

# INCOME GENERATING ACTIVITIES AS AN EMPOWERMENT INSTRUMENT

Case study of refugee women in Kiryandongo refugee settlement in Uganda



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requirements for the degree of Masters in Management of Development, with specialization  
in Gender, Youth and Social Inclusion

By  
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### **Dedication**

I dedicate this thesis to my parents, siblings and my late brother Aaron Stephen Ongeng. Your spirit lives on!

## **Acknowledgement**

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Thank you, everyone!

## Abstract

Empowerment has been a buzz word for quite some time among development organizations running poverty alleviation initiatives. This thesis provides insights on how income-generating activities (IGAs), as an empowerment instrument has influenced the social capital, collective action, leadership, skills building and decision-making for refugee women in order to develop strategies that integrate IGAs with the empowerment of refugee women. The study was carried out for six weeks in Kiryandongo refugee settlement in Uganda. It includes interviews with refugee women from South Sudan and Kenya to understand their experiences with IGAs, key informants to gain their expertise, two FGDs with refugee women and men from South Sudan descent, and triangulated my data through participant observation and informal conversations with refugee men, women and host community.

The research appreciates that IGAs have indeed contributed, to a large extent, towards empowering refugee women. It brings to attention the fact that refugee women and men define the concept of empowerment, agency and self-reliance based on their experiences and environment. This calls for development agencies to understand these concepts through the eyes of the beneficiaries. It also sheds light on how through IGAs, refugee women have created strong social capital which has contributed immensely to providing a source of financial security through the Village Saving and Loaning Associations (VSLAs) formed, and also formed solidarity to challenge the gender norms they faced before joining the settlement – i.e. ability to earn an income, run a business, make decisions on behalf of their families. Refugee women also appreciated the skills and dignity they acquired through the IGAs, which could be harnessed while still in the settlement and also upon return home. Furthermore, there was a noticeable shift in decision-making powers at the household level by the women, which powers they didn't have before coming to the settlement. This was largely attributed to the fact that most of the refugee women were now in female-headed households. Additionally, the research also unravels how existing community institutions affect the empowerment and agency of women family, social, and economic factors. These findings as such contribute to forming a basis for creating a sustainable refugee hosting model for a developing economy like Uganda.

The study concludes that indeed, IGAs have contributed to building self-reliance and agency of refugee women. Some refugee men, however, argue that the concept of women empowerment emasculated the men in the household. This is largely attributed to the fact that the development programs targeting refugees were aimed at mostly women and youth, excluding the men. The researcher as such recommends for development programs that are inclusive of women, men and youth to address gender norms. Lastly, the concept of women being the agents of change by creating VSLAs for economic empowerment is recommended to be adopted as better practice in implementing programs targeting to empower refugees. Locally sourced solutions are usually more sustainable.

**KEY WORDS:** Income generating activities, empowerment, agency, self-reliance, refugees, refugee women, refugee men, Kiryandongo refugee settlement, South Sudan.

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*Photo: World Food Programme (WFP) food storage facility in the settlement*

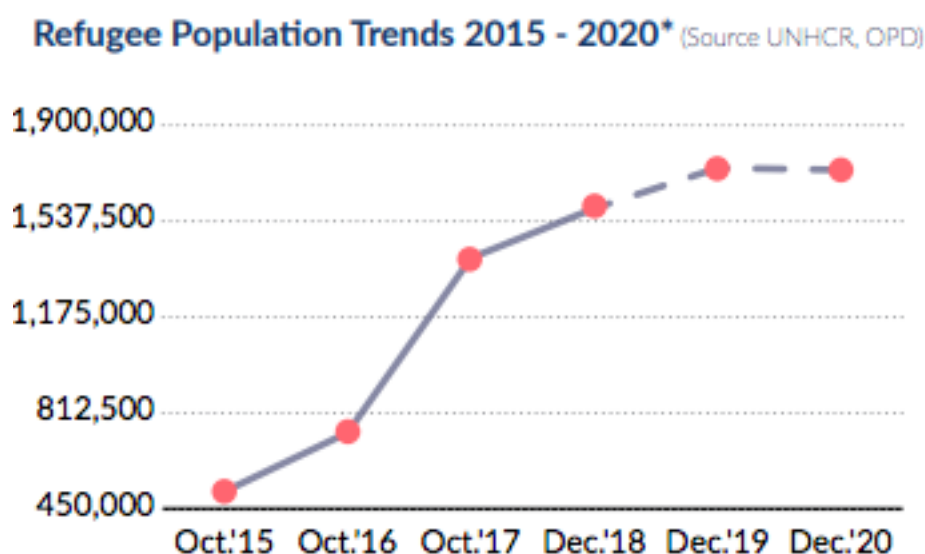
# CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Introduction

There is a growing global crisis of refugees worldwide, with people fleeing from their countries of origin across borders and oceans due to war, conflicts, and disasters that threaten their existence. In the last decade, people have been displaced and killed by some of the world's devastating calamities. A glaring instance was The 2015 Rohingya refugee crisis that saw a mass migration of approximately 25,000 people from Myanmar to South-Eastern Asia due to ethnic conflict (UN Women, 2018a) and the Syrian civil war that has displaced over 5,600,000 people as of May 2019 (UNHCR, 2019a). Likewise, Uganda hasn't been spared from this crisis as it continues to be a safe haven for most of its neighbours like South Sudan, Kenya, Democratic Republic of Congo, Burundi, Rwanda, seeking refuge from civil war and conflict (UNICEF, 2018). Following the 2016 war in South Sudan, there was an influx of South Sudanese refugees into the country, doubling Uganda's refugee population from 500,000 to over 1.2 million in a year, making it the third-largest refugee population in the world after Turkey and Pakistan (Coggio, 2018). It was projected this number could grow up to 1.8 million by the end of 2018, according to the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA, 2018). This high refugee arrival has mostly been attributed to Uganda's refugee hosting policy that has been publicised as the "most generous" in the world (Schiltz et al., 2019). Refugees in Uganda are accorded almost equal rights as its citizens; they have the freedom to get employment, run businesses, have access to land, have free movement and live side-by-side with the host community.

