SIHMA
Scalabrini Institute for Human Mobility in Africa

REFUGEES INTEGRATION IN UGANDA: PERSPECTIVE OF REFUGEES, STAKEHOLDERS AND THE HOST COMMUNITY

Researchers and authors
Dr Rachel Chinyakata, Dr Robinah Nakabo,
Dr Cletus Muluh Momasoh, Filippo Ferraro
Edited by Filippo Ferraro

Researcher and author Dr Rachel Chinyakata
Co-researcher Dr Robinah Nakabo
Co-researcher Dr Cletus Muluh Momasoh
Co-researcher and Editor Filippo Ferraro

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SCALABRINI INSTITUTE FOR HUMAN MOBILITY IN AFRICA
47 Commercial Street, 8001
Cape Town Tel +27 82 555 2066
Email admin@sihma.org.za
Website www.sihma.org.za

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AUTHORS

Dr Rachel Chinyakata is a researcher specialising on human mobility, migration policies, migration and health, gender, migration and climate and vulnerable minors research. She holds a PhD in Gender Studies degree from the University of Venda. Rachel also has experience in conducting Evaluation and Operations Research and has participated in evaluations of big multi-country projects. She possesses experience in conducting both qualitative and quantitative research and in conducting research that informs practical programmatic response. Dr Chinyakata has strong facilitation skills including setting up networks and teams to work with, establishing rapport with stakeholders and participants, ensuring effective communication throughout the process and in setting up proper reporting channels. She is passionate on conducting research that contributes knowledge development, informed policies and programmes that promotes the rights and well-being of migrants, asylum seekers, refugees, and other people on the move.

Dr Robinah S. Nakabo is a core team member in several research projects especially where postgraduate students are involved, and contributing substantially to the development of project design, planning and implementation guidelines that often ensure quality delivery of project outputs. She is researcher with a qualitative bias focusing on applied philosophy, women and gender studies and development. She currently heads the Directorate of Graduate Studies, Research and Enterprise at Uganda Martyrs University (UMU) and coordinates a number of projects including TAGDev 2.0, a program implemented by RUFORUM in partnership with the Mastercard Foundation and other RUFORUM member institutions. She benefited from the international deans course (IDC), a training to dialogue on innovating higher education strategies (DIES) 2025/26. She completed her doctoral studies in 2022, M.A in Philosophy Degree both from Makerere University (2019) and M.A Organizational Leadership from Eastern University (2013); and a B.A in Social Sciences also from Makerere University. She has an experience in supporting research work with refugees in the different refugee districts in Uganda. In the past two years she has collaborated with SIHMA in conducting research work mainly aimed at enhancing protection and integration of refugees and asylum seekers. Dr Robinah has experience in facilitating research work from the initial setup until the dissemination stages.

Dr Cletus Muluh Momasoh comes from a multi-disciplinary background in Political Science, Development Studies, and Sociology. His research interests focus on African migration, global inequality, social movement, and social theory. In addition to lecturing several courses in the Department of Sociology at the University of Cape Town (UCT), he is a part-time researcher with the Scalabrini Institute of Human Mobility in Africa (SIHMA), from which he seeks to build bridges between migrants and their host communities through several interventions implemented by the organization. He is also a member of the Migration and Mobility Research Group at UCT. Dr Momasoh has experience in conducting ethnographic studies and desk reviews. He has experience in conducting research across Africa and has specifically contributed to some research projects in Uganda. Through being part of the Scalabrini network of organisations, Dr Cletus has been involved in a number of philanthropical activities including facilitating workshops to equip people on the move with the knowledge and understanding of their rights and services that are available to them.

Filippo Ferraro is a Missionary of St. Charles Scalabrini Father with a Bachelor's Degree from the Theological Institute of Northern Italy (Milan) and an advanced Diploma in Pastoral Care of Migration from SIMI (Scalabrini International Migration Institute - Pontifical Urban University in Rome). Since the end of 2017 he has been the Executive Director of SIHMA and the Coordinator of social projects in Africa. As member of the Scalabrini network, his specific background and mission is the pastoral care of people on the move, integration of asylum seekers and refuges in local communities, advocacy for human rights in a context of intercultural diversity. Since 2014, as Executive director of SIHMA, Fr Filippo has worked for many years on research, publication of the academic journal AHMR, training on human mobility and media production on narrative of migration across Africa. He has worked in many different parts of Africa including Uganda, where he was instrumental in setting up the missionary work and in facilitating the "Formative Research" aimed at informing the work and workshops to equip pastoral agents of migration and other people working in the field.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Based on the need to strengthen responses and programmes to support refugee integration in Uganda and beyond, the Scalabrini Institute for Human Mobility in Africa, the Missionaries of St Charles Scalabrini Uganda and other partners conducted this research. The research report explores the integration of refugees in Uganda particularly focusing on how integration is perceived, barriers and facilitators to integration. Focus is also given towards understanding refugee needs, support services available and gaps in support as essential factors that shape integration. Lastly the report proposes a list of indicators that could be used to monitor the integration of refugees.

The report is based on fieldwork that was conducted in Uganda in Kampala representing the urban context and Adjumani representing the settlements in December 2024 up to February 2025. Participants included stakeholders working with refugees, refugees and some members of the host community (HC) in Kampala and Adjumani. The study was conducted in these two districts to provide an understanding of refugee integration in both the urban context and the settlements.

The findings in this report reflect Uganda is an environment consisting of both support, and opportunities mixed with difficulties and barriers that affect refugees ability to integrate into the social and economic fabric of the society. Although the policy environment described as progressive, there was a disjuncture between policy and implementation mainly attributed to resource shortages, discrimination, lack of will from departments and stakeholders involved and other systemic issues that interplayed in blocking the integration of refugees. Coupled with other individual barriers such as language, limited skills and education and economic status, the report highlights some of the practical challenges that result from the above-mentioned barriers including limiting the refugees' sense of agency and future aspirations. This report also shows the realities of the life of refugees within the settlements and outside of the settlements with both areas having its own opportunities and challenges.

The report identifies and proposes some key performance indicators that could be used to monitor and shape implementation in Uganda. Through this research, we provide some recommendations to inform advocacy, research and initiatives to enhance, support and facilitate the integration of refugees in Uganda.

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ABBREVIATIONS

Abbreviation/Acronym	Full Meaning
ADR	Alternative Dispute Resolution
ATLAS.ti	Qualitative Data Analysis Software
CBOs	Community-Based Organisations
CRRF	Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework
DAR	Development Assistance to Refugees Hosting Area Programme
DRC	Democratic Republic of Congo
FGDs	Focus Group Discussions
HC	Host Community
ID	Identity Document
IDPs	Internally Displaced Persons
IOM	International Organisation for Migration
JLIRP	Jobs and Livelihoods Integrated Response Plan for Refugees and Host Communities
JRS	Jesuit Refugee Services
KCCA	Kampala Capital City Authority
KIIs	Key Informant Interviews
KPIs	Key Performance Indicators
MHPSS	Mental Health and Psychosocial Support
NCHE	National Council for Higher Education
NCST	Uganda National Council for Science and Technology
NDP11	National Development Plan
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organisations
OAU	Organisation of African Unity
OPM	Office of the Prime Minister
ReHoPE	Refugee and Host Population Empowerment Strategic Framework
SIHMA	Scalabrini Institute for Human Mobility in Africa
SRS	Self-Reliance Strategy
UDHR	Universal Declaration of Human Rights
UCICA	Uganda Citizenship and Immigration Control Act
UGX	Ugandan Shilling
UNEB	Uganda National Examinations Board
UNDAF	United Nations Development Assistance Framework
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
WEP	Women Empowerment Programmes
WFP	World Food Programme

1. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

Refugee movements continue to increase globally due to war, violence, persecution, and human rights abuses United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR), 2022a). Integration is a key factor for well-being and belonging for refugees as well as peaceful co-existence with the communities they live with. This work explores integration taking into consideration contextual factors in defining integration, from the refugees, host population and people who work closely with the refugees. Integration varies according to context, time, interests, values and perspectives of the people concerned and these need to be considered as key factors for successful integration (Robinson, 1998; Sigona, 2005; Tyson, 2017). To fully integrate the refugees into the host communities and include them in the country's developmental plans, their needs and perspectives need to be taken into consideration in defining what integration looks like and the strategies that could work in achieving it. The voices of the host community also need to be taken into consideration in defining integration to promote coexistence (Pace & Simsek, 2020). As such, the Scalabrini Institute for Human Mobility in Africa (SIHMA) and the Missionaries of St Charles Scalabrini, Uganda conducted this study to understand the needs of refugees and their integration in Uganda, in order to develop some guidelines for refugee integration. The findings of this study will be used in informing decisions on refugees' administration, policies and the implementation of welfare, advocacy, and other support programmes.

1.1 DEFINITION OF REFUGEE INTEGRATION

Refugee integration is interpreted differently among states, migrants/refugees/asylum seekers, the communities of the host country, academics, people that work with refugees and policy makers. Furthermore, the concept is an ever revolving one. As such, there is no one standard definition of refugee integration.

Academic literature approaches the meaning of refugee integration both as a literal definition, and/or as a framework for operationalizing the integration process. Heckman (2005) defines integration as "Long lasting inclusion of refugees into core institutions, core relations and core statuses of the hosting community". Refugee integration can also be defined as the inclusion in the cultural (learning the language and norms), social (getting social services like health and education), political (participation in processes like voting) and economic (participating in labour markets or business) aspects of the community (Pennix, 2004; Castle et al., 2002; Castle & Miller, 2003; Opono et al., 2023).

Seyidov (2021) summarizes the meaning of refugee integration as, "being amalgamated into the social fabric of society and being able to incorporate oneself and live harmoniously in a host society and forming holistic structures in society without losing heterogeneity". This is influenced by economic, political, and environmental factors" (ibid). According to Crisp (2004), integration consists of inter-related legal, economic and social/cultural dimensions". The legal part entails the acquisition of rights and entitlements from the host country, such as right to employment and income generating activities, right to owning property, freedom of movement and access to public services like education and health. These rights and entitlements also include being granted permanent residency or citizenship. The economic dimension is about the refugees attaining a level of self-sufficiency and standard of living that is comparable to the average in the host community. And finally, the social/cultural dimension is whereby the refugees "can live among the host population without fear of systematic discrimination, intimidation or exploitation by authorities or members of the host community" (Crisp, 2004).

International Organisation for Migration (IOM) (2011) and IOM (2017) also defined integration as a process by which migrants become accepted into society, both as individuals and as groups and refers to a 2-way process of adaptation by migrants and host societies". This process includes consideration of rights and obligations of migrants and host societies; access to different kinds of services and the labour market; and identification/respect for a core set of values that binds migrants and host communities in a common purpose. As per IOM, concepts of refugee integration include "social inclusion and social cohesion". Social inclusion entails full participation of refugees in economic, social, cultural, and political spheres of the host communities. While social cohesion entails experiencing lack of discrimination and xenophobia, as well as promotion of mutual understanding.

From the various definitions above, the following can be summarized as key characteristics that encompass the refugee integration process: a) two-way b) long-term c) multi-dimensional and multi-faceted d) involving migrants/refugees/asylum seekers, the receiving nation's policies, and members of the host community e) incorporating the rights and obligations of both the incoming and host populations.

In terms of summarizing what a locally integrated refugee life could look like, Mena's article summarises it as including all the parameters below:

- Progressive access to a wide range of rights and entitlements of the host state.
- Living among and alongside the host population without fear of discrimination, intimidation, and exploitation.
- Economic self-sufficiency and standard of living that is comparable to that of the average population.
- Feeling at home in the host country.

1.2 CONTEXT

Uganda has a long history of opening its borders to those that need asylum as a result of political persecution or armed conflicts in their countries (Sebba & Zanker, 2022). According to the UNHCR (2025), Uganda hosts almost 1.8 million refugees with the majority coming from South Sudan (54,2%) and the Democratic Republic of Congo (32.3%). The refugees live in different districts of the country that are Madi Okollo & Terego, Adjumani, Isingiro, Yumbe, Kampala, Kikuube, Kiryandongo, Obongi Kyegegwa, Kamwenge, Lamwo and Koboko (UNHCR, 2025).

The country is considered a role model for hosting refugees, guided by the Refugee Act of 2006 and the 2010 Refugees Regulations the country is considered progressive (Bohnet & Schimitz, 2019; Omata, 2020). Since 2016, the country has implemented the Refugee and Host Population Empowerment (ReHoPE) strategy which aims at harmonizing the refugees response in the country by integrating refugee programming in the National Development Plan (Bohnet & Schmitz, 2019). Uganda also has several frameworks aimed at operationalizing resilience and self-reliance with the goal of ensuring refugees and host communities are socially, economically, and financially included. Some of these frameworks include the Jobs and Livelihoods Integrated Response Plan for Refugees and Host Communities in Uganda (JLIRP) developed in 2020, Refugee Livelihoods and Resilience Sector Strategy (2022-2025) and in 2024, Uganda Country Refugee Response Plan Detailed Planning (2024-2025).

In its road to achieving the integration of refugees, Uganda is implementing a self-reliance approach through the implementation of the Refugees Act of 2006, of "integrated settlements" (World Bank Group, 2016; Kreibaum, 2016). The integrated settlement approach recasts the notion of a traditional camp from a humanitarian obligation that consumes resources (Jansen, 2016) to a component of regional development that attracts investment. These camps are located adjacent to a host community's settlement and offer residents of the host community access to the settlements' services, schools, and infrastructure upgrades

(Krause, 2021).

