is here with me and the other child remained in Congo as she was staying with my mother in Bunia.

In Congo, I was doing petty trade in the market where I was selling fish at the landing site. When the war began, I heard bullets and saw so many people fleeing towards the Uganda border. When my husband came, he said that we should immediately flee since the rebels were coming. Together with other people, we ran to Busunga and thereafter to Butanda. As we were in a hurry, I lost most of my clothes and really, I came with only the clothes I was putting on. They are the same clothes I am still putting on now. We took three days to reach Bubukwanga reception centre.

Before that attack on Kamango, I had never seen any war. We were at Bubakwanga for 2 months before being shifted to Kyangwali Settlement Camp. In Bubukwanga, the food was bad as the posho is not well cooked and we were not used to it.

In Kyangwali, we have needs that are specific for us as women. I need to look after my hair and I need soap to bathe and look good as well as clothes to look decent. I need sanitary towels and knickers, which so many people here do not talk about.

We cannot continue to live as refugees here in Uganda. This is not our country. We need a president who can help us get peace in our country. Government should handle the rebels and show that it is in charge. Even if they give me anything good here and a lot of food, it is useless if there is no peace at home and I have no peace of going back, then it is useless. When we continue to

have problems, even if we get food, we shall remain traumatized and suffering as refugees. We must have peace at home and that peace should come to all people not only women.

Rebecca's experience shared above illuminates a number of issues on what women would want humanitarian aid to look like. The key issues highlighted from the study include:

Menstruation: Women by biological constitution undergo monthly menstruation. This requires use of sanitary towels. These items are usually not part of the basic items distributed to women; it is always viewed as secondary compared to the delivery of food. However, women need these items for their cleanliness and well-being.

Child care: During flight women, with babies had the additional responsibility of carrying their babies and a few items that the baby requires. In some cases some of the children fell sick and women depended on faith for them to get better. Similarly, while in refugee camps the child care needs of women are not given due considerations. For example even when the children are hungry mothers have to improvise until the official time for eating.

Clothing: As observed, most of the women and even men fled with literally no extra clothing, including panties and other personal effects like soap and body cream. Most women interviewed expressed concern about losing their identity as women. This left many of them traumatized and withdrawn. In most cultures in Africa, the hair is adored and respected. In a situation where women are unable to attend to their hair needs leads to a feeling of frustration, and a feeling of considering them lesser beings.

Sexual and reproductive health: There were no sexual and reproductive health services available in the two researched camps. Some development partners distribute condoms, but we are also aware that many men would not use condoms. It is important that beyond condoms humanitarian aid must address other family planning needs and reproductive health needs of women refugees.

Livelihood: Women are allocated items on the basis of being members of a

family. This in most cases decreases their access to their own resources, as the man is the one who heads the household. It would be more effective for women to have allocations as individuals. For example, while allocating land, women find that men sell the farm produce even before their spouses are informed. Therefore, they hardly benefit from their labor, which also prevents them from addressing their specific needs.

Majority of the situations discussed above increases the inequality between women and men and leaves women more vulnerable. Yet women have the skills and potentials to contribute to peace making and humanitarian assistance.

The UNHCR and all stakeholders working with refugees must adopt a gender sensitive approach to providing support to refugees and ensure their participation as mandated by the UNSCR1325 and the IASC Policy Statement on the Integration of Gender into Humanitarian Assistance. As mentioned earlier, majority of the refugees fled their homes without any personal effects. Most women have just one or two under-wears and outer clothing, which in most are torn, but they have to wear them like that. Women need to be involved in planning, implementation and monitoring of humanitarian assistance as that is the only way their needs can be reflected in refugee response actions.

Women were optimistic that if they get support in form of revolving loans, they will be able to address their livelihood problems and their lives will improve.

The UNHCR and all stakeholders working with refugees must adopt a gender sensitive approach to providing support to refugees and ensure their participation. As mentioned earlier majority of the refugees fled their home without any personal effects, most women have just one or two underwear and outer clothing, most are torn, but they have to wear them like that. Women need to be involved, that is the only way their needs can be reflected in refugee response actions.



7.2 Isis-WICCE's response to the gender specific needs of women

During the research, Isis-WICCE distributed items to refugees which included wrappers, panties, sanitary pads, rice, sugar, beans, millet flour, soya bean porridge, milk, salt, posho, soap, petroleum jelly and perfumes. Isis-WICCE team realized from the beginning that the study will be conducted in an area where most of the respondents are lacking almost everything including basic items for themselves and their children.

The selection of items was based on the understanding that refugees especially young women were conscious of their status, their dire need in terms of lack of basic items and needed these items to alleviate their status.

“My experience when I lived as a refugee in Kyangwali refugee camp for 4 years is that refugees are poor and lack everything—from basic items to food and shelter...it is good that we take items to them which immediately respond to their immediate needs...they will be happy...otherwise, why would someone in distress waste time to give you information when her child is hungry and crying?” (Nelly Zahinda, Research Assistant)

The refugee population especially women on observation lacked almost everything. They had scanty and dirty clothing and those who had children needed food for themselves and their children. They scrambled for the few items the Isis-WICCE team distributed after the focus group discussions and individual interviews. The majority were grateful for the few items they received.