**Figure 1: Population trend of refugees in Uganda over last 5years**



Source: adapted from (UNHCR, 2019c)

During displaced conflicts, the vast majority of those affected are usually women and children. With the new arrivals from South Sudan in the past 3years for instance, it was estimated they made up 21 percent and 66 percent respectively (UNHCR, 2017), with 13 percent of them being men. Due to this, UNHCR (2014) argues that it is one of the reasons for an increase in the number of female-headed households as women have to rise to the occasion of caring for their families while in exile and looking for long-lasting solutions in the absence of their husbands. This is because in times of war, the men either opt to seek employment opportunities elsewhere, go to war to fight or they are killed in the process (UNHCR, 2014b). Conflict in the refugees' countries of origin usually takes years before

it is safe enough for them to return home and as such, they become protracted refugees, living indefinitely in the host countries for years (Hunter, 2009).

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*A protracted refugee is a person living indefinitely in exile free from danger but remains unfilled because their basic financial, social and psychological needs are not fully met and rights violated.*

(Jallow and Malik, 2005).

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Moreover, the growing number of protracted refugees in Uganda's refugee camps have strained humanitarian aid resources which would otherwise be used to benefit new arriving refugees thus leading to budget cuts by donor agencies, case in point was budget cuts of World Food Programme (WFP) for humanitarian assistance in 2014 (WFP, 2014). Jacobsen et al. (2006) further argues that the nature of the aid offered to refugees by The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and its agencies are mostly for initial emergency phase and when the media stops broadcasting the refugees' emergency, the amount of aid also dwindles (Alloush et al., 2017). And as such, the refugees receive meagre and dwindling levels of humanitarian aid. The refugees, therefore, find alternative ways of self-reliance to provide for their needs (Calabria, 2016b; Loughran, 2019). The UNHCR's Handbook for Self-Reliance (2005) defines self-reliance as;

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*the social and economic capacity of one to afford essential needs (including protection, food, water, shelter, personal safety, health, and education) in a sustainable and dignified manner. Self-reliance, from a program perspective, refers to developing and strengthening livelihoods of persons of concern, and reducing their vulnerability and long-term reliance on external assistance*  
(UNHCR, 2005)

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According to Betts et al (2014), humanitarian agencies have since developed two innovative approaches in order to address the growing needs of the refugees (protracted or new arrivals): top-down approach where humanitarian agencies dictate the kind of interventions for the target beneficiaries; and the bottom-up approach which harnesses the skills and experience of the recipients to create more sustainable and dignified solutions for their livelihoods. For the case of Kiryandongo refugee settlement, with a population of over 61,000 refugees, it is currently closed to new arrivals of refugees, implying that the nature of refugees there are protracted (UNHCR, 2018). Humanitarian agencies have thus adopted the bottom-up approach in the recent past and trained refugees to engage in self-reliant income generating activities (IGAs) to earn an income through small enterprises such as petty trade and services (Werker, 2007). Some of the most prominent IGAs that the refugees are involved in in Kiryandongo settlement include tailoring, brick layering, carpentry, arts and crafts, home gardening, restaurants and mini-supermarkets (Calabria, 2016b). Betts et al argues this strategy if strengthened, deepens the refugees' contribution towards building skills, growing the host country's economy and creating platforms for collaboration among themselves thus improving their agency. There have been success stories registered from refugees' involvement in these activities for example ability to afford education, health care and increase income level (Werker, 2007). On the flipside, however, Jacobsen et al warn that most humanitarian agencies treated refugees as one homogenous group when designing interventions purported to make them self-reliant. This implies that the empowerment concept for instance is often used as a mainstay feature in programming but the approach for tracking progress is lacking). Women refugees and female-headed households are already a vulnerable group and they make up the majority of the households in the refugee camps yet they have been neglected from reporting (Bruijn, 2009).

## **1.2 Problem statement**

Humanitarian agencies have intervened to equip refugees with tools for self-reliance, beyond giving aid donations. Refugee Innovation and Sustainable Enterprise – Urban Project (Rise-UP) Hub, the commissioner for this research is one of such organisations working closely with refugees in Kiryandongo refugee settlement to train them to start income generating activities for self-reliance to better cope. It is noted that the majority of the households in Kiryandongo refugee settlement is headed by refugee women, who have taken on the mantle of taking care of their families. There is traceable evidence of increase in the level of income of the refugees involved in these projects however, there is a lack of information on how the increase in income level by these IGAs empower the refugee women to cope better and improve their agency in the protracted refugee situation (Jacobsen et al 2006). This research study, therefore, seeks to explore this knowledge gap of how the IGAs improve agency and enhance the empowerment of refugee women to achieve self-reliance.

## **1.3 Objective**

To gain insight in what ways Income Generating Activities (IGAs) have improved agency and enhanced empowerment for self-reliance of refugee women in Kiryandongo settlement. Thereafter generate recommendations aimed at assisting RISE-UP hub in developing strategies targeted at integrating IGAs with the empowerment of refugee women in Uganda.

## **1.4 Main Question**

This study will be guided by the question: how have income generating activities as a strategy for self-reliance contributed towards improving agency and consequently enhancing empowerment of refugee women at household and community level in Kiryandongo refugee settlement?

To answer this question, I will explore the refugee women's perceptions towards the IGAs as an empowerment instrument and their own definition of empowerment and improvement of agency, IGAs as a coping mechanism they have adapted to be self-reliant and the consequences they face in being self-reliant. The research will seek to answer the following sub-questions;

- I. How do refugee women and men in Kiryandongo define empowerment, self-reliance and agency?
- II. What are the perceptions of refugee women towards the IGAs in building skills and dignity?
- III. How is collective action and leadership shaped in the refugee settlement?
- IV. What influence do refugee women have in decision-making, access and control of resources at household and community level?
- V. How do community institutions affect the empowerment and agency of refugee women in Kiryandongo refugee settlement?





*Photo: Women vending merchandize on a food distribution day*

## CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW

## CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

Development, according to Sumner and Tribe (2008), is viewed as a structural societal transformation process. Overtime, development programs have been criticized of ignoring gender roles and the impact it has on empowering women. Recently though, there's a notable change witnessed as programs attempt to integrate development in its programming for women economic empowerment and poverty eradication. This research particularly contributes to literature on two theoretical frameworks proposed by Collins (2013) for women empowerment i.e. gender and development, which focus on how reproductive, social and economic roles are linked to gender inequalities, and mainstream gender equality approach which ensures all gender issues are addressed and integrated in all levels of society, politics and programs.