Furthermore, despite the overall settlement approach, which ties refugees to remote areas, there are also several self-settled refugees living in urban areas mostly in Kampala in areas such as Kisenyi, Kansanga, Nabulagala, Nateete, Nakulabye, Rugaba, Makindye, Mengo, Katwe, Old Kampala, Salaama, Kawepe, Kyebando, Makerere and Kabalagala, to seek for better economic opportunities (Bahemuka, 2025; Monteith & Lwasa, 2017; Tshimba, 2022). There, refugees carve out their own modes of belonging although with some challenges. Efforts by the UNHCR to promote integration of refugees in urban areas, such as their 2009 Policy on Urban Refugees and the 2014 Alternatives to Camp Policy, received little political attention and resonance (Hovil 2018). Self-settled refugees lose their UNHCR and government protection/ assistance making them more vulnerable (Easton-Calabria & Wood, 2022). Furthermore, according to Tshimba (2022), there is scarce information on refugees that are self-settled or that are in urban areas. This reveals a gap in the promotion of integration among refugees in urban areas in Uganda.

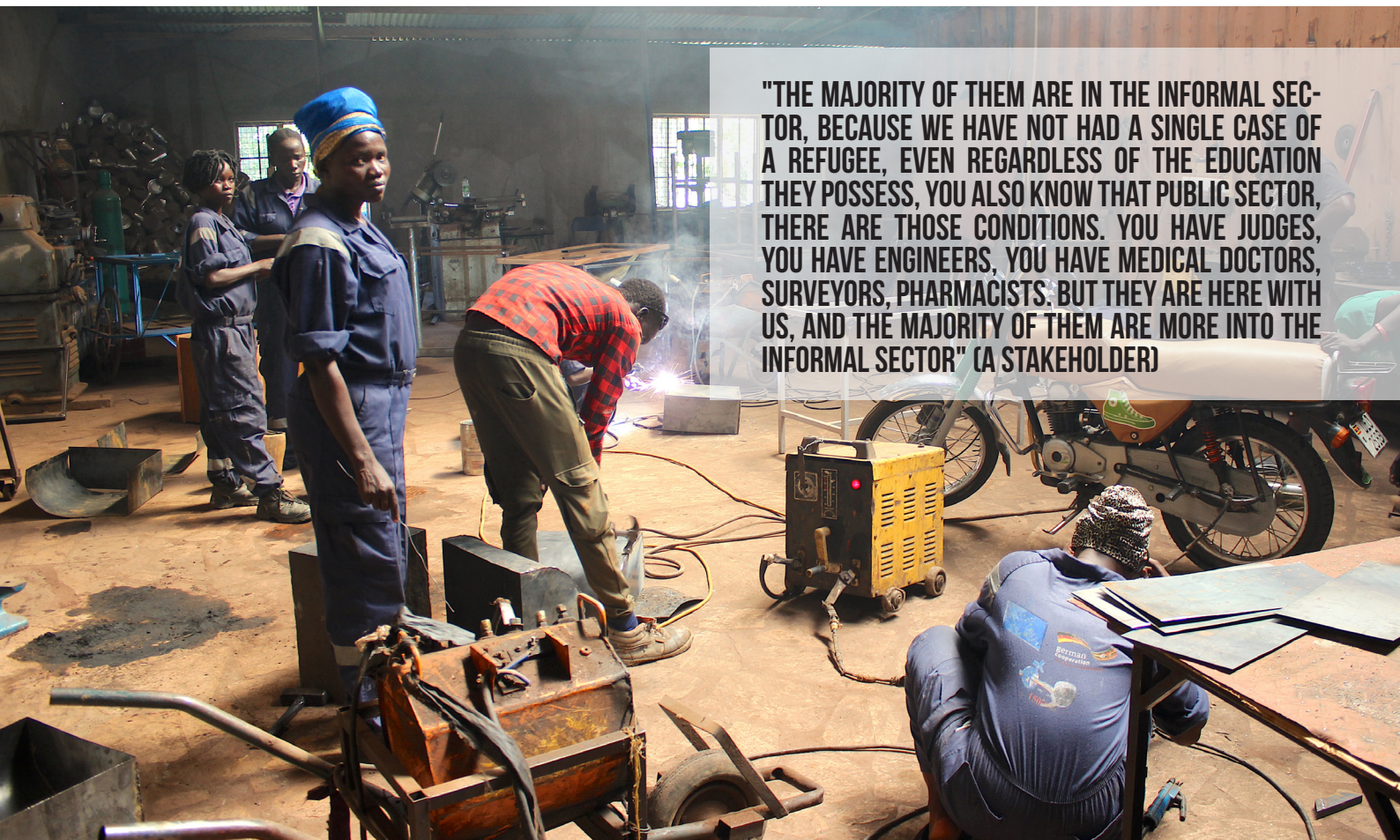
1.3 AIM

The aim of the study is to understand the needs of refugees in Uganda and propose some Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) for refugees integration in Uganda.

1.4 OBJECTIVES

The main objectives of the study were to:

1. Identify the specific support needs of refugees in Uganda
2. Explore the perception and understanding of refugees, local people and stakeholders on the concept of integration
3. Explore the existing welfare and integration programmes available in Uganda
4. Determine the facilitators and the barriers to the integration of refugees in Uganda
5. Propose some Key Performance Indicators for the integration of refugees in Uganda



2. METHODOLOGY

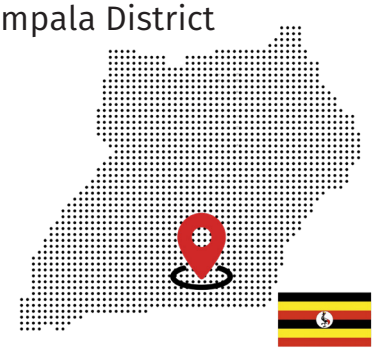
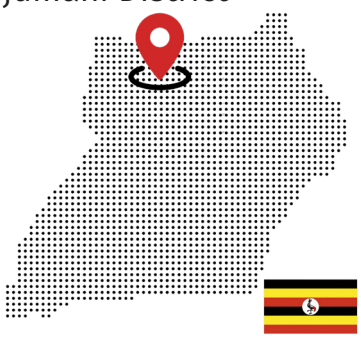
The study was conducted using a qualitative approach through an intervention mapping framework to guide the design of the study. This overarching approach allowed for an in-depth understanding of the presence of refugees in Uganda, their needs, facilitators, and barriers to integration. This approach was chosen as it provides a blueprint on developing solutions of interventions (Bartholomew, Parcel, Kok & Gottlieb, 2001). Overall, three key methods were used:

1. Desk review mapping the presence of refugees, understanding their needs, barriers and facilitators to their integration and existing indicators for integration. This also included a mapping of the legal and policy landscape in relation to the integration of refugees in Uganda.
2. Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) with refugees, the host population and stakeholders working with refugees.
3. Focus Group Discussion (FGDs) with the refugees.

2.1 DESK REVIEW

A review of literature and policy was conducted to mapping the presence of refugees in Uganda, identifying their needs, barriers and facilitators to their integration and existing indicators for integration. The review was conducted using databases, relevant policy documents from the government and information from Non-profit organisations websites. A policy review is included as part of the review. Aspects of the review are integrated into the body of this report to contextualise our empirical findings and support the analysis and recommendations. The full literature and policy review is included in Appendix A.

2.2 KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEWS

Location	Stakeholders	Host Community	Refugees
Kampala District 	5	5	15
Adjumani District 	5	5	15

Contact was made with the partners working in Kampala and Adjumani districts, Uganda to support with the identification of stakeholders, refugees and host community in the two districts for participation. The participants were purposefully selected. The inclusion criteria for the stakeholders was that they had to be working with refugees for at least 3 years in Adjumani or Kampala. The researcher contacted stakeholders from different organisations to support with the identification of participants and with helping to set up appointments physically and electronically. A total of 10 stakeholders were included in the study. KIIs were conducted physically in Kampala and in settlements in Adjumani specifically, the Pagirinya and Nyumanzi from December 2024 to February 2025. A total of 10 host community members living alongside refugees in Kampala and in Adjumani participated in the KIIs. It was important to understand their perception of refugee integration as the people welcoming the refugees in their communities. 5 host community members were interviewed in Kampala and the other 5 in Adjumani.

A total of 15 urban refugees living in Kampala and 15 refugees living in Adjumani settlements of Pagirinya and Nyumanzi participated in the KIIs to understand their needs and the concept of integration. Both the refugees and the host community representatives were purposively selected through partners working on the ground with refugees. The sample size for the KIIs was determined by data saturation.

2.3 FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS

FGDs were conducted in Kampala and Adjumani to understand the intersubjective perspective of refugees towards integration in Uganda. Through the FGDs a further exploration of the needs of refugees, their perception and understanding of integration, barriers, and facilitators to integration was conducted. A total of 4 group discussions (2 in Kampala district and 2 in Adjumani district) were conducted, each group consisted of 6 refugees. The refugees were purposively selected with the support from the local stakeholders working in both locations. The FGDs were conducted in December 2024 in Kampala and February 2025 in Adjumani.

2.4 ANALYSIS OF THE DATA

The perspectives from the KIIs and the FGDs were recorded and transcribed verbatim. The transcripts were then analysed inductively using thematic analysis. ATLAS.ti was used as a data management software. The six-phase of thematic analysis was followed as proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006) which included familiarising with the data by reading and re-reading the transcripts, followed by generating initial codes, then going through the codes and the quotations, identifying the mistakes in the coding and making comments. After generating codes they were grouped into themes, the themes were then named and defined to explain the ideas captured by each theme. The themes were checked against the original quotations, ensuring that the quotations confirmed the classification into the theme. The final analysis and write up of the findings was done as indicated below linking the themes to the quotations by the participants and then commenting on both the quotations and the themes.

2.5 IDENTIFYING SOME KPIS FOR REFUGEES' INTEGRATION

Based on the data from the desk review, the KIIs and the FGDs, KPIs were identified. The process of identifying the KPIs was mainly inductive and grounded from the data. The researchers took into consideration literature from other sources on indicators of integration around the world and in Uganda.

2.6 WORKSHOP

After the development of draft KPIs a workshop was held in Kampala in July 2025 with stakeholders, refugees and the HC representatives. The purpose of the workshop was to share the key findings of the research, present, discuss and refine the proposed KPI framework developed. During the 2 days' workshop missing aspects of the KPI were identified and suggestions for the refinement of the indicators were made. By the end of the workshop consensus on the KPI Framework for refugee integration had been reached. This refined KPI Framework is presented in the findings section.

2.7 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Ethics approval was obtained from Makerere University Social Science Research Ethics Committee (Ref 08.2024763/AR) and a letter of approval to access the refugee settlements was sought from the Office of the Prime Minister and the Uganda National Council for Science and Technology. The researchers also applied widely accepted research principles. For example, informed consent where the participants were thoroughly informed about the study, after they understood all the details they were invited to participate and those that agreed to participate were asked to sign a consent form before participating in the study. Anonymity was also safeguarded by allocating codes to each of the participants masking their personal details including in written and verbal reports of the results.

"BECAUSE HERE IN KAMPALA, THINGS THAT PROBABLY AFFECT REFUGEES, BASICALLY, IS THE CAPACITY TO ACCESS FINANCIAL LINKAGE. SO, IF PARTNERS OR, SAY, POLICYMAKERS CAN BOOST MORE SUPPORT IN TERMS OF ECONOMIC RECOVERY AND DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMMES, IT WOULD GIVE THEM A HIGHER CHANCE OF PROBABLY BEING ABLE TO START UP A BUSINESS AND BE SELF-RELIANT TO OVERCOME THIS ELEMENT OF DEPENDENCE SYNDROME. BECAUSE IF YOU EMPOWER SOMEONE WHO HAS AN IDEA AND WHO HAS SOMETHING OR A SKILL, ESPECIALLY NOW THE YOUTH, THEY ARE THOSE THAT HAVE REAL SKILLS WITHIN, BUT THEY JUST NEED THAT FINANCIAL BOOST TO ALLEVIATE THEM TO ANOTHER LEVEL". (A STAKEHOLDER)

3. FINDINGS

The findings are presented below within the themes that emerged from the data. Quotes from the stakeholders, refugees and host community members are used to illustrate or substantiate the findings. The person speaking is identified with an anonymous label after each quote.

3.1 THEME 1: LIFE IN KAMPALA VS LIFE IN SETTLEMENTS

This section gives a description of the perception of the stakeholders, host community members and the refugees of the life in Kampala and the life in the settlements in Adjumani. This gives an overview of the two contexts and the life of the refugees within both contexts. Kampala was seen as the land of opportunities for economic advancement and freedom for refugees. Refugees in Kampala were able to navigate the space and find opportunities especially in business to sustain themselves and their families and to rely less on donor funding.