“We left without anything significant...we let our clothes, property accumulated after many years; even money. Each one of us had to carry the luggage one can manage. We are here without enough food; our young children are malnourished and suffer from cold as we do not have enough blankets. I am happy now at least that Isis-WICCE has given me some rice and salt which will change the diet of my child tonight...” (Margret, Kyangwali)

“...Like all others, I am happy that the Isis-WICCE team has given us some items which we need but cannot get in this refugee camp. I got rice, soap

and sugar and I am very happy...I was also given a wrapper – maybe because I am pregnant...but as women we need many things- clothes, soap, health medication, jelly for the body...when you are pregnant like me, you need to eat well and have good shelter...now I am worried of what will happen to me...” (Martha, Marambo)

“These items that we have received are significantly important to us as women. We used to get only food items but now we have got food items as well as soap...we are going to be clean and ensure our families are okay. We have also got soya for our children which are good for their health.” (Nyamayabo, Desire)

“we are only given those things that are considered good for survival...yes we need them also but as women, we need to be clean and look good...we need to look after our hair, we need soap to bathe and be clean, we need clothes, sanitary pads and knickers...just look at my hair - I do not think it will ever look good again looking at the way I live. At least the Isis-WICCE team has given me a piece of soap, a knicker and wrapper...they are not enough but I fear walking half naked even when my stomach is satisfied...” (Rebecca).

“They talk of peace but they continue to kill innocent people...is this the right way of establishing peace in a country...peace means we should all be in our homes and we are not threatened...and have all basics of life...we are now like beggars and this cannot be called peace...we are happy with what has been given to us but most people did not get and they remain worried. We need more” (Rebecca has 2 children).

From all indications there were so many items but not enough for the many needs of women refugees. This means that providers of humanitarian assistance must plan in such a way that the needs of women refugees are adequately addressed and as already mentioned, by including them in the planning process.

8

8.0 Peace and Security

Based on their flight stories, refugees provided views on the current conflict and protection by the government. The general perception include; lack of protection from government; lack of commitment to care for people in the region and communities suffering from a senseless and meaningless war. Some of the voices captured are illustrated below:

“The government does not care. They send soldiers who are thieves, who loot and harass us. We have seen the President of Uganda more than the President of DRC. We don't know him, except by seeing his picture” (FGD, October 9, 2013)

“Why are we being killed? We are innocent and we are not involved in government activities. If they have problems, they should solve it and not kill innocent people” (FGD, October 9, 2013)

“We had only seven government soldiers, while the rebels were in thousands. The soldiers who were supposed to give us protection ran even before us” (FGD, October 10, 2013)

Participants were not very clear about the role of MONUSCO. They believed that the team has not been effective in protecting the population and have even further exposed communities to danger. Even though the roles of MONUSCO are unknown, women knew exactly what role they should play. They suggested that they should give help in protection, recovery of lost items and in the stabilization of the region.

“We see them but they do not assist us. We don’t know what they are doing. We hope that MONUSCO can stabilize the area and get back the items that we have lost. If they fail to get them, then they should compensate us”. (FGD, October 9, 2013)

Some intimated that they know MONUSCO, as basically an organization whose members do not do any work, particularly in the area of protection. According to one of the participants:

“MONUSCO, we know them. They just eat chicken” (FGD, October 11, 2013)

“We don’t see their work. Even when the problem started; they came and did not do anything” (FGD, October 11, 2013)

The UN needs to do more to make local communities understand the role of peacekeeping forces. It is disheartening to know that MONUSCO has been wrongly perceived by the same people they are working to protect.

All the women interviewed expressed the need for peace to be restored to enable them return to their homes and live normal lives.

“We want peace so that from here we move back to our country. If there is still war, then we want to be taken care of while we are in Uganda” (FGD, October 9, 2013)

“We want peace and stabilization. We just want peace”

“We want peace and we want the war to end, and the improvement of the security system. We need enough security personnel in our area to protect us” (FGD, October 10, 2013)

This further shows the level of frustration that women and men suffer due to their refugee status. It is very difficult for refugees to settle in another country without really thinking about how the war has made them very vulnerable.

8.1 Recommendations

- The DRC government working with the government of Uganda and the ICGLR must ensure the elimination of the ADF-NALU and all other rebel groups operating in north Kivu.
- The government of DRC, the UN (MONUSCO) and other international players must ensure the restoration of peace and stability in the region; by increasing deployment of security forces in the area to protect civilians.
- The government of DRC must support local governance structures through which the state can provide effective leadership for sustainable peace and development.
- The government of DRC and the International Conference of the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR) must ensure the involvement of refugees in the peace efforts, to ensure their views are reflected in any peace building plans.
- The International Community and the ICGLR must commit more resources to combat sexual gender based violence as indicated in the 2011 Kampala Declaration on SGBV; and particularly giving attention to needs and concerns of refugees in the Great lakes Region.
- The Uganda Refugee Commission, UNHCR, Red Cross and other actors must engage women refugees in all planning processes to ensure their needs and perspectives are taken into account in Refugee Settlement management and refugee welfare issues.
- The refugee leadership should form associations for women as a means of providing a platform for skills acquisition to support their livelihoods.
- The government of DRC should put in place the necessary infrastructure and governance systems in place as a way of generating security in the region.

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