### 2. Women empowerment concept, agency and self-reliance

#### Empowerment

The concept of empowerment has been a subject of much intellectual scrutiny and discourse. It has become a buzzword that has been thrown around loosely by some organisations into old programs to get funding (Scrutton and Luttrell, 2007). However, several scholars have attempted to define it. Empowerment has been thought of as a process through which women take ownership and control of their lives by expanding their choices (United Nations, 2001; Lorinkova and Perry, 2017). It has also been described by Bleck and Michelitch (2018) as a process that gives one the ability to make their own life decisions in the context that they were denied before. Mayoux (2013) on the other hand views it "as a process of questioning and changing all forms of inequality and domination in relationships between women and men." She equally attributed empowerment to the multidimensional process in power relations amongst different actors and noted empowerment could manifest as;

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*"1) power within – confidence of women articulating their own strategies and aspirations for change, 2) power to - enabling women to develop the necessary skills and access the necessary resources to achieve their aspirations; 3) power with - enabling women to examine and articulate their collective interests, to organize, to achieve them and to link with other women and men's organizations for change; and 4) power over - changing the underlying inequalities in power and resources that constrain women's aspirations and their ability to achieve them."*

(Mayoux, 2000a)

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Mayoux asserted that these power relations also operated at different levels i.e. individual, community, household, as in box 1 and in different paradigms i.e. increased well-being, economic and socio-political empowerment as explained in box 2.



### **BOX 1: DEFINITION LEVEL OF EMPOWERMENT**

**Economic empowerment:** ability of women to have access to savings and credit facilities in order to increase their economic decision making to improve savings and employment opportunities. In the feminist empowerment paradigm, individual economic empowerment is seen as dependent on social and political empowerment.

**Increased well-being:** access to savings and credit facilities and women's decision about what is being done with savings and credit strengthens women's say in economic decisions of the household. In the financial self-sustainability and feminist empowerment paradigms, improved well-being is an assumed outcome from increasing women's economic activities and incomes.

**Social and political empowerment:** a combination of women's increased economic activity and control over income resulting from access to micro-finance with improved women's skills, mobility, access to knowledge and support networks. By contrast, the feminist empowerment paradigm advocates explicit strategies for supporting women's ability to protect their individual and collective gender interests at the household, community and macro-levels.

*Source: (Mayoux, 2000a)*

### **BOX 2: EMPOWERMENT PARADIGMS**

**Financial self-sustainability paradigm;** This is the paradigm mainly used by development partners running micro finance programs targeting the poor. Through this, they provide micro-finance services to a large group of poor people operating small and medium enterprises (SMEs). The assumption here is that, increasing access of micro-finance to women will lead to economic empowerment of individuals, increase well-being and social and political development.

**Poverty alleviation paradigm:** This paradigm seeks to reduce poverty among the poorest, increased well-being and community development. Women's empowerment and poverty alleviation are viewed as two coins of the coin. The assumption here is, increasing women's access to micro-finance will bring about wider changes in gender equality.

**Feminist empowerment paradigm:** this paradigm underlies gender policies of many NGOs. Underlying concerns are gender equality and women's human rights. Microfinance is promoted as a wider strategy for women's economic empowerment and socio-political empowerment.

*Source: (Mayoux, 2000a)*

Rayan (2002), in the World Bank Sourcebook on Empowerment, views it as 'expansion of assets and capabilities of poor people to participate in, negotiate with, influence, control and hold accountable institutions that affect their lives.' It is also important to note that the concept of



empowerment is subjective and varies from individuals as each one may define it differently based on their experiences, aspirations and individuality (Adams, 2017; Bradbury-Jones et al., 2008; García-Juan et al., 2018). No wonder Kabeer, Eyben and Cornwall (2008) asserts that empowerment happens when individuals and organized groups realize the potential within and among themselves and work collectively to challenge the power that have kept them in poverty. In this research, therefore, empowerment is defined as a process that helps people, especially women and men exercise their agency and have control over their own lives, which control they didn't have before, with the ultimate goal of being reliant. An empowered woman or man in this paper is a man or woman who understands the power relations impacting their self-reliance and has the ability and self-confidence to either act individually or collectively to challenge such relations, as and when the situation demands so.

Women empowerment therefore is primarily about power – the power to redefine potentials and options, and to act on them, the power within that enables people to believe in themselves and accomplish things they did not know they were capable of doing (like earn an income, attain an education), and the power that comes from working together to claim what is rightfully theirs (Kabeer, Eyben and Cornwall, 2008). Women empowerment can be believed of as a direction, an invitation that beckons each and every woman to live fully and to become the person they want to be (Hall, 2010). Investing in women's empowerment sets a pace towards achieving Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) 5 of gender equality, SDG 1 of no poverty, and SDG 8 of decent work and economic growth (UN Women, 2018b). This affirms the notion that women contribute equally to economies whether through engaging in businesses, agriculture, paid work or by doing unpaid care work at home. Unfortunately, they remain affected by exploitation, poverty and discrimination (UN Women, 2018b). Therefore, women empowerment is more than a marginal increase in incomes as it requires transformation in power relations. Development entities should as such take into account not only increase in levels of income but also relations of power in households, communities, national and international markets for economic empowerment (Mayoux, 2000b).

### **Agency**

Just like empowerment and power, agency is yet another abstract concept complex to define (Coper, 2012). This is because according to (Ahearn, 2001; Emirbayer and Mische, 1998; Robson et al., 2007) as quoted by Coper, it is rarely defined as a stand alone but rather defined in relation to the concept of structure. Agency, according to Lister (1997) is the "capacity of individuals or groups to embark on processes of autonomous self-realization." (Kabeer, 2005, 1999) on the other hand defines it as capacities of women and men to take advantage of choices they hold to draw social positions they are aware of. This therefore implies that women empowerment shouldn't be viewed only as one's ability to exercise choice, but also should serve to challenge the power relations (Panelli and Pini, 2005). In this research therefore, the concept of agency is defined as the ability of a man or woman (individual or group) to make decisions independently or collectively with a goal of attaining self-reliance.

### **Self-reliance**

Self-reliance has been widely used as a basis for delivering effective projects for community development and empowerment in most parts of Africa. The concept is centrally located in the discourse of community development and closely associated to terms like mutual-help, indigenous participation, self-help and rural development as it advocates for improvement of people's conditions using locally sourced solutions and resources at their disposal (Fonchingong and Fonjong, 2003; Kim and Isma'il, 2013). Omata and Kaplan (2013) and Bassey (2009) define it as the autonomy to diversify one's source of income to maintain and sustain life without external assistance. Helin (2014) agrees that self-reliance ensures the underprivileged attain an improvement in their lives by setting an attainable pathway far from crippling dependency but instead work towards personal dignity.