Many of the refugees owned businesses in locations like Cooper Complex, Kasanga, Mengo and Rwabange. One of the refugee participants indicated how refugees navigate their lives in Kampala as follows:

> Life in Kampala is good. The good thing about Kampala is that there is freedom. You are free to…if you got a hassle, you could find your way out. (Refugee)

Although Kampala was presented as an avenue for economic advancement for many, living in the city had challenges of its own. For example, some of the refugees struggled to sustain themselves in Kampala including not being able to pay rentals/afford decent housing, transport to work/school, and school fees especially for secondary school. Large numbers of refugees were mainly staying in informal settlements with poor conditions such as Kisenyi, Katwe, Makindye, and Masajja. This was further exacerbated by the fact that refugees living in Kampala have limited support from the UNHCR and other partner organisations and they cannot access funds or start-ups for their businesses. Although the Refugees Act (2006) and 2010 regulations make provisions for refugees living both in Kampala and in the settlements, support for refugees living in Kampala is limited. As a result of the difficult living conditions in Kampala and as a way to return the benefits that they receive in settlements, some refugees in Kampala were reported to move back and forth between Kampala and the settlements.

In contrast to living in Kampala, life in the settlements specifically in Adjumani was considered a blend of both support and hardships. Refugees in the settlements receive support from the government, UNHCR and other partner organisations (UNHCR, 2025). The type of support includes plots of land given for to construct shelter and for cultivation, services in form of health, education, cash assistance, start-up packages, WASH facilities and skills development. However, the interviews revealed that refugees face significant challenges in the settlements that impact their own lives. The settlement approach was described by some of the stakeholders as expired because firstly, the plots that they are given are becoming smaller (size 30 by 30 metres) with time due to the increase in the number of refugees and most of the settlements are in arid areas making it impossible to be self-reliant through agriculture. Furthermore, poor living conditions were reported by the participants. There is food, water and medical supplies shortages and the houses they lived in are not durable. The cash assistance that the refugees received in the settlements was considered insufficient to buy food that would last for a month and with the removal of food parcels by the World Food Programme and the funding cuts, the situation for refugees has become more difficult. The cash assistance given ranged from about UGX 14 000 (USD 3.89) to UGX 28 000 (USD7.79) which was barely enough to sustain the families. In another study by Brown and Torre (2024), the refugees in the settlements are categorised into 3 categories of vulnerability with Category 1 (most vulnerable)

accounting for 13,4% of the refugee population receiving UGX 28 000, Category 2 (moderate vulnerability) accounting for 82,2% of the refugee population receives UGX 14 000 and lastly Category 3 (least vulnerable) accounting for 4,4% of the refugee population does not receive any cash assistance.

The challenges faced by refugees were further exacerbated by the fact that there are limited economic opportunities for refugees in the settlements. Agriculture was the main perceived economic activity but due to challenges mentioned above, not many of them could survive through agriculture unless they borrow land for a fee from the locals. Some of them survived through selling building material and firewood and some survived from remittances from relatives living in Kampala or abroad. With the limited opportunities in the settlements, some of the refugees hoped that one day they would leave the settlements for a better life. Due to limited economic opportunities, majority of the people within the settlements were indicated to be women and children. Many men had left for the urban areas or back to their countries of origin so that they could work and fend for their families.

Women in the settlements were indicated to carry the burden for providing for their families signifying a great need to empower them:

> Women also, as you know, in the settlements, especially the refugees from South Sudan, women play a key role in maintaining the home. And most of the time they are the ones suffering to look for food. And sometimes if they don't have enough food, some end up committing suicide. So, in as much as the youth are being empowered in that line of livelihood and skills, the women also must be given opportunities to access certain facilities that will help them to have their livelihood somehow emancipated. (Stakeholder)

Both the contexts offered push-and-pull factors for the refugees and in both, there is required support especially in terms of avenues for economic freedom or self-reliance.

3.2 THEME 2: EXISTING WELFARE AND INTEGRATION SUPPORT FOR REFUGEES

The findings from the interviews revealed that there are existing welfare and support programmes available in Uganda. The development and implementation of these programmes is mainly guided by the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework 2017 and are provided through the collaboration of Government of Uganda, the Office of the Prime Minister Uganda, UNHCR and other Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs). Although some services were available in both settings (Uganda and Adjumani) most of the services were mostly provided for in the settlements because of how the refugee response system is designed, encouraging refugees to stay in designated settlements and making it easier to provide service delivery in a more controlled manner. The available support services are discussed below.

3.2.1 LEGAL SUPPORT

Legal support is one of the services that was identified to be available both in Adjumani and in Kampala. This included support with documentation assistance including asylum documents, refugee status determination and obtaining birth certificates, child protection encompassing assisting with foster or alternative care arrangements for separated and unaccompanied minors, advocacy and the provision of legal counselling and providing information. Legal support was also in form of assistance in drafting or reviewing tenant agreements for land

and in resolving disputes with other refugees of the HC. Legal support was mainly provided through the OPM, the UNHCR and other NGOs including the Nowergian Refugee Council, Refugee Law Project, Uganda Law Society in Kampala and the Lutheran World Federation in Adjumani. The legal services provided by these organisations were available to the refugees free of charge.

However, some stakeholders reported that there was a need for more legal support and protection for refugees from unlawful detention and deportations practices that are on the rise despite the protections that are provided by the Refugee law.

3.2.2 LIVELIHOOD AND ECONOMIC INCLUSION PROGRAMMES

During the discussions with the participants, both the refugees and the stakeholders mentioned that there are initiatives mostly in settlements aimed at promoting self-reliance through skills and entrepreneurship development. Some examples of projects mentioned include Beekeeping project which is empowering refugees and HC to produce and sell honey, the Briquette making project for sustainable energy and the Women empowerment programmes by the UN Women in collaboration with other organisations. During the interviews it was also revealed that there is financial support by some financial institutions offering loans in Adjumani for starting their businesses after receiving training, but the details around this was scanty:

> After the skills, they also give away some cash. Some cash, though not to everyone. But their cash is so much tailored to the women. The women refugees are more compared to the men. And they are more vulnerable. Their needs are quite high compared to the men. So, there are some livelihood programs where they support. And they give some cash for start-up. And do financial literacy here and there through their partners. (Stakeholder)

Financial support was indicated to be available for refugees as a start-up package upon arrival and as monthly cash assistance to refugees in the settlements through the WFP and United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund for children. The amount is based on the level of vulnerability of an individual/family. Even though the assistance was available, the participants indicated that it was insufficient because the cash given was too little to sustain them (reported to be between UGX 14 000 and UGX 28 000), the number of refugees keep on growing thus straining donor funding and due to the WFP funding cuts, the situation is considered dire.

3.2.3 EDUCATION

Guided by the Uganda's Refugees Act (2006) and the Education (Pre-Primary, Primary and Post-Primary) Act, refugees are granted the same rights to education as the HC. Through integrated education, refugees access free primary education in public schools and in the secondary schools they are required to pay a fee. The amount paid depends on the location with urban areas reported to be charging more. According to the findings, some organisations like the UNHCR, Hope for Refugees and Jesuit Refugee Services (JRS) work together with the government to ensure access to education for refugees. Education provided to refugees also extends to programmes for overaged learners that could not continue with their education due to instability in their home countries and accelerated learning programme for some young people who missed school because of the instabilities. Even though educational support is available, the support was indicated as not adequate and barriers such as high costs to access secondary schools and post-secondary education were noted. Secondary school cost barriers were especially prevalent in Kampala.

3.2.4 HEALTH AND WASH (WATER AND SANITATION AND HYGIENE)

According to the data from the interviews, refugees have access to health services, and they can use the same health facilities as the Ugandans both in Kampala and the settlements. However, due to overcrowding, shortages of medicine and specialized treatment services some NGOs for example the UNHCR in the settlements and the African Humanitarian Action, Caritas Uganda, International Rescue Committee and the ABYSS Uganda located in Kampala offer health support where needed especially in terms of giving medication. There was a presence of mental health support noted in both Kampala and in Adjumani, however these were indicated to be limited but necessary since mental health challenges were indicated to be serious due to the past and present experiences of the refugees. Water, sanitation and hygiene facilities were reported to be available by the participants in the settlements, for example the UNHCR ensures that they have safe water, latrines and through its partners offer awareness campaigns on sanitation, hygiene and health.

3.2.5 LAND, HOUSING AND START-UP MATERIAL

In the settlements, refugees are provided with plots for shelter and agriculture as part of the Self-reliance Model (Bohnet & Schmitz, 2019). According to the interviewees, the plots of land are determined by the number of refugees in the area and most of them have become smaller and smaller due to the increased demand. According to one HC member in the Pagirinya settlement:

> Like on this day the refugees came here; after being registered they were given something to support them. Clothes, housing materials, bed sheets and let me say, land, but the portion of land given to these refugees compared to other camps is now little. It is 30 by 30 meters. This way is 30 meters and that way is also 30 meters. (HC)

Due to the size of the land, it is difficult for the refugees to be fully reliant on agriculture and this departs from the goal of promoting self-reliance of refugees in Uganda through agriculture and thus pushing some of them out of the settlements. For some, they rent land from the locals for them to practice farming. Besides land the participants indicated the availability of start-up material such as clothes, material to build houses, bedding and food. These were indicated to be helpful especially because when refugees arrive in the country, they mostly do not have any resources.

Even though there are programmes and support services for refugees both in Kampala and Adjumani, there are reportedly not enough to cater for the whole refugee population and some of them are not sustainable. Therefore, the participants of the study indicated a need for more effort, funds and sustainable programmes that are tailored at supporting refugees to be self-reliant, independent and live healthy lives without issues that limit their capabilities. Additionally, a need to harmonise different initiatives was identified to avoid replication and for new interventions to focus on existing gaps.

3.3 THEME 3: KEY SUPPORT NEEDS OF REFUGEES

The needs of refugees vary according to their geographical location, socio-economic status, level of education, knowledge of language and knowledge of rights and entitlements. Despite the differing circumstances there were commonalities in the needs identified by the participants in this study. These needs are mainly centred around their livelihoods, that is mainly activities and resources that are essential for them to maintain their physical, social, economic and mental well-being. According to one Stakeholder in Adjumani:

> Wherever I go and this is my advocacy, refugees are like you and me. They need what we need. They need to go to school, they need proper social amenities and in terms of services, the children need to go to school, medical care, they need markets. They need

to do economic activities. (Stakeholder)

During the interviews the refugees, stakeholders and the HC echoed on the need for food security and nutrition support. According to the findings, there are food shortages for refugees both in Kampala and Adjumani with some, according to a Stakeholder, "struggling to eat even 1 meal daily". This has worsened in the settlements because of the reduced food ratios due to the funding cuts by the World Food Programme (WFP) which has left many refugees depending on the monthly payouts they are given. This is barely enough to take them even for a week. The plots given to the refugees are reported to be small for large-scale cultivation; they can only make small gardens which cannot sustain their families. Furthermore, there is water scarcity in Adjumani, with a dry season stretching from April to September and a few boreholes saving large numbers of people and some had to walk a long distance to get the water, therefore, having backyard gardens for some was impossible.

Similarly, in Kampala the participants highlighted that some refugees are living in adverse conditions where they cannot afford decent meals and to pay rentals. Due to these difficulties some of the refugees are not hopeful about their livelihoods in Uganda and mentioned that it might be better to return to their countries of origin. One of the key goals of the Ugandan Refugee Act of 2006 is for the refugees in Uganda to become self-reliant as a main indicator of integration. However, the interviewers noted that there is a great discrepancy in terms of translation of this on the ground as many refugees do not have a proper livelihood strategy. The majority of the refugees cannot work in formal employment due to barriers that they face in integrating into the labor market. For example, they face barriers in equating their qualifications, registering with professional bodies and discrimination in occupying certain positions in specific industries such as law, health and government, which are considered only for citizens. Most urban refugees in Kampala survive on informal work mostly owning small businesses and hawking in the streets. Some of the refugees have received some skills training but the research indicated that they cannot start businesses due to lack of funds for starting up. In the settlements, economic activities were limited, people mostly survived on agriculture but it was difficult to earn a proper living due to limited land and lack of input. The lack of a livelihood strategy was linked in both instances to the mental health of the refugees.

Furthermore, the need for education and skills training was identified as a need both in the settlements and in Kampala. Although Uganda's Ministry of Education and other partner organisations are making strides to realize comprehensive education through various initiatives for example free primary education and bursaries for secondary and post-secondary school, the interviewees indicated that there are still gaps in education and training. For example, the refugee population keeps on increasing and the resources available cannot support the refugee population, in Adjumani overcrowding in classes was also reported. In other cases, the refugees could not pay secondary school fees. The participants also emphasized on the need for education for women, girls and youth that are not in school or idle to reduce challenges of drug abuse, petty theft and early marriages in both the settlements and in Kampala.

> And when you talk about the youth, because of limited skills and the labour market, you find that they have gone so much into drug abuse and all kinds of violence. So, the more there could be more opportunities for them to be skilled and then possibly give them start-ups that would somehow orient them towards their sustainability and livelihood, it can be more helpful. You have maybe one primary school which can only host 2,000 children, but you have more than 10,000 children in the settlement. So where are you taking the other 8,000? So that jeopardises their future and as well their proper integration. (Stakeholder)

Furthermore, health and psychological support was indicated to be limited or insufficient. In the settlements, the referral hospitals/specialized treatment hospitals are reported to be far

away from most settlements and due to shortages of finances, most people cannot access the hospitals. Similarly, in Kampala, the government hospitals are open for everyone, but they have limited resources and medical support. Several NGOs support with medicine and one of the most mentioned during the fieldwork was the African Humanitarian Action even though a stakeholder from the organisation indicated that they cannot cope with the pressure.