Millions of refugees today are trapped in protracted encampment where they are dependent on external support for basic necessities (Zeus, 2011) and as such, governments and NGOs are recently emphasizing the need to reduce the dependence of refugees on humanitarian 'hand-outs' with the key goal of creating self-reliance programs (Ilcan et al., 2017). Uganda's refugee policy for instance allows for refugees to live and enjoy benefits like free trade, owning businesses like Ugandan citizens. With this policy, a number of refugees in Uganda's settlements have engaged in activities that generate them an income. Self-reliance as such in this research is defined as the ability of refugees to engage IGAs to expand their agency, with little or no external support from development agencies.

In conclusion, different authors agree that the concepts of empowerment, agency and self-reliance are abstract and complex and as such, the research will seek to understand it based on the perspective of refugee women. Numerous studies have been carried out in the context of empowerment for women, however, this research appreciates that women are not one homogenous group and as such, it focuses on understanding particularly the empowerment of refugee women. Through literature, there's limited study of the extent to which IGAs have empowered refugees to live sustainable lives while still in the settlements and acquainted them with skills they can harness when they return home. This research will therefore contribute to addressing this knowledge gap. UNHCR (2003) argues that self-reliance is only possible if the economic environment is friendly to help the refugees better take advantage of the training opportunities around them to create sustainable livelihoods.

### **3. Self-reliance: IGAs and refugee women empowerment**

The ultimate goal of self-reliance is the ability of refugees to find sustainable means of living independently with little humanitarian assistance (Khan, 2019). It is usually hoped that when conflict or war stops, the refugees are able to return to their countries of origin (Azad and Jasmin, 2013). However, scholars cite that some refugees have lived indefinitely in their host countries for a period of over 5 years (Omata and Kaplan, 2013). In such instances therefore, reinforcing refugees' livelihoods and their economic self-reliance remains one of the most formidable and thought-provoking in the forced displacement arena (Calabria, 2016a). However, a shift to the self-reliance approach, suggests that humanitarian agencies aim for more than the refugees' mere survival but also strive to protect their agency and ensure "safe and productive futures for all those impacted by a crisis" (Schiltz et al., 2019). The UNHCR 2019-2023 Global Strategy for instance advocates for an enabling environment such that refugees have legal and decent living (such as through rights to work, own a business, access financial services, land/property ownership, and freedom of mobility) (UNHCR, 2019b). One of the approaches that has been cited to address as a self-reliance strategy is engaging in income generating activities (IGAs). According to Balestri and Meda (2016), IGAs are small-scale businesses operated by people as a strategy to grow household income and diversify livelihoods. Promoting the practice of IGAs is not important only for economic empowerment but it also has the potential of bringing about social cohesion and increasing social capital among groups and as such fostering relationships and social inclusion (La Ferrara, 2002).

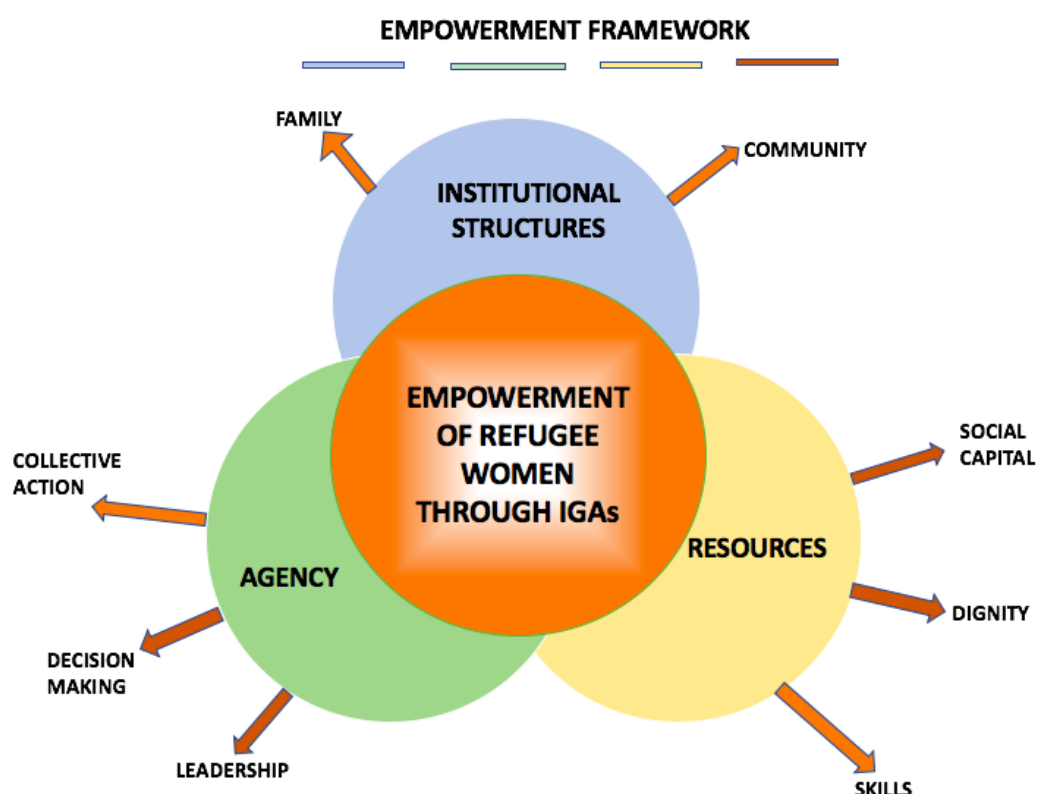
The concept of empowering women especially during conflict serves to place them at an advantage to equip them with survival skills while they juggle the realities of their life. Women make up 80% of the world's population so, targeting them with empowerment initiatives through IGAs eliminates poverty and upholds human rights (A et al., 2018). Most importantly, a woman's position in the household is strengthened when she generates her own income (Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2000). On the flipside, host states also fear that refugees who are more independent may decide to reside in the host country (Hunter, 2009). Hunter however justifies that refugees who have obtained skills training, attained an education and run successful livelihood activities are better placed to survive when they either choose to stay in the host country or return to their countries of origin

thus having better well-being. This research as such serves to investigate how IGAs have served as an empowerment instrument to refugee women in Kiryandongo refugee settlement.

### 2.3 Measuring women's empowerment and agency

According to Kabeer (1999), the concept of empowerment has not been explicitly defined so, this research provides a useful standpoint of assessing women empowerment both from a narrower and broader implications of measuring what is not easily measurable. Based on the literature reviewed above, empowerment concept is at the core of empowering refugee women. To measure how IGAs are acting as an empowerment tool to refugee women as such, this research will use the empowerment framework in figure 2 below, adopted from the white paper on empowering women and girls, developed by Eerdewijk et al. (2017).

**Figure 2: Conceptual framework for measuring empowerment**



Source: Researcher's data (2019), adopted from Kabeer (1999)

#### Empowerment

The concepts of the framework above are explained based on definitions from the KIT gender White paper on empowering women and girls. Based on the framework, the women empowerment concept is a dependant variable (interest of the research and it what is being tested and measured in this study) while the concepts of agency, resources and institutional structures are independent variables (variables that will be assessed using indicators as changes to any of them affects empowerment positively or negatively). Defining it through the eyes of the refugees will serve to answer sub question 1.

### Agency

In this research, the indicators for refugee women's agency will be measured using three indicators below and defined accordingly i.e.

- **collective action:** "ability of women to work together to gain solidarity and taking action collectively to enhance their position and expand the realm of what is possible." Its outcome, based on this study, will be assessed based on group memberships that refugee women belong to lobby for strategies or policies that meet their interests.
- **Leadership:** Concerns ability of women to lead and inspire social change and to effectively participate in governance; it can be formal (women holding positions of authority like political participation or representation) or informal (ability to influence and guide others for social change or to solve complex problems) (Debebe, 2007). In the study, outcome will be assessed by individual or collective leadership of women leading other women.
- **decision making:** encompasses influencing and making decisions, and also being able to act on them. This research will limit it to the extent of women's influence in decision making at both household and community level) (Kabeer, 2010). Analysis will be done both at household and community level and outcome will be understanding influence of women in decision making at household and community.

Exploring the agency dimension will give answers to sub questions 3 and 4.

### Resources

These are defined as tangible and intangible capital and sources of power that women and girls have, own or use individually or collectively to exercise their agency (Kabeer 1999). The indicators that will be explored in this research will be;

- **social capital:** formal and informal structures and networks formed by refugee women to improve their agency. Outcome from this study will be networks and coalitions formed amongst women.
- **skills building:** skills acquired and harnessed by refugee women to build their livelihoods. Its outcome will be knowledge and skills acquired by refugee women.
- **Dignity:** achieved through self-confidence of earning their own income. Its outcome is self-confidence or improved self-image among refugee women.

Hall (2010) asserts that, regardless the limitations that surround women, all women have the ability to make some constructive changes to enhance and improve their situations. The results from assessing the resources concept will specifically answer sub-question 2.

### Institutional structures

These are social arrangements of formal and informal rules and practices and they shape and influence the expressions of agency as well as women and girls' control over resources. Institutional structures can be found in the arenas of the family, community, market and state (Eerdewijk et al, 2017). However, this research will adopt the indicators of family and community to analyse the factors at household and community levels that affect decision making of refugee women.

- **Family:** this involves household and wider kinship relations; including relations between spouses, in-laws, or parents and children. In patriarchal societies, the relationships that women and girls have with their husbands, fathers or brothers, or extended male relations are important as these are assigned authority over women and children (Eerdewijk et al 2007).
- **Community:** refers to formal and informal institutions in place that affect agency of women and girls. Addressing institutional structure will provide answers to sub-question 5.

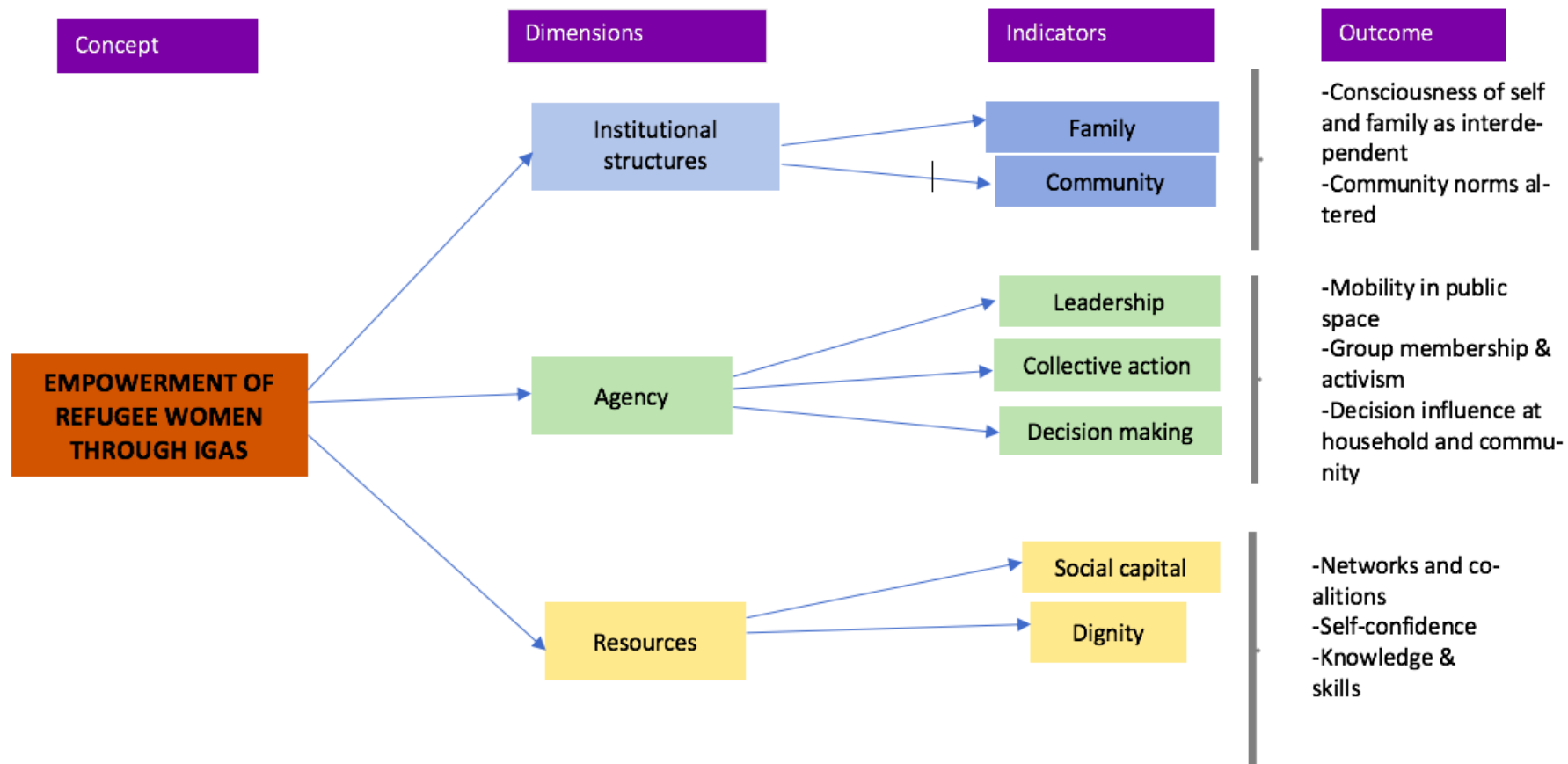
In conclusion of this chapter, empowerment for self-reliance happens through women exercising their agency and taking action, through the reallocation of resources towards women, and

through shifting the institutional structures that shape women choice and voice, and ultimately their lives and futures (Eerdewijk, 2017).