Mental health services were indicated to be limited although this was one of the major needs of the refugee population since they must cope with multiple challenges related to the trauma experienced in the sending country, separation from families and the challenges they face in the HC. Due to this, the suicide rates among the refugees has been reported to be high especially in the settlements and even though there are some mental health services available, the participants described them as limited. One stakeholder described mental health as the "biggest morbidity among refugees".

3.4 THEME 4: UNDERSTANDING OF REFUGEE INTEGRATION

During the KIIs and the FGDs, the participants shared what their "understanding of integration" was. This was important in order to determine how they conceptualize the term and the translation on the ground. Participants described integration as an important aspect of belonging and as part of a durable solution for refugees in Uganda. It was explained as involving refugees and the HC peacefully coexisting and sharing resources and the ability of refugees to find a sense of belonging, adjust to the new environment and have access to the fundamental human rights. For them integration was described in three main categories which include the legal, economic, and social and cultural. Although political and civic participation is an important element of integration, the participants rarely defined integration in that lens.

3.4.1 LEGAL INTEGRATION

The participants described integration as being able to have access to the fundamental rights in the same manner as the citizens of the country. These include the right to work, protection under the law, education, health care and participation in civic engagements. One stakeholder in Kampala described integration as:

> Local integration is basically ensuring the rights of refugees are at the same level literally like nationals. The social, economic, physical, all those rights. (Stakeholder)

Integration was further described as being able to be naturalized or to gain citizenship. This was described as a major aspect of refugee integration although in Uganda is not practically realized. The Uganda Citizenship and Immigration Control Act (UCICA)[1] makes provisions for this, but this right is not accessible. Some of the challenges included are the strict and complex application requirements and processes. And sometimes the officials' denial of these rights to individuals who meet the criteria.
This is explained by one of the stakeholders interviewed:

> That a refugee in the host country has to fully integrate in society legally. Thereby becoming, say, a citizen. But when you look at it in a broader sense, in the context of Uganda, because that legal refugee integration, even in most African contexts, is not something being realized. (Stakeholder)

3.4.2 ECONOMIC INTEGRATION

During the interviews, intervention was described as the ability to participate and contribute to the economy of the country. This can be through gainful work participation, recognition of their qualifications acquired abroad, opportunities to integrate into all the employment

[1] https://mia.go.ug/resources/acts/uganda-citizenship-immigration-control-act

industries and the ability to participate in business without any restriction or discrimination. When asked to define integration one of the participants indicated that:

> So, we can talk about economic integration. How are the refugees finding a space in the economic space of the area where they are? Are they able to access economic facilities that can sustain their living? This is linked to livelihoods, refugees are doing business with host communities. Some have started organizing jointly. So, when it comes to the economic bit, refugees and host communities are doing business together. (Stakeholder)

Refugees can participate in some aspects of the economy mainly in business together with the HC. They were also reported to be starting businesses e.g. restaurants, nightclubs, bars and hotels, and organisations. Through this, they contribute to the economy of the HC by employment creation and paying taxes. However, when it came to integration in the formal sector there was a huge gap indicated because there are some specific sectors reserved for citizens. Given the challenges that most refugees experience in naturalizing, this seems to be a far-fetched reality for most.

3.4.3 SOCIAL INTEGRATION

The data also revealed that for integration to occur, the social aspect must be considered, for example issues of cultural exchange, peaceful co-existence and community collaboration. When asked to explain integration some of the participants explained that it involves the way in which the refugees live alongside the local people and are able to participate in the same community activities. The Ugandan community was described as receptive, accommodative and willing to share resources including land, schools, water and hospitals. They also engaged in intermarriages between the refugees and the host community; an example given was the intermarriages between the Madis in Adjumani. The participants, however, also indicated that there are some aspects affecting social integration, for example tensions over land rights and tribal differences especially in Kampala where some refugees prefer keeping to their small enclaves.

Social integration was also described as the ability to live without any fear of attack and harm from the HC, other refugees and from the persecution that they were facing in their countries of origin. Although Uganda was indicated to be relatively safe for refugees, some lived in fear of persecution. Some refugees mentioned that they are living in the same settlements with people whom they fled from in their countries, which threatens their security.

3.5 THEME 5: BARRIERS TO REFUGEE INTEGRATION

3.5.1 LEGAL BARRIERS

The Ugandan Refugee Act of 2006 and 2010 Refugee Regulations, align with international refugee laws and are regarded as one of the most progressive refugee policies in Africa due to its emphasis on inclusion, self-reliance and integration. However, the findings from the interviews indicated some shortfalls especially in the implementation of the regulations which in turn affects the integration of refugees. The government's Refugee Desk, under the Office of the Prime Minister, implements the Self-Reliance Strategy (SRS), which includes amongst others the freedom to work and movement, allocation of land and access to services. According to the interviewees the SRS has been clearly laid out on paper but there are challenges in the implementation because the resources available or given to the refugees are not adequate to realise self-reliance. For example, with access to land in the settlements, the plots of land that were allocated were reported to be too small to conduct sustainable farming that can be used

for income generation. Furthermore, the policy has been structured in a way to favour refugees living in settlements and minimally the refugees in urban areas. As a result, they face greater vulnerabilities, limited support, and policy neglect. In explaining this some stakeholders indicated that:

> When you look at the legal framework or the provisions of the law, I think we fall short in many ways. Because the picture that is painted is one of a refugee being very comfortable, but in practice that's not what happens. We are speaking about self-reliance and resilience for refugees. And a lot of people have to move out of a certain designated area to look for alternative forms of livelihood. And from the outside this is not what it is. I think for any duty-bearer or any person that is formulating policies, they would need to rethink some of these things again because the numbers are only increasing and the humanitarian funding is only going down. (Stakeholder)

> The law is ambiguous when it comes to refugees in urban areas. Kampala is recognized as the 13th refugee hosting district. But in the ambiguity, it means when you come to Kampala, you're going to provide some of the services that are offered to your counterparts in the settlement…. It's more of a privilege as opposed to someone in the settlement. That's one way of putting it. (Stakeholder)

Naturalization of refugees in Uganda was indicated to be a long process, and the requirements are not easily accessible. This affects the sense of belonging, unlike in other countries whereby refugees can apply for citizenship after a few years of being granted the refugee status, in Uganda you can only apply after 20 years given that you meet all the other requirements[2]. Additionally, Uganda does not grant citizenship by birth unless they inherit the nationality from the parents, and it was indicated that some parents leave their countries of origin without documentation, therefore, it becomes difficult to officially register their children thus leading to statelessness. Not having a Ugandan identity document blocks the refugees access to certain rights and privileges for example employment in certain trades and access to loans.

> So, what remains a very difficult question to achieve is legal integration, where you see a refugee attaining citizenship of the country. It is something that is not really working. (Refugee)

Furthermore, the participants indicated that the process from the asylum registration to getting an ID document should be 3 to 6 months but at times the process can take several months to a few years. That affects the integration of refugees because they cannot access some fundamental rights and services without the refugee ID. Amongst the legal barriers were issues on land ownership. The study indicated that the refugees are not allowed to purchase land, but they are allocated temporary small plots for agriculture, or they can acquire land through a leasehold of up to 99 years. Furthermore, the data indicated that the refugees do not have the right to vote or participate in any public office. Excluding them hinders their integration because they cannot take part in decisions that affect them. Some of the participants indicated that most of the disparities between the law and practice are political and there is no political will to address these.

3.5.2 ECONOMIC BARRIERS

Even though Uganda has a progressive policy environment providing land and freedom of movement and work, the findings of the study revealed that there are some factors that impede refugees from effectively contributing economically. Integration into the labor

[2] https://www.immigration.go.ug/citizenship/naturalisation

market was indicated to be a challenge due to the discriminatory nature of the employment processes in some industries; limited skills and educational training and strict processes in the equating of qualifications acquired from the refugees' home countries. The cost of equating qualifications by Uganda National Examinations Board (UNEB) and the National Council for Higher Education (NCHE) is around UGX 200,000 to UGX 250,000 and for non-English qualifications there are additional costs since they must be translated, posing as an additional barrier[3].

> Those who are qualified, have difficulty in accessing employment simply because many of them need to get certification from the NCHE, which is a problem. Some of them face discrimination. For example, the doctors, we have examples of doctors who qualified from home, but they can't get the certification. So, the NCHE told them they have to go back and do an internship, a full year of internship before they get the certificate here. This varies from profession to profession. The same applies to lawyers. They can't even get licensed practice. (Stakeholder)

> So, in Kampala, I would say that the majority of them are in the informal sector, because we have not had a single case of a refugee, even regardless of the education they possess, you also know that in the public sector, there are those conditions. We have received high level, profile people. You have judges, you have engineers, you have medical doctors, surveyors, pharmacists. But they are here with us, and the majority of them are more into the informal sector. (Stakeholder)

Due to the challenges in integrating into the labor market, many refugees end up in low-paying jobs or in the informal sector. Integrating into the informal sector was also mentioned to come with its own barriers like lack of funds to start businesses coupled with the fact that they sometimes cannot get trading licenses from the Kampala Capital City Authority (KCCA), and for some, limited access to loans limiting the possibility of growth for some businesses. Furthermore, the economic barriers to integration were further exacerbated by the limited opportunities both for employment and businesses especially in the settlements. With limited opportunities for livelihood, most refugees found themselves in hopeless situations impacting both their physical and mental health and their ability to have control over their livelihood. Due to the limited economic activities especially in the settlements, many men have left their families and migrated either to the cities or back to their home countries leaving women and children.

Furthermore, the economic barriers to integration also included overpopulation and limited resources, for example funds and land which is small for self-sustenance. The monthly payments that are given to some of the refugees in the settlements was not enough and also considered to create dependency for refugees which could be a barrier to long term economic integration.

3.5.3 SOCIO-CULTURAL BARRIERS

Many of the migrants hosted in Uganda are predominantly from non-English speaking countries. With this, the refugees experienced language barriers especially in the employment sector, education and in the business sector. In some public spaces, for example the hospital it was indicated that it was particularly difficult although in some hospitals they have interpreters. Discrimination and abuse was experienced in formal and social settings whereby the refugees experienced discrimination in form of unfair treatment and hiring practices in employment, abuse and name calling in the community and at school for children and rental hikes for refugees especially in Uganda.

> So, they hike the rent. You know, when you go to buy something, if you don't know the

[3] https://eservices.uneb.ac.ug/es/equating/app

> language, they say, no, this person is a strange person, he is a foreigner. And that will increase the amount of things you want to buy .(Refugee)

> So even at school, we started feeling some kind of discrimination. They started calling us some names. I don't want to mention them, like, go back to Somalia, you're this, you're that. That's when I felt like I'm not at home. Children are beaten at school. Like, they're not safe. Someone bumps into you and then he starts abusing you, like, he wants to beat you up. (Refugee)

Clashes between the refugees and the Host community were raised, mainly because of conflict over limited resources as some of the HC perceive refugees as causing pressure on the available resources and as benefiting more than them. The findings also revealed that conflict in the settlements was also caused by reports that refugees were blamed for attacking the HC especially during the night to steal money and other items from them. This was mainly linked to a reduction in funding that left some refugees without adequate money for their needs and issues around drug abuse that is on the rise in the settlements. Furthermore, land disputes were common, for example, there were reports that some HC members rented their land to the refugees for farming but sometimes claimed back the land before the refugees could harvest their produce.

3.5.4 LACK OF INFORMATION, FEAR AND LIMITED SECURITY

Lack of information was identified as a significant barrier to refugees' integration in Uganda. For example, some refugees explained that they did not have information on their rights, information on where to access some resources for example education and organisations that they could find support. This resulted in missed opportunities for some, vulnerability to exploitation and poor decision making. Overall, Uganda provided a safe environment for most refugees, but some mentioned that they do not feel safe because they find themselves living in the same settlements as people who they fled from. One of the refugees in Adjumani explained that:

> But most of us, we have faced rape cases and domestic violence. We find it so difficult to sustain ourselves here because some of our perpetrators also came and sought refuge in the same country where we are staying. How can I seek refuge at the same time where the perpetrators are staying? Or maybe their families, I'm seeing them here enjoying their life and my life. I already lost it because of their family. So, it is so painful. And whenever I walk on the road, I feel like I'm still scared. And I have developed the heart condition because I always fear and all that. (Refugee)

3.6 FACILITATORS OF INTEGRATION

Numerous factors facilitating refugee integration were raised during the field work. Legal and policy frameworks were mentioned as key facilitators to the integration of refugees. The participants mentioned the Ugandan refugees policies as some of the best in the world; however, they indicated there is a need for other Ugandan domestic policies to take refugees into consideration. For example, the 1995 Constitution and the Land Act, Cap 236 still restricts refugees from ownership of land which together with housing ownership, were mentioned as important facilitators to refugee integration.

Language, communication and access to information are considered key requirements of refugee integration. The ability to speak and understand the HC's language helps the refugees to navigate in certain environments. Also access to information and sensitization is essential for them to understand their rights, entitlements and services available for them in

the HC. Access to information facilitates the HC's ability to co-exist with the refugees. One of the refugees described how language has facilitated a livelihood opportunity for him:

> Well, actually, there is some project I was thinking of. You know, refugees, they suffer because of lack of knowledge. Yes. Refugees, as I said, I went to the Refugee Law Project, I studied English. Now, that little English I studied from there, it is giving me bread. (Refugee)

Education, skills training and access to a livelihood strategy (business and employment) were identified as core capabilities that facilitate the development of other capabilities and quality of life. The above were identified as facilitators for access to other resources and rights that are essential for integration. For example, possessing some skills was seen to increase the chance to engage economically. Multi-stakeholder (Governmental and Non-governmental) collaboration and harmonization of certain systems and a bottom-up approach to ensuring the rights of refugees are protected were also explained to be essential facilitators that need to be taken into consideration for refugee integration.

Access to resources that are essential for a refugee's wellbeing for example access to health and social services were also noted to be fundamental to realise integration and resilience. Lastly the participants described having programs or activities that help build trust and interaction between refugees and host communities to reduce tension. For example, cultural events, sports and community projects promote inclusion. Social relationships are noted as major facilitators of the integration of refugees.

"WE HAVE REFUGEES WHO HAVE BEEN HERE 20, 25 YEARS. THEY WERE BORN HERE. SOME AND THEIR PARENTS WERE HERE. AND IF THESE PEOPLE WENT BACK TO THEIR COUNTRIES OF ORIGIN, THEY WOULD BE MORE FOREIGNERS THAN CITIZENS OF THEIR COUNTRY. SO, I THINK WE NEED TO HAVE A DIALOGUE WITH THE GOVERNMENT TO HAVE THAT KIND OF, TO LOOK INTO THIS AND BE ABLE TO INFLUENCE THE CHANGE OF THE POLITICAL WILL. AND OF COURSE, THEN PUT IN PLACE MUCH CLEARER POLICIES ON THIS QUESTION".
(HOST COMMUNITY MEMBER)

4. IDENTIFYING KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS FOR REFUGEE INTEGRATION

During the KIIs the participants were asked to identify some of the possible indicators that could be used to measure refugee integration in Uganda. These provided a basis for the development of the KPIs for refugee integration in Uganda. The researchers also referred to the work of other researchers, scholars and government documents especially in Uganda (Khasalamwa-Mwandha (2021), Opono et al., Uganda's 2017 ReHoPe Strategic Framework, Mena, (2018) Wamara et al. (2022) in order to develop a framework that is context specific. Other international frameworks were used in informing the development of this framework for example work by Ager and Strang (2008) and the 2019 UK Home Office Indicators of Integration Framework (2019).

The KPI Framework is founded on Human rights as critical in shaping the legal, ethical, and practical frameworks for the integration of refugees into host societies. Integration is deeply rooted in the recognition and protection of the fundamental human rights of refugees. Hence the researchers acknowledge that recognizing and upholding the rights of refugees as enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) and the 1951 Refugee Convention, 1969 OAU Convention and the 2006 Refugees Act Uganda, and its 2010 Refugee Regulations. The framework also consist of makers which are the measurements or a set of quantitative and qualitative indicators used to monitor, evaluate, and guide refugee integration. Lastly the framework consists of facilitators which are the enablers or factors that promote, enable, or accelerate the process. Importantly is the ability of organisations, stakeholders, communities and individuals to work together towards setting measurable indicators and in ensuring that their interventions are measurable according to common standards.

The proposed KPI was shared with stakeholders that participated in a 2 days' workshop in Kampala Uganda. Through this workshop, the proposed KPI was refined by stakeholders in multiple discussion and feedback sessions during the workshop. Below is the proposed Key Performance Indicator (KPI) Framework containing indicators that could be considered when developing, monitoring, evaluating, and guiding refugee integration in Uganda.

Table 2: Developed Key Performance Indicator Framework

FOUNDED ON HUMAN RIGHTS	
1. Legal Protection and Civic Involvement	
Indicators	**Facilitators**
Number of refugees possessing refugee identity cards or certificate of attestation	☐ Laws and policies that grants access to rights and services for refugees ☐ Avenues for participation in host community-local government planning or coordination forums ☐ Access to information on rights ☐ Advocacy ☐ Education and training ☐ Non-discrimination ☐ Access to institutions and processes
Percentage of birth registrations of refugee children born in Uganda	
Number of refugees with access to birth registrations, death certificates and deed poles	
Number of refugees with access to legal aid or dispute resolution mechanisms	
Access to citizenship for refugees qualifying for citizenship	
Participation of refugees in host community-local government planning or coordination forums	

Percentage of refugees participating in NGOs, community-based organizations (CBOs), or cooperatives	
Number of refugees awareness of their legal rights and responsibilities	
Number of community bases sensitization workshops on rights	
Percentage of refugees participating in informal community elections or leadership selection	
Percentage of refugees with access to refugee passports/ travel documents	
Number of female refugees participating in refugee representatives' local elections and decision-making dialogues	
Number of female refugees in decision making/leadership positions	
2. Education Inclusion	
Indicators	**Facilitators**
Number of refugee children of school going age enrolled in primary and secondary education	☐ Laws and policies that grant the right to education for all. ☐ Availability of teaching and learning materials ☐ Availability of adult education opportunities and accelerated education opportunities ☐ Opportunities for affordable primary and secondary education ☐ Language ☐ Transport ☐ Advocacy to ensure access to education
Number of schools with access to schools with teaching and learning materials (scholastic materials)	
Number of adult or young refugees with access to accelerated education or alternative education opportunities	
Number of refugee children with access to affordable primary and secondary education	
Number of refugees with access to bursaries or scholarships	
Number of advocacy initiative/campaigns to ensure access to education	
Number of refugees children/adults with the required documentation to register for education	
Ratio of student to teaching staff	
Number of basic educational facilities (primary and secondary) existing in the community	
Number of refugees with access to vocational training and tertiary education	
Number of schools with mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) in schools	
Access to equating and translation (academic documentation)	
Availability of feeding schemes in the educational settings	
Access to gender specific interventions in educational settings	
Proportion of children with different abilities who can access education	
Percentage of school attendance and dropout rates among refugee students	

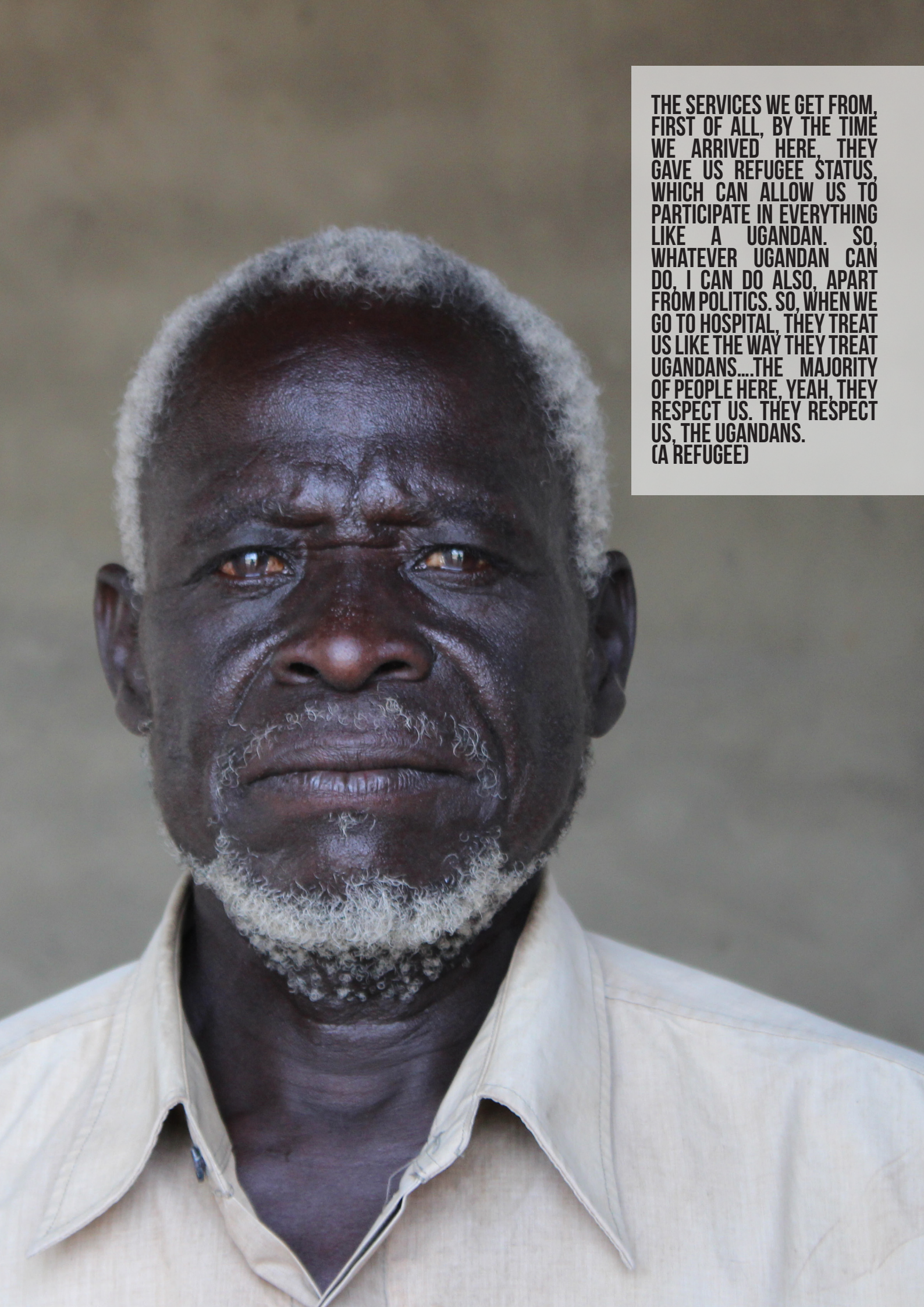
3. Livelihood (Employment and Income Generation)	
Indicators	**Facilitators**
Percentage of refugees of working age with access to paid work or self-employment	☐ Law and policy granting access to employment in all sectors. ☐ Access to paid work or self-employment and business registrations for refugees in the working age. ☐ Access to financial services to invest in businesses, land for farming and educational and vocational training programmes ☐ Language ☐ Education and training ☐ Access to information
Number of refugees owning businesses or who have registered businesses	
Number of refugees with successfully registered businesses	
Number of refugees absorbed into the formal employment sector	
Average income levels of refugee households	
Number of refugees accessing to monthly cash transfers or food assistance	
Percentage of refugees participating in vocational or livelihood programmes	
Access to vocational training, business opportunities and employment for the elderly population	
Number/proportion of refugees employed by locals and vice versa	
Participation of refugees and the host community in cocreated economic activities	
Refugee participation in financial inclusion initiatives (community savings groups)	
Number of refugees with access to loans and business start-up capital	
Number of refugees accessing existing livelihood programmes (from government and other stakeholders)	
Number of refugees contributing to the country's tax system	
4. Land and Housing	
Indicators	**Facilitators**
Number of refugees accessing land from locals with formal documentation	☐ Policy and law making provisions for adequate housing and land ownership for refugees. ☐ Availability of affordable housing (rental prices, lease terms) and land plots accessible to refugees. ☐ Access to information ☐ Legal advice and support
Number of refugees with access, ownership, control and utilizing land	
Number of refugees with access to residential and agricultural land	
Number of refugees with average size of land plots	
Access to clean water, sanitation facilities and energy sources for refugees and host communities.	
Access to information about land acquiring and mediation/ facilitation (local councils)	
Level of cooperation between the HC and refugees in accessing and using land	
Decreased rate in lawful evictions, land wrangles, disputes about rights	
Number of refugees in urban areas with safe and decent housing	
Number of refugees using smart agriculture to fully utilize their plots and homestead	

5. Health and Wellbeing	
Indicators	**Facilitators**
Accessibility to a primary health care (day to day visits, immunisation, nutrition)	☐ Policies and laws granting access to health care for all including refugees. ☐ Access to clinics, hospitals and specialised care including mental health, disability, and sexual/ reproductive health services. ☐ Language ☐ Sensitization ☐ Transport
Access to specialized care including SRHR, chronic disease management and care	
Number of refugees living in close proximity to a health facility (less than 5km)	
Availability of programmes or services for mental health support	
Number of medical professionals in refugee hosting communities	
Number of mental health sensitizations conducted	
Number of pastoral care and spiritual/faith support initiatives in refugee hosting communities	
Number of programmes targeting substance abuse	
6. Social Cohesion and peaceful co-existence	
Indicators	**Facilitators**
Number of refugees and host community members participating in peace building initiatives and dialogues conducted in refugees hosting places	☐ Programs encouraging interaction between refugees and host communities. ☐ Support from local leaders and community organizations. ☐ Conflict resolution mechanisms. ☐ Language and information ☐ Number of refugees and host community participating in peacebuilding or dialogue initiatives ☐ Availability of safe and neutral spaces to meet for dialogues
Number of cultural inclusion activities in refugee hosting areas	
Number of host community and refugees attending spiritual and faith initiatives together	
Decreased negative narrative towards migrants (media, local institutions)	
Refugees and local people sharing resources (facilities, markets, boreholes, grazing land and forest) in the community	
Number of inter-generational dialogues held annually in the refugee settlements and host communities	
7. Peace and Security	
Indicators	**Facilitators**
Proportion of refugees who report feeling safe in and around settlements	☐ Training of officials working with refugees Availability of SGBV reporting mechanisms and survivor support services ☐ Access to child protection services (e.g., reporting abuse, child-friendly spaces) ☐ Availability and accessibility of police, community neighbourhood watch, security services and safe spaces in the settlements or host communities
Number of peace building/campaigns/dialogues conducted	
Incidence of violence, crime, or exploitation in refugee-hosting areas	
Number of police officials and security services in refugee hosting communities	
Availability of alternative dispute resolution (ADR) through mediation, arbitration, reconciliation and negotiation	

5. CONCLUSION

In this final section, we provide a summary of the findings of this study and suggest some key recommendations from the KIIs and the FGDs. These recommendations are aimed at providing directions for discussions on ways to ensure that the integration of refugees in Uganda is realised and to guide future research work. The findings of the study provides an understanding of Uganda as a country that is open to hosting refugees from across Africa and beyond the continent through its progressive policies and support provided to the refugees. What is clear in the study is that Uganda is an environment consisting of support, and opportunities mixed with difficulties and barriers that affect the ability of some refugees to fully integrate into the social and economic fabric of the society. Evident is the fact that the policies are progressive, however the implementation on the ground was a challenge mainly due to resource shortages, discrimination, lack of will from departments and stakeholders involved and other systemic issues that interplayed in blocking the integration of refugees. Other practical barriers such as language, limited skills and education and economic status. This limited their ability to have full control of their lives or shape their future. Although the settlement approach was considered to have its own merits for example it gave an opportunity for housing for many but the findings of the study showed that in fact it did not present opportunities for families to be self-reliant through agriculture. Thus, refugees had to find other survival mechanisms which were considered to be limited. Both Kampala and Adjumani had their own challenges while there was provision of more support in the settlements, economic opportunities were limited and in Kampala there were more economic opportunities but limited support. This limited their ability to fully integrate and as a way to cope some refugees had to move between both settings to try to complement what is not available in the other context.