#### **Operationalisation of the conceptual framework**

The dimensions of the conceptual framework will be operationalised into indicators as in figure 3 below. Outcome refers to the end result of measuring each indicator.

Figure 3: Operationalisation of the conceptual framework



Source: Researcher's data (2019), adopted from CARE's women empowerment framework (2014)





*Photo: Researcher with a respondent at her vegetable stall*

# CHAPTER 3

# METHODOLOGY

## CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

### 3.1 Introduction to research strategy

The data for this study was collected between June-August 2019 in Kiryandongo refugee settlement, with authorisation from the Office of the Prime Minister (OPM) in Kampala (*see appendix 8 for letter*). Without this permission letter, I would not be able to conduct the research in the refugee settlement. This research focused on studying ontological (what one knows) and epistemological (how they know it) paradigms of the realities of the refugee women in the camp based on their own beliefs; they were able to construct their own realities with a mutual understanding of their context other than being influenced by external dynamics (Andrews, 2012). The research focused on studying IGAs as an empowerment instrument for refugee women in Kiryandongo refugee settlement in Uganda and the nature of the research was a case study.

According to John Gerring (2004) a case study is a thorough study of a single unit in order to understand a larger class of similar units. It is also referred to as “a research approach used to generate a detailed, multi-faceted understanding of a complex issue in its real-life context” (Crowe *et al.* 2011). Case studies can be used to explain, describe or explore events or phenomena in everyday contexts in which they occur (Yin, 1998). The motivation for studying refugee women is based on my intrinsic interest to understand empowerment of refugee women through IGAs.

The refugees selected for the study included refugee men and women aged 18 years and above either running an IGA or not. This study defines a woman as a female or any person who identifies themselves as a female, who is either single, married, divorced or widowed. These women were either from female headed households (households where either a woman is married but husband stayed back in their country, woman widowed, divorced or they were single with no children/husband), and male headed households (woman married and living with the husband in the camp). Throughout this thesis report, the terms woman/women or man/men will be used interchangeably to mean refugee woman/women or refugee man/men. The research was based on an ethnographic study of refugee women to help understand and interpret concepts of empowerment from their point of view (O’leary, 2017). To better interpret the refugee women’s perceptions, qualitative data was collected through, semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions (FGDs), participatory observation and informal conversations through capturing the experiences, words and making observations that were not quantifiable (John W. Creswell, 2003). Mulumba (2007) argues that choosing qualitative data helps a researcher come up with interesting findings that go beyond the initial preconceptions and frameworks. Additionally, secondary data was collected through a desk study by reviewing literature with a view of understanding the context of the research topic.

Primary data was collected through interviewing refugee women who are engaged in IGAs in the refugee settlement and those who are not in order to understand what empowerment meant for both categories of women. The results from this study therefore provides input to understanding how IGAs act as an instrument for empowerment of refugee women. This field research also works as a triangulation method to confirm the literature studied prior for reliability of my results. Triangulation, according to Laws et al (2013), refers to using multiple methods, different investigators and different sources like key informants to increase confidence in your research results.

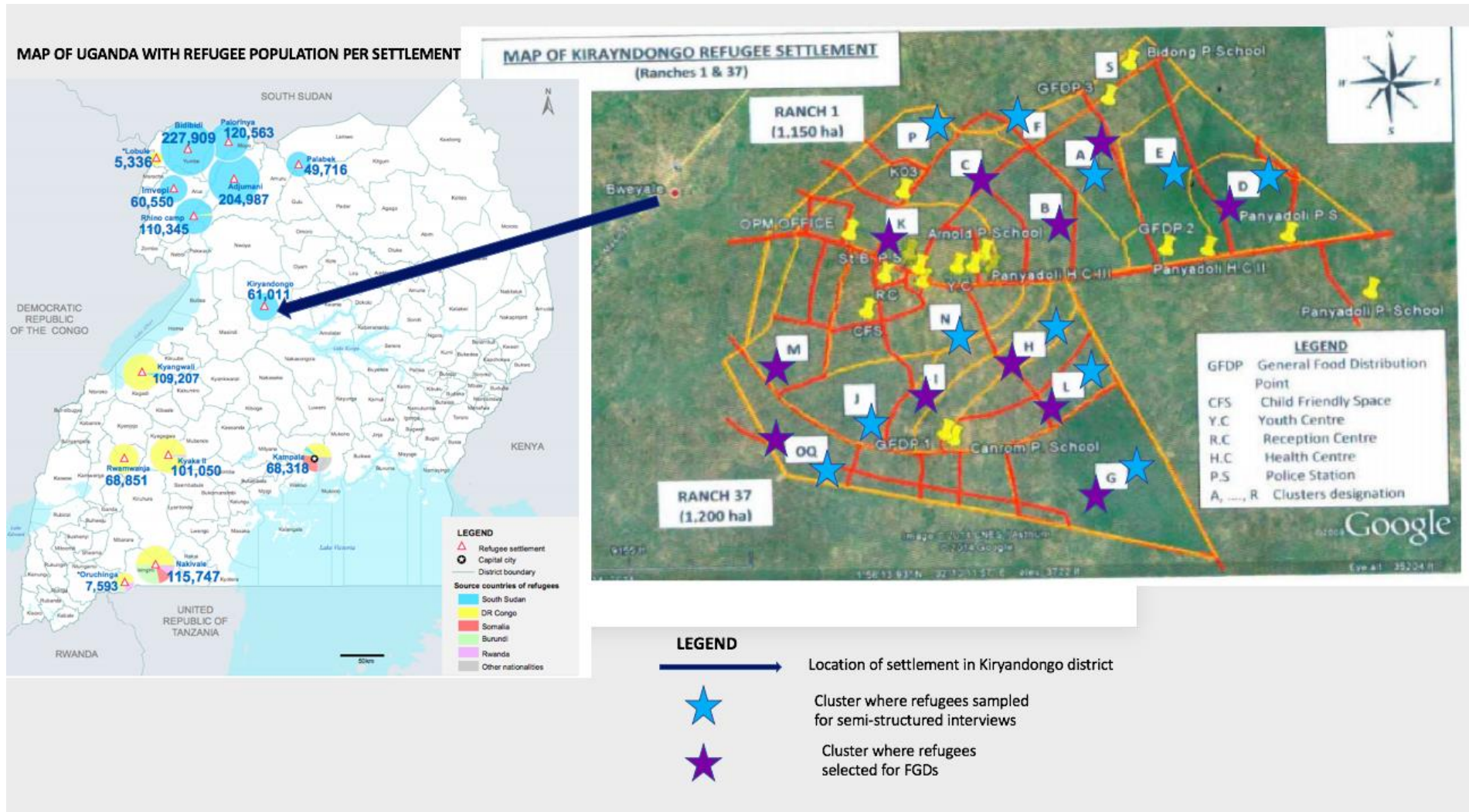
### 3.2 Study area

Kiryandongo district hosts Kiryandongo refugee settlement, one of the long-term assistance settlements for refugees. The settlement is located in Bweyale in Western Uganda, approximately 3-4 hours’ drive from Kampala, the capital city. It has an estimated population of 277,000 nationals, 61,000 of whom are refugees from South Sudan, DR Congo, Burundi, Rwanda and Kenya (UNHCR, 2018). Kiryandongo camp was first inhabited in 1954 by Kenyan refugees fleeing the fight during the



Mau Mau rebellion. It then became uninhabited until 1990 when the Ugandan government officially gazetted the land as a refugee camp (Kintz, 2018). It has since hosted women, children and men refugees from neighbouring countries. According to UNHCR (2017) operational statistics, the South Sudanese refugees make-up the biggest proportion of refugee because approximately 639,000 South Sudanese refugees were displaced by South Sudan conflict in 2016. Kiryandongo is formally designated as a settlement rather than a camp because of its relatively open layout where refugees and nationals live side-by-side, and the economic freedom afforded to refugees (Omata, 2015). The settlement is made up of 17 villages commonly referred to as clusters. These clusters are distributed into two divisions, known as ranches i.e. ranch 1 and 37. Ranch 1 hosts residential homes for the refugees and includes 9 clusters A,B,C,D,E,F,K,S, and P. On the other hand, ranch 37 hosts both residential homes and all the offices in the settlement, including the refugee reception centre, The OPM, youth centre, health centre, local and international NGOs offices. It includes 8 clusters OQ,I,G,L,H,N,J, and MR. In this research, at least one person was interviewed either through FGDs or semi-structured interviews from each of these clusters apart from clusters S. This is because this cluster is occupied by Ugandan nationals who were recently internally displaced by mudslides on the slopes of Mt. Elgon. Tabular representation of the respondents is annexed in appendix 1. Figure 4 below places Kiryandongo refugee settlement, with clusters where interviewees were sampled from during data collection.

Figure 4: Map of Kiryandongo refugee settlement showing data collection points



Source: Researcher's data (2019), adopted from UNHCR Kiryandongo 2019

Each ranch is headed by a Chairperson, who are both South Sudanese nationals. These act as direct links between the refugees and implementing partners in the settlement. Furthermore, each cluster is also headed by a youth leader, to ensure equal representation of interests of the refugees. The camp is currently closed to new arrivals because it doesn't have the capacity to accommodate more refugees (UNHCR 2018). This implies that the nature of people living in this settlement is protracted and as such, aid donations have since dwindled (Jacobsen et al., 2006). Therefore, refugees look for alternative means of survival, including engaging in IGAs. According to Omata (2015), some of the economic activities common in this camp include; small-scale agriculture, tailoring, shops selling goods and services, etc. This provided the justification for carrying out research in this area to understand how IGAs have empowered refugees, especially women. RISE-UP (Refugee Innovation and Sustainable Enterprise – Urban Project) Hub, one of the partners to my former employer was my commissioner for this study.

### **Rise-Up Hub and its strategy for empowering refugees**

RISE-UP Hub is a social enterprise working towards economic empowerment of refugees. It achieves this through training refugees and providing them an online market place for showcasing and selling authentic and fine fashion products made by refugees in Uganda (RISE-Up Hub, 2019). Since its inception in 2018, it has trained refugees in tailoring for self-sustenance. However, the concept of empowering especially women beyond increase in income is not well documented. RISE-UP Hub is looking towards expanding its operations to refugees in Kiryandongo refugee settlement with a focus of empowering especially refugee women to build their skills, dignity and independence free from external assistance. Results obtained from this research will thus be used in drafting strategies on inclusiveness of women, men and youth.

### **3.3 Research tools**

The nature of the research was a social constructionist approach-that there was no right answer out there waiting to be identified (Laws et al). So, the results of how refugee women feel empowered through IGAs in this context is based on their own understanding and interpretation of what empowerment is. The research was participatory, requiring interaction and involvement of the refugee women, men and key informants. The data was collected using semi-structured interviews, focused group discussions (FGDs), participatory observation, including informal conversations and key informant interviews.

#### **Semi-structured interviews with refugee women and KIs**

Through face-to-face interviews with the refugee women running IGAs and key informants, this method was used to address questions 3, 4 and 5 about leadership positions, skills acquired, decision making at household level, and community institutions. Clifford *et al* (2016) defines a semi-structured interview as where one person (interviewer) tries to get information from another person (the interviewee) in a conversational manner using a list of pre-defined questions while giving room to the interviewee to explore topics they feel are important. The researcher in this context developed separate interview guides with a list of questions to interview the refugee women and key informants (see appendix 9 for guide). This tool was used to interview the refugee women because the nature of the questions asked were more on a personal and household level and as such, the women would not openly share it. This tool was also used to interview key informants to get expert insights about IGAs as an empowerment instrument in the refugee camp.

#### **Focus group discussion (FGD)**

Longhurst (2003) defines FGD as a meeting in an informal setting to dialogue about a particular topic. The research consisted of two FGDs; one was carried out mid-way the research period with refugee women to gain a general understanding of the research topic. It helped to revise the interview questions accordingly, where need was. The second one was carried out at the end of the

semi-structured interviews with refugee men to seek clarity on certain concepts and validate the data collected. The results from the FGDs will provide answers to sub questions 1, 2 and 5 about understanding of empowerment, agency, self-reliance, dignity, skills building and community norms.