It is evident that although the Ugandan government, UNHCR and other partner organisations are actively involved in providing support to refugees, the support and resources are not adequate and there is limited harmonization of efforts. What was clear is the need for platforms for different service providers to come together and map ways that they can work together or complement each other's activities. Lastly the research developed and proposed a KPI Framework that could be used to guide implementation and projects aimed at ensuring the integration of refugees in Uganda.



THE SERVICES WE GET FROM, FIRST OF ALL, BY THE TIME WE ARRIVED HERE, THEY GAVE US REFUGEE STATUS, WHICH CAN ALLOW US TO PARTICIPATE IN EVERYTHING LIKE A UGANDAN. SO, WHATEVER UGANDAN CAN DO, I CAN DO ALSO, APART FROM POLITICS. SO, WHEN WE GO TO HOSPITAL, THEY TREAT US LIKE THE WAY THEY TREAT UGANDANS....THE MAJORITY OF PEOPLE HERE, YEAH, THEY RESPECT US. THEY RESPECT US, THE UGANDANS.
(A REFUGEE)

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 ADVOCACY

The government of Uganda and other stakeholders need to address the gap between the law and the implementation on the ground, for example the implementation of the Uganda Citizenship and Immigration Control Act (UCICA), 1999 which grants the rights to naturalisation for refugees. More advocacy needs to be done targeting unfounded rejections to citizenship and late adjudications. There is a need for alternative ways for children born of refugees in Uganda who cannot obtain citizenship from the countries of origin of their parents to avoid the risk of statelessness.

Attention should be placed on the gaps between policy and other frameworks guiding refugee integration and what is on the ground particularly in promoting refugee self-reliance. There is a need to address the systemic gaps in service delivery, livelihood and developmental strategies for some strategies proposed to be effective and sustainable. Refugees need to be included in developing policies that have to do with their protection and integration.

Effort should be channelled towards advocating against unlawful detentions of refugees and deportations. Human Rights Advocates and Organisations need to sensitize refugees and refugee communities of their rights and ways and channels to follow when detained. The government officials and police should be sensitized and trained about the provisions of the Refugee Laws and procedures of protection for them to comply.

6.2 PRACTICAL PROGRAMMING RESPONSE

6.2.1 PSYCHOSOCIAL SUPPORT

Many organisations have psychosocial support services, but there is a need for comprehensive programmes that target issues on mental health and take into consideration the diverse experiences of the refugee population. Stakeholders need to collaboratively come up with innovative strategies to tackle mental health challenges which has been considered as a major challenge because of the past traumas and current experiences in Uganda. Psychosocial support should include elements of supporting gender based violence victims.

6.2.3 RESPONSES TO PROMOTE PEACEFUL CO-EXISTENCE

There is a need for programmes that sensitize the community, create platforms for community dialogue and social cohesion amongst refugees, and between refugees and the HC. Cultural activities, sports and recreation have been suggested as some of the powerful tools for co-existence and integration of refugees. There is a need to censure resource sharing amongst the HC and refugees, programmes should be inclusive of both refugees and the HC to reduce tensions.

6.2.4 LIVELIHOOD AND EMPLOYMENT OPTIONS

Refugees are faced with strict and discriminatory recruitment processes and coupled to this, limited opportunities for employment both in Kampala and Adjumani. There is a need to create training and employment opportunities for refugees including practising deliberate affirmative action in recruitment procedures. Vocational training and empowerment programmes should be accompanied by start-up capital or financial boost so that the refugees could be able to start businesses that can sustain them.

6.2.4 IMPLEMENTING THE PROPOSED KPI

There is a need to channel efforts towards sharing the proposed KPI Framework with different stakeholders and organisations who work with refugees in different platforms including in working groups, workshops and conferences. The KPIs could be used to develop programmes, guide implementation and monitor integration of refugees. The KPIs developed offer general guidelines to measure/guide the work with refugees, therefore it would be essential for organisations to adopt them and link with the strategic goals of their organisations.

6.3 DIRECTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

There is a need for research to in-depth explore the available training, empowerment and support programmes for refugees especially in the settlements to understand where there are gaps and also draw learnings from sustainable and impactful projects. This is important especially in increasing economic livelihoods for young people who have been reported to be idle and involved in criminal activities. For example, drawing learnings from initiatives such as the Smart Agriculture for Youth Empowerment in Adjumani where young people are taught innovative farming methods in their small pieces of land.

The study was conducted in only 2 of districts hosting refugees in Uganda, therefore, to ensure the development of more comprehensive interventions there is a need to understand the needs of refugees in other regions and also their perception of integration in Uganda. This research project will be followed by stakeholder engagements examining and discussing the findings of this study, recommendations and the proposed KPIs in order to plan on how they could be used to inform initiatives for the integration of refugees.

WHEN I ENTERED, I WAS RECEIVED VERY WELL. BECAUSE THEY KNEW THAT I CAME FROM SUDAN AND THE AREA WHERE I CAME. IT WAS A WAR ZONE AREA AND WHEN I CAME I TOLD THEM THAT I CAME FROM THIS REGION. THEY TOLD ME, NO, YOU ARE MOST WELCOME TO A PEACEFUL PLACE, AND YOU FEEL FREE. AND I HAVE BEEN RECEIVED VERY WELL AND I MANAGED TO COME TO KAMPALA.
(A REFUGEE)

APPENDIX A: DESK REVIEW

According to Concern Worldwide, as of 2023, Uganda is among the top 4 countries hosting the largest number of refugees in the world and the top country in Africa (Concern Worldwide, 2025). UNHCR statistics show that as of 28 February 2025, there were 1,829,606 refugees and 38,267 asylum seekers in Uganda (UNHCR, 2025). UNHCR further breaks down the total asylum seekers and refugees by country of origin as follows: South Sudan (54.0%), DRC (31.5%), Sudan (3.9%), Eritrea (3.2%), Somalia (2.8%), Burundi (2.4%), Rwanda (1.3%), Ethiopia (0.8%), and Others (0.1%) (UNHCR, 2025). Uganda grants refugee status to an individual through assessment of a given asylum application. In addition, it provides for "prima facie refugee status". Tshimba (2022) explains that prima facie refugee status is granted to refugees who fled their country en-masse, sought asylum as a collective influx and were granted asylum as a group (Tshimba, 2022). Granting of this asylum status is based on the expanded definition of a refugee in the OAU Refugee Convention of 1969[v]. The prima facie route in Uganda is currently limited to asylum seekers from South Sudan, DRC, and Burundi (Tshimba, 2022).

Table 3: Refugee percentages by country of origin

Country of origin	Percentage	Population
South Sudan	52.7%	1,016,247
Dem. Rep. of the Congo	32.7%	629,961
Sudan	4.4%	85,384
Eritrea	3.0%	58,254
Somalia	2.6%	50,617
Burundi	2.3%	44,849
Rwanda	1.3%	24,591
Ethiopia	0.8%	15,692
Others	0.1%	1,998

Source: UNHCR & OPM (2025)

UGANDA'S REFUGEE MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

Responsibility for managing the asylum seeker and refugee system in Uganda is held by the Department of Refugees, which falls under the Office of the Prime Minister (Tshimba, 2022). This shows the high-level focus that refugees receive in Uganda.

Uganda's overall approach to refugee management promotes non-encampment, self-reliance, and community integration. This method is governed by various international legal instruments, including the 1951 Refugee Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, the 1967 Additional Protocol, and the 1969 OAU Convention Governing Specific Aspects of the Refugee Problem in Africa. At the national level, this approach is supported by the Ugandan Constitution, the Refugees Act of 2006, and its 2010 Refugee Regulations.

All rights availed to refugees towards self-reliance and local integration have been

enacted in the Uganda 2006 Refugees Act. Article 29 outlines those rights, including the right to access education, employment, agriculture, commerce, own property, transfer property and the right to practice in one's qualified profession (Uganda Refugees Act, 2006). Article 30 (1) further provides refugees with the right to freedom of movement (Uganda Refugees Act, 2006). And Article 45 states that all naturalisation processes available under the Uganda Constitution also apply to individuals with refugee status (Uganda Refugees Act, 2006).

Additional tools have been developed to guide implementation of the national integration and self-reliance exercise including the following; the 1999 Self-Reliance Strategy (SRS) - which became the 2003 Development Assistance to Refugees Hosting Area Programme (DAR), the 2015/16 to 2019/20 National Development Plan 2 (NDP11), the 2017 Refugee and Host Population Empowerment Strategy (ReHoPE), the 2021-2025 Jobs and Livelihoods Integrated Response Plan for Refugees and Host Communities in Uganda (JLIRP), the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (CRRF), and the Settlement Transformative Agenda (STA).

Development partners within Uganda have also ensured that their government support is aligned with the overreaching goal of self-reliance and integration of refugees. These goals have been incorporated into donor programmes, including the UNDAF (UN Development Assistance Framework) and the UN-World Bank Trust Fund.

REFUGEE SETTLEMENTS IN UGANDA

Uganda is among only three African countries that promote a non-encampment policy for refugees, with South Africa and Egypt as the other two. While freedom of movement is a right granted to refugees under Article 30(1) of the 2006 Refugees Act, this freedom of movement is qualified in Article 44 (Uganda Refugees Act, 2006). The Act states that individuals awaiting processing of asylum claims may only stay in gazetted transit centres – Art 44(1a), while those to whom refugee status has been granted may only stay in "refugee settlements" – Art 44(1b). The Act further indicates that any asylum seeker or refugee who wishes to live in a place other than a designated one must first seek approval from the authorities – Art 44(2). Lastly, the Act states that the government will support refugees and promote self-reliance of those residing in designated areas or authorised alternatives – Art 44(4).

The above stipulations have resulted in refugees benefitting from humanitarian assistance (including food and cash transfers) from both the government and aid organisations while residing in gazetted settlements (Uganda Refugees Act, 2006). Refugees are additionally provided with land for food cultivation and building houses (UNHCR, 2025).

Refugee settlements are located in 11 districts of the country. The settlements are Achol-Pii, Agojo, Alere 2, Ayilo 2, Baratuku, Bidi Bidi, Boroli, Imvepi, Kiryandongo, Kyaka II, Kyangwali, Maaji, Mirieyi, Mungula, Nakivale, Nyumanzi, Oliji, Olua I, Oruchinga, Pagirinya, Palabek, Palorinya, Rhino Camp and Rwamwanja. Where the land has not been gazetted, the government negotiates with landowners to establish a settlement (UNHCR, 2024).

As per UNHCR data (derived from the Uganda OPM Office), the table below gives a distribution of refugees by district as of 28 February 2025 is highlighted below (UNHCR, 2025).

Table 4: Refugee Numbers by District, as of June 2025

Location	Percentage	Population
Isingiro	14.2%	274,341
Madi Okollo & Terego	13.7%	264,564
Adjumani	12.0%	231,807
Yumbe	10.8%	208,180

Kiryandongo	8.2%	158,224
Kampala	8.2%	157,310
Kikuube	7.9%	151,802
Obongi	7.3%	141,256
Kyegegwa	7.0%	135,681
Kamwenge	5.4%	103,412
Lamwo	4.8%	92,940
Koboko	0.3%	6,363

Source: OPM & UNHCR (2025)

CONCEPT AND DEFINITION OF REFUGEE INTEGRATION

According to UNHCR, there are 3 durable solutions and pathways for asylum seekers once they are certified as refugees in a host country. The first is voluntary repatriation whereby the person returns to their country of origin with informed consent and once the country is safe. Where conditions are unlikely to improve in their country of origin, refugees are left with two options: resettlement and local re-integration. With protracted and repeated conflicts in the world, most refugees spend many years in host countries without the possibility of voluntary repatriation to their countries. Resettlement and local integration are therefore now the more feasible solutions. Resettlement is a process whereby a refugee is settled in a third country from where they received refugee status, with the consent of the receiving country. This pathway has become less likely due to the recent wave of populism in many countries, where refugees are viewed as a security threat and an economic burden (Mena, 2018). As such, developed nations (the normal resettlement hosts) are less open to accepting refugees from other host countries. The most likely solution, therefore, remains permanent settlement and integration of refugees in the country in which they first sought asylum.

The concept and meaning of refugee integration are interpreted differently among states, migrants/refugees/asylum seekers, the communities of the host country, academics, and policymakers. Furthermore, the concept is an ever evolving one. As such, it is not possible to find one standard definition of refugee integration.

According to Pace and Simsek (Pace & Simsek, 2019) and Phillimore (Philimore, 2012), historically, local integration of refugees has been a hierarchical, top-bottom, and one-way process where sole responsibility for integration has been placed on the incoming population and is based on parameters pre-determined and demanded by the host state. Under this one-way model, the focus is primarily on reconciling differences between the newcomers and the host society. Several limitations have been identified with this approach. For one, there is very minimal consideration of the experiences and voices of the migrants themselves who must deal with the mandated processes of integration (Pace & Simsek, 2019). Furthermore, members of the host society and their experiences within the integration process are not factored in (Pace & Simsek, 2019). Lastly, the approach does not provide clarity around whose perspective local integration is being considered. For example, whether refugee integration is being assessed from the perspective of the receiving government, the migrants themselves and/or the host community members.

To circumvent some of the above limitations, refugee integration has, over time, expanded in scope and meaning. Academic literature approaches the meaning of refugee integration both as a literal definition and/or as a framework for operationalising the integration process. According to Harrell-Bond (Harell-Bond, 1985), refugee integration means the "co-existence between refugees and host community including sharing of social

resources and economic resources, with no more extra conflict than there would be within the host community itself". Heckman (Heckman, 2005) defines integration as "Long-lasting inclusion of refugees into core institutions, core relations and core statuses of the hosting community". As per Pennix (Pennix, 2004), refugee integration means "Integration into the host community culturally, socially, politically and economically". Castle et al. (Charles et al., 2002) and Castle and Miller (Castles & Miller, 1998) had earlier already expounded on Pennix's four categories as follows: cultural (learning the language and norms), social (getting social services like health and education), political (participation in processes like voting) and economic (participating in labour markets or business). Opono et al. (Opono & Ahimbisibwe, 2023) define refugee integration as a "2-way process, where migrants are infused into the political, social, and economic fabrics of the host society." Seyidov (Seyidov, 2021) summarises the meaning of refugee integration as "being amalgamated into the social fabric of society and being able to incorporate oneself and live harmoniously in a host society and forming holistic structures in society without losing heterogeneity". He further acknowledges the multi-dimensional nature of the process by further stating that refugee integration is influenced by economic, political, and environmental factors". According to Crisp (2004), "local integration is a process that consists of inter-related legal, economic and social/cultural dimensions". Crisp (2004) views the legal part to entail the acquisition of rights and entitlements from the host country, such as the right to employment & income generating activities, the right to owning property, freedom of movement and access to public services like education & health. These rights and entitlements also include being granted permanent residency or citizenship. The economic dimension is about the refugees attaining a level of self-sufficiency and standard of living that is comparable to the average in the host community. Finally, the social/cultural dimension is whereby the refugees "can live among the host population without fear of systematic discrimination, intimidation or exploitation by authorities or members of the host community" (Mena, 2018).

International organisations working with migrants have similar definitions of refugee integration. According to IOM 2011 and IOM 2017 (Data Catalogue, 2022), refugee integration is "the process by which migrants become accepted into society, both as individuals and as groups and refers to a 2-way process of adaptation by migrants and host societies." IOM states that this process includes consideration of the rights and obligations of migrants and host societies; access to different kinds of services and the labour market; and identification/respect for a core set of values that binds migrants and host communities in a common purpose. As per IOM, concepts of refugee integration include "social inclusion and social cohesion". Social inclusion entails the full participation of refugees in the economic, social, cultural, and political spheres of the host communities. Social cohesion entails experiencing a lack of discrimination and xenophobia, as well as the promotion of mutual understanding.

Sovereign states also have their own definitions of refugee integration. For example, the British government, which is currently grappling with refugee management, defines it as "Communities where people, whatever their background live, work, and socialise together based on shared rights, responsibilities and opportunities" (UK Home Office, 2019).

From the various definitions above, the following can be summarised as key characteristics that encompass the refugee integration process: a) two-way; b) long-term; c) multi-dimensional and multi-faceted; d) involving migrants/refugees/asylum seekers, the receiving nation's policies, and members of the host community; and e) incorporating the rights and obligations of both the incoming and host populations.

In terms of summarising what a locally integrated refugee life could look like, Mena's article summarises it as including all the parameters below (Mena, 2018):

- Progressive access to a wide range of rights and entitlements of the host state.
- Living among and alongside the host population without fear of discrimination, intimidation, and exploitation.

- Economic self-sufficiency and standard of living that is comparable to that of the average population.
- Feeling at home in the host country.

UGANDA'S SPECIFIC APPROACH TO REFUGEE INTEGRATION

In Uganda's case, local integration is the preferred solution for its refugee management. The term refugee integration is governed by the 2017 ReHope Strategic Framework, which defines it along the lines of "self-reliance" and "empowerment" of refugees (Mena, 2018). Uganda places refugee management as part of the development agenda, as opposed to a standalone and short-term humanitarian issue. This approach mitigates several challenges present in the traditional humanitarian model of refugee support. Firstly, humanitarian programmes are of an emergency and short-term nature and do not provide sustainable solutions for refugees. Secondly, the programmes are normally funded by external donors and provide support only to the refugee population, which has been shown to create resentment from local populations in need as well. Thirdly, humanitarian programmes do not focus on self-reliance and local integration since the expectation is that refugees will voluntarily repatriate at some point.

Uganda's inclusion of refugees in the national agenda necessitates long-term, comprehensive and sustainable solutions. The approach ensures that resources are directed towards benefiting both refugees and local communities, thereby minimising tensions (Uganda Government, 2017). In allowing refugees access to socioeconomic services available to Ugandan nationals, the government ensures that refugees become independent and are not a perpetual burden to the state. The crucial provision of land for subsistence farming and home building further enhances that self-reliance. In providing pathways towards permanent residency and citizenship, Uganda ensures the ultimate marker of local integration (Uganda Government, 2017).

Literature suggests that due to this integration policy rooted in self-reliance, by 2015, 25% of refugees in Uganda made a living from different economic activities to augment the assistance provided by international humanitarian agencies, such as IOM and UNHCR (Opono & Ahimbisibwe, 2023).

The long-term nature of Uganda's integration and refugee management strategy is evident in the fact that the 2017 ReHoPe framework has a 20-year implementation timeline (Opono & Ahimbisibwe, 2023).

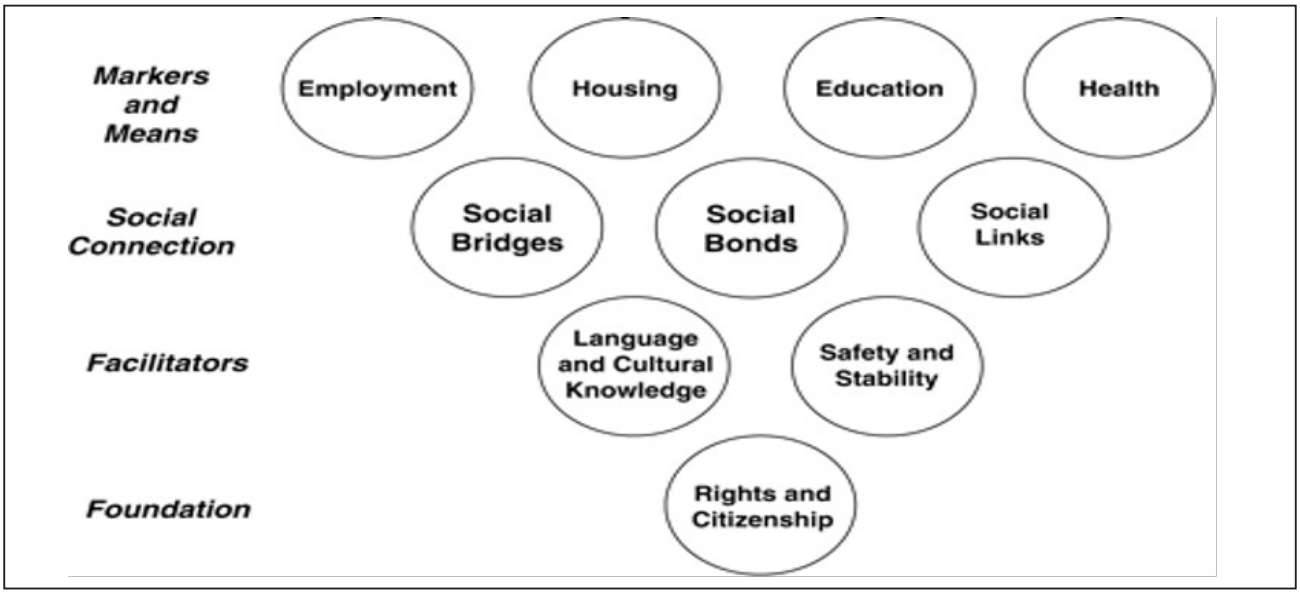
POSSIBLE INDICATORS FOR REFUGEE INTEGRATION

The discussions above have provided several definitions and ways of conceptualising the refugee integration process. However, there is a need to ascertain how refugee integration can be measured using indicators.

The framework most widely utilised and adapted by academics to measure refugee integration is the one proposed by Ager and Strang (Ager & Strang, 2008). This framework emanated from a study commissioned by the UK Home Office in 2002 and ended up as the 2019 UK Home Office Indicators of Integration Framework (UK Home Office, 2019).

The framework consists of 4 core domains that ensure successful integration of refugees and asylum seekers. These are: a) markers and means b) social connections c) facilitators d) foundation. Evaluation indicators can subsequently be developed within each of these domains towards measuring levels of refugee integration.

Figure 1: A Conceptual Framework Defining Core Domains of Integration



Source: Ager and Strang 2008, pag 170

Markers and means refer to key activities in the public domain that newcomers must participate in to achieve integration. This entails access to essential and basic services of employment, housing, education, and health. Without access to these basic livelihood services, a refugee cannot make any strides towards local integration. The UK Home Office Framework expounds on the role of markers and means as follows:

1) employment - economic independence allows active social roles, development of language, etc, that promote integration
2) education - creates employment opportunities, which in turn facilitates other markers
3) housing - impacts the sense of community and stability, which leads to more chances of making social connections
4) health and social care - good health and well-being allow for better social participation and engagement in employment and education activities
5) leisure – recreational activities allow for better social participation and engagement in employment and education activities.

Social connection is a second domain that is perceived as necessary to drive the process of integration. Access to basic services without social connections limits levels of personal integration. Social connections comprise social bonds, which are connections with others that have a shared sense of identity, epitomised by a lack of social isolation with like-minded people. The second aspect is social bridges, which are connections with people of different backgrounds, resulting in a lack of social segregation. The final connections are social links, which are linkages with institutions, including local and central govt services, shown by the ability to access rights and services within the new environment (voting and civic duties).

Take note that the concept of social connection captures the idea of newcomers maintaining links with people of shared identity, meaning that assimilation is not part of Ager and Strang's model of refugee integration.

Facilitators are those who help in actively removing barriers and creating opportunities for easier access to both public services and social connections in the new environment. Facilitators can be used as proxy indicators for local integration. Examples include language (sharing a common language makes it easier to connect with others and interact with public

services), culture (understanding local cultural values allows you to participate and integrate), digital skills (IT abilities promote social connections), safety (sense of safety and security provides the foundation for forming relationships), stability (feeling secure in every part of life creates social connections).

Foundation is the fourth domain proposed by Ager and Strang, comprising rights and citizenship. This domain relates to issues of nationhood and citizenship, plus the rights and responsibilities contained therein. The authors recognise that these concepts vary according to country and should, therefore, be assessed within a given local context (Ager & Strang, 2008) . For example, in Germany, naturalisation (as part of local integration) requires some level of assimilation. In France, naturalisation is a requirement for full participation in French local life. And in the USA, certain benefits in society can only be accessed with full citizenship. As such, indicators for this domain must be developed based on individual state context.

As will be seen below, Ager and Strang's model has been modified and adapted widely in literature, but the general premise remains the same. The 2022 Global Migration Data Portal (Data Catalogue, 2022) provides a list of similar indicators of refugee integration. The indicators include: labour market levels (employment rates, wages, occupation, activity rate), education levels (highest level, drop-out rates, grades, skills), health indices (healthy life years, life expectancy), social inclusion (property ownership, housing cost burdens, child poverty), social exclusion levels (discrimination, xenophobia), civic engagement levels (voting rights, representation in the political arena, public, share or long term residency and naturalisation), cultural inclusion (customs, traditions, language, and religion), financial inclusion (banking, savings, credit, insurance, advice), spatial inclusion (residential segregation by socio-economic status), public opinion (ability to integrate highly heterogenous and culturally diverse group of people), and role of media (inclusion and diversity in public service media).

Tyson (Tyson, 2017), Walther et al. (Walther & Kroger, 2020), and Strang and Quinn 2021[xlvii] (Strang & Quinn, 2021) in their work provide the following as some of the indicators for refugee integration: participation in the labour market, formal education, intra and inter-group relations, access to land, language acquisition, belonging, socio-economic mobility, cultural preservation, and visibility of the refugees in the community.

It may be argued that the above academic works aim at refugee integration into the developed world. However, literature does have studies from the African region that propose refugee integration indicators based on a more localised context. As will be seen below, those indicators cover similar parameters to those of Ager and Strang. Opono et al. (2023) conducted a study among South Sudanese refugees in the Adjumani district, assessing their sentiments and motivations around integration, which yielded potential indicators for integration. Interviews were conducted with refugees, refugee leaders and members of the local community. The study found that positive attitudes towards refugee integration correlated with access to employment (teaching, boda-boda drivers, causal labourers), access to grants and loans, access to productive land for agriculture (one with good size, good soil, and access to water source), access to labour markets for their produce (including good road networks), access to vocational skills training, ability to establishing businesses (including shops), ability to buy and build houses, access to good social services (health and education of one's choice), access to leisure activities and spaces, positive contact between refugees and host community, access to national documentation (including Uganda national ID), living in peaceful co-existence with the host community, and having family ties that further facilitate easier integration. The findings of the study were still categorised by Opono et al. (2023) using the Ager and Strang Framework of 2008.

Khasalamwa-Mwandha (2021) conducted 416 household and key informant interviews with South Sudanese refugees in selected settlements in the Adjumani district and attempted to assess interactions between the refugees and host communities and how this impacted access to resources and economic spaces. Through analysis of the various challenges encountered

by refugees, especially in remote areas, some possible measures of integration may be deduced, including levels of trade and informal exchanges, the extent of collective farming, labour exchanges, social and cultural inclusion/exclusion (sharing of religious, cultural, sporting activities and language), freedom of movement, access to employment, access to host community markets, access to health care, and user-rights to allocated plots of land.

Additional studies that interrogate issues of integration on the African continent include studies by Mena (Mena, 2018) with Somali and Eritrean refugees in Ethiopia and Wamara (Wamara et al., 2022) who compares integration models in Uganda and Zimbabwe.

Finally, proxy indicators for integration within Uganda's 2017 ReHoPe Strategic Framework include the following: access to basic social and support services (health, sanitation, education, legal), access to livelihood (employment, loans, skills training, village savings loans), access to protection (from conflict and against other shocks), access to land (land for farming and building homes), access to legal documentation (permanent residency and citizenship), and access to village savings and loan associations (to assist with savings).

CHALLENGES WITH REFUGEE INTEGRATION

While Uganda's model of integration has widely been touted as a beacon of hope for refugee integration, there are still a multitude of challenges around its implementation. Studies suggest that refugees and asylum seekers still leave designated settlements in search of additional opportunities (Tshimba, 2022). Once refugees willingly leave allocated settlements, they are considered as "self-settled refugees" (Tshimba, 2022). At that point, they are deemed as self-reliant and no longer eligible for humanitarian assistance available to those in the formal settlements (Tshimba, 2022).

But as stated in Tshimba 2022, the motivation for refugees leaving designated settlements in Uganda is not always a sign of self-reliance but also due to challenges with the settlement arrangement and local integration process (Tshimba, 2022). With many of the settlements designated in rural districts of Uganda, social, economic, and ecological challenges propel some refugees to leave the settlements and their associated benefits. For example, some refugees from DRC indicated that living without amenities that they were used to in their previous lives could be difficult, including reliable electricity, proper wi-fi and access to proper dress (Tshimba, 2022). Ecological factors were also reasons for leaving settlements, including the new area being too hot and infested with mosquitoes, resulting in continuous sickness and fatigue, especially among their children. Due to poor road networks and limited markets, refugees leave settlements in search of formal employment and access to resources for business enterprises and markets. For others, moving to self-designated places improves their chances of obtaining legal documents, including naturalisation papers. As one individual stated, urban areas have more available wi-fi, places where they can print and scan documents for applications, as well as ready access to the offices that process the applications (Tshimba, 2022). This then expedites the final integration step. For others, there was a need to live life away from the supervision of authorities and easy identification as refugees. Other refugees felt that living in designated settlements attracted stigma, with the host community viewing them as outsiders and charity cases (Tshimba, 2022). A unique challenge in Tsimba's study was the finding that ethnic and political differences from one's original country of conflict may, at times, carry over into refugee settlements, thereby forcing some to leave and become self-settled refugees in a neutral area (Strang & Quinn, 2021). In conclusion, some refugees in Uganda view the settlements model (rooted in self-reliance, empowerment, and integration) as a barrier to its intended local integration process.

According to Tshimba 2022, the Uganda model can further discourage local integration for another reason. Refugees who move out of designated settlements are considered self-reliant and lose access to the associated benefits. However, as seen above, self-reliance is

REFUGEES INTEGRATION IN UGANDA: PERSPECTIVE OF REFUGEES, STAKEHOLDERS AND THE HOST COMMUNITY

VISUAL SUMMARY OF THE RESEARCH

1 AIM

To understand the needs of refugees in Uganda and propose some Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) for refugees integration in Uganda

2 OBJECTIVES

- ☐ to identify refugees' support needs in Uganda;
- ☐ to assess perceptions of integration among refugees, locals, and stakeholders;
- ☐ to map existing welfare and integration programmes;
- ☐ to identify facilitators and barriers to refugee integration;
- ☐ to propose KPIs to measure refugee integration in Uganda.

3 METHODOLOGY

Qualitative approach guided by an intervention mapping framework, employing methods:
1. Desk review
2. Key Informant Interviews with refugees, host communities, and stakeholders.
3. Focus Group Discussions with refugees.

4 FINDINGS

THEME 1: LIFE IN KAMPALA VS SETTLEMENTS

Kampala percieved as a place of freedom, economic opportunity and self-reliance, especially through small businesses. However, life in the city was challenging due to high costs, poor housing conditions, limited access to support and barriers to education and transport. Limited assistance in Kampala led some refugees to move back and forth between the city and the settlements.

In Adjumani, refugees received land, materials to build shelter, health and education services, skills training and cash assistance. However, plots of land were small and increasingly unproductive, food and water shortages were common, cash assistance was insufficient, and funding cuts worsened conditions. Limited economic opportunities meant most people relied on small scale farming, remittances or selling firewood. Both environments offer trade-offs, and neither fully enables self-reliance.

THEME 2: EXISTING SUPPORT SYSTEMS

- ☐ Uganda provides legal aid, livelihoods training, education access, health/WASH services, and land/housing support, mainly in settlements.
- ☐ Services are helpful but underfunded, inconsistent, and insufficient for longterm integration.

THEME 3: KEY REFUGEE SUPPORT NEEDS

- ☐ Food security, livelihood opportunities, education access and skills training, and health/mental health support are major unmet needs.
- ☐ Funding cuts, limited economic and lack of start-up capital options fuel hopelessness, economic hardships and dependence
- ☐ Support with equating qualifications and registering with professional bodies

THEME 4: UNDERSTANDING INTEGRATION

- ☐ Integration is viewed as gaining legal rights, economic inclusion, and social belonging.
- ☐ Naturalisation and equal access to services are central but hard to achieve.

THEME 5: BARRIERS TO INTEGRATION

- ☐ Legal: Difficult naturalisation, delays in getting refugee documentation, policy–practice gaps.
- ☐ Economic: discrimination, unrecognised qualifications, lack of capital.
- ☐ Social: Language barriers, discrimination, tension with hosts.
- ☐ Information/Safety: Poor awareness of rights and trauma triggers in
- ☐ settlements.

THEME 6: FACILITATORS OF INTEGRATION

- ☐ Inclusive policies and implementation, welcoming attitudes, language, communication, access to information and social cohesion activities.
- ☐ Education, skills training and fair access to economic opportunities.
- ☐ Multi-stakeholder collaboration, harmonization of systems and a bottom-up approach in ensuring inclusion and intergration
- ☐ Access to resources (health care and social services)

5 RECOMMENDATIONS

- ☐ Close monitoring of the implementation of refugee protection laws and policies to bridge the gap between policy and practice
- ☐ Advocacy towards ensuring the rights of refugees including access to naturalisation for eligible refugees, education, health care and protection from detention
- ☐ Expand access to skills development, empowerment programmes, financial resources, and livelihood opportunities to foster refugee self-reliance and promote their inclusion in development planning and implementation processes
- ☐ Develop and institutionalise mechanisms to guide the design, implementation, and monitoring of integration programmes based on clearly defined standards and key performance indicators (KPIs)

6 DIRECTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

- ☐ In-depth research on lessons learned and existing gaps in refugee training and support programmes to inform future implementation
- ☐ Future research should examine the diverse needs of refugees across different hosting regions to support the design of more comprehensive interventions
- ☐ Conduct in-depth research on the interaction between policy, legal frameworks, strategic planning, and implementation in practice

not necessarily the case for moving out. Consequently, some refugees will desist from any attempts at further growth or expansion into the wider community for fear of losing out on the settlement benefits. The same self-reliance model could then potentially promote dependency. A closer look at this dichotomy is warranted.

The 2019 ReHoPe strategic framework does acknowledge practical challenges in the implementation of local integration. These include unfamiliarity with the language, navigating the legalities of asylum-seeking, poor interview skills for employment, lack of proper documents for employment, discrimination, community hostility and xenophobia.

Wamara (Wamara et al., 2022) also acknowledges that while the self-sufficiency model of Uganda is a good vision, it does face practical challenges. These include a shortage of start-up capital for businesses, limited demand and supply for produce, poor road networks to markets for produce, poor electricity supply for farms and businesses, and poor water supply for the farms. Refugees further complained that the allocated land was small of poor quality and did not allow productive crop production. Furthermore, despite the availability of vocational training, limited job market, discrimination, low pay, and language were still barriers to employment. Finally, there was recognition that despite freedom of movement and access to social services, refugees did not always have a choice in terms of which school or medical facility they could get services from. Refugees were frequently limited to services around their designated settlement, even when they would prefer a different quality (Wamara et al., 2022).

While the above studies acknowledge that the Uganda self-reliance/integration model is a positive thing, albeit with extreme challenges for implementation, other scholars do not believe that it improves the quality of life of refugees. Krause's (Krause, 2021) work in settlements in Uganda gave rise to her conclusion that the settlement approach does not lead to better services for refugees. Krause's study was on gender, violence, and coping mechanisms in settlements, as opposed to integration specifically. However, she found that violence (including gender-based violence) from countries people were fleeing continued into the settlement setting (Krause, 2021). As such, there was very limited empowerment and self-reliance under those circumstances (Krause, 2021). Bohnet and Schmidt-Pranghe (Bognet & Schmidt-Pranghe, 2019) argue that Uganda's self-reliance policy was not aimed at full social integration, let alone naturalisation, but rather temporary localised integration, up to the point when the refugees can return home.

Based on the above differing positions, a possible area of future research could be assessing how refugees and the host community view the potential of local integration through the settlements approach versus one that would allow choice of residence.

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NETWORK OF SCALABRINI STUDY CENTRES

CEMLA, Buenos Aires
Centro de Estudios Migratorios Latinoamericanos, established in 1985 in Buenos Aires (Argentina)
www.cemla.com

CSER, Rome
Centro Studi Emigrazione Roma, established in 1964 in Rome (Italy)
www.cser.it

CIEMI, Paris
Centre d'Information et d' Études sur les Migrations Internationales, established in 1971 in Paris (France)
www.ciemi.org

CEM, Sao Paolo
Centro de Estudios Migratorios, established in 1985 in Sao Paulo (Brazil)
www.missaonspaz.org

CMS, New York
Center for Migration Studies of New York, established in 1969 in New York (USA)
www.cmsny.org

SMC, Manila
Scalabrini Migration Center, established in 1987 in Manila (Philippines)
www.smc.org.ph

SCALABRINI MIGRATION STUDY CENTERS

The Federation of Scalabrini Centers for Migration Studies unites seven centres across the world, each devoted to research and advocacy on migration. Located in New York, Paris, Rome, Basel, São Paulo, Buenos Aires, and Manila, these centres monitor the development of international migration. All of them are organized with similar departments, including a program dedicated to research, another dedicated to specialized publications—including periodicals, monographs and academic papers—as well as programmes dedicated to documentation, conferences, and other educational activities.

SIMN
Scalabrini International Migration Network

The Scalabrini International Migration Network (SIMN) is an umbrella organization established in 2007 by the Congregation of the Missionaries of Saint Charles, Scalabrinians. SIMN encompasses more than 250 grassroots Scalabrini entities that serve and advocate for the dignity and rights of migrants, refugees, internally displaced people, and seafarers around the world. SIMN fulfils its mission through an extensive network of think tanks, social service centres, shelters, senior centres, orphanages, medical clinics, kindergartens, schools, employment centres, and cultural centres. SIMN works closely with other entities at the local, national, and international levels, promoting comprehensive service programs and advocating for the dignity and rights of migrants and their families.

SIHMA

Scalabrini Institute for Human Mobility in Africa

PEOPLE BEHIND THE FIGURES