#### **Informal conversations**

Initially, I had not thought of this approach as a data collection tool but now that I reflect back upon my experience in the field, I realise that I am able to ascertain and explain certain facts because of the conversations I held with the refugee women, men and the host community thus providing reliability to my research. Austin and Sutton (2014) notes that “in the real world, the environment and context influence behaviors and outcomes.

#### **Key informant interviews**

O’leary (2017) cites the importance of working with experts in one’s research field as they help to build the researcher’s contextual knowledge, triangulate the accuracy of the data collected or used to generate primary data. Interviewing key informants (KIs) provided answers to research questions 1,2,3,4 and 5, where their responses were triangulated with what the refugee women and men provided when asked particular questions. 6 key informants were interviewed based on their expertise, experience and local leadership in the settlement. The six included; a Program manager from The Whitaker Peace & Development Initiative (WPDI)-aims to promote the values of peace, reconciliation and social development within communities impacted by conflict and violence; a project Officer from BRAC Uganda; a South Sudanese youth who currently runs South Sudan Women Building Association (SSWBA) a community-based organisation (CBO); another South Sudanese youth leader of 37 tribes of South Sudan; and the two chairpersons of ranches 1 and 37, due to their day-to-day interaction with the refugees. (See appendix 6 for profiles of NGOs and impact in community).

### **3.4 Sampling**

Laws et al defines sampling as identifying a representation of a larger group (the population) of your research area. Ideally, the sample also acts as the researcher’s unit of analysis and as such, my unit of analysis will be individuals and two groups because I interviewed individual refugee women and conducted 2 focus group discussions including;

- **21 refugee women** (refugee women from both male-headed and female-headed households) running businesses (see appendix 3) were interviewed to gain an understanding of empowerment from both categories of refugee women. To access the refugees, I worked with two interpreters who had quite an understanding of the area and are well known by the refugees, which made approaching them for interviews easier. After briefing the interpreter what category of person I wanted to interview (any refugee woman above 18 years running a business), the easiest place to find them was in the market either in the settlement or the main in the main trading centre and others at the food distribution centres. The interpreter and I simply walked up to either a vegetable stall or shop of the said refugee woman and requested of their time. So, right there, the interviews were carried out at their business stands, with other vendors watching and each interview lasted about 20-30 minutes because of the constant interruptions to attend to her clients.
- **6 key informant interviews (KIs)** to confirm the accuracy of the data collected. With the help of the first interpreter, who was also one of the KIs, I interviewed, we simply knocked on the doors of WPDI and BRAC Uganda offices without prior appointments and requested to see someone in charge of programs. Luckily, they weren’t engaged at the time and gave me their time, after presenting the letter from the OPM and them taking copies of it. Consequently, the interpreter made calls to the chairperson of ranch 37 and youth leader for interviews. Through the chairperson of ranch 37, I was able to meet and interview chairperson ranch 1. My initial plan was to have 4 KI interviews, but I settled for 6 to compare information from at

least 3 NGOs to validate my results. Each of these interviews with the KIs took about 30-45 minutes. For each of these interviews, the letter from the OPM played a key role because after introducing myself, the next question would be the letter and with it, everything else went on smoothly.

- **two FGDs** (including refugee men and women separately) in the refugee settlement in order to understand from both perspectives their understanding of empowerment. The first mobilisation happened, with the help of an interpreter, and the women didn't turn up. This was because on the particular scheduled day, there was cash distribution ongoing so, most of them had travelled for it (happens only once a week in a month). Additionally, the women also operated small businesses and every single coin earned counted. Because they didn't have any other person to operate the shops/stalls for them, they couldn't close it for the duration of the discussion. So, our next strategy was to go to the distribution centre where most of them had gone to. We approached 10 of them for this and only 8 turned up for it. Because it was a sufficient number to get the data, I had the FGD with these. As for the men, they are much fewer in the camp and most of them wanted first hand payment before coming to the FGD so, my interpreter and I went to where they normally play board games and identified 8 of them who were willing to give of their time. There was a little financial cost to this, but it went successfully. Each of these FGDs took 1 hour. When my initial plan of how to hold the FGD failed, I learnt that as a researcher, you have to adapt very fast to the situation at hand, in order to collect the information you want within your target deadline.

For all the three tools, I used different interview guides (see appendix 9 for respective questions to each tool) for the refugee women, FGDs and KIs and I occasionally took notes by myself, and audio recordings for all the interviews conducted, with a verbal request to the interviewees to permit me to do so (see appendix 5 for script). Additionally, I took a couple of pictures especially when interviewing the refugee women during and after the interviews, still with a verbal promise that they would not be shared publicly.

Due to the fact that I wanted to capture experiences of refugee women who were both youth and not, I purposed to approach refugee women who were within the age brackets from 18 and above as indicated in appendix 4. The motivation for selecting this sample size was I got enough in-depth information per respondent.

The sampling strategy I used was purposive or non-random sampling to select the women I interviewed, given their characteristic of being refugees. With the help of my interpreters, I laid down the kind of people I needed to talk to. For the interviews, they had to be a refugee woman, 18 years and above, and involved in an IGA. To ensure a representative research results, at least one refugee woman was interviewed from all the 17 clusters in the camp, apart from cluster S. O'Leary (2017) cautions about the consequences of this technique i.e. bias when picking samples and erroneous assumptions. As an alternative strategy, I also used the snowballing technique, where one refugee woman introduced me to the next one to interview. This came in handy on a particular day when both interpreters were abruptly unavailable so, I approached a refugee woman I had interviewed the previous day to identify for me some women I could interview. With her being my day's interpreter, I was able to interview 5 women for that day, instead of the day being wasted.

### **3.5 Methods for data analysis**

Data analysis refers to taking things apart and putting them together again, to work out the links/patterns between respondents' inputs and the original questions. The interviews were conducted in English, Arabic, Swahili, Dinka, Luganda and Luo (most widely spoken languages in Kiryandongo), with the help of interpreters to translate the languages I didn't speak (Arabic, Swahili,

Dinka). The interviews (both notes and audio recordings taken) were coded to help me remember what a particular respondent said. This data was then categorized based on themes derived from the sub questions and common patterns identified from the data collected and interpreted using the conceptual framework. According to O'Leary, the researcher should treat each interview data as a respondent. The information from the FGDs and semi-structured interviews are descriptive in nature, however, some are presented using tables, figures, and pie-charts where necessary.

### **3.6 Research limitations**

Like in any research, there are a number of possible challenges that could limit your research. Price and Murnan (2004) defines limitations as features of design or methodology that are likely to influence how you interpret your research findings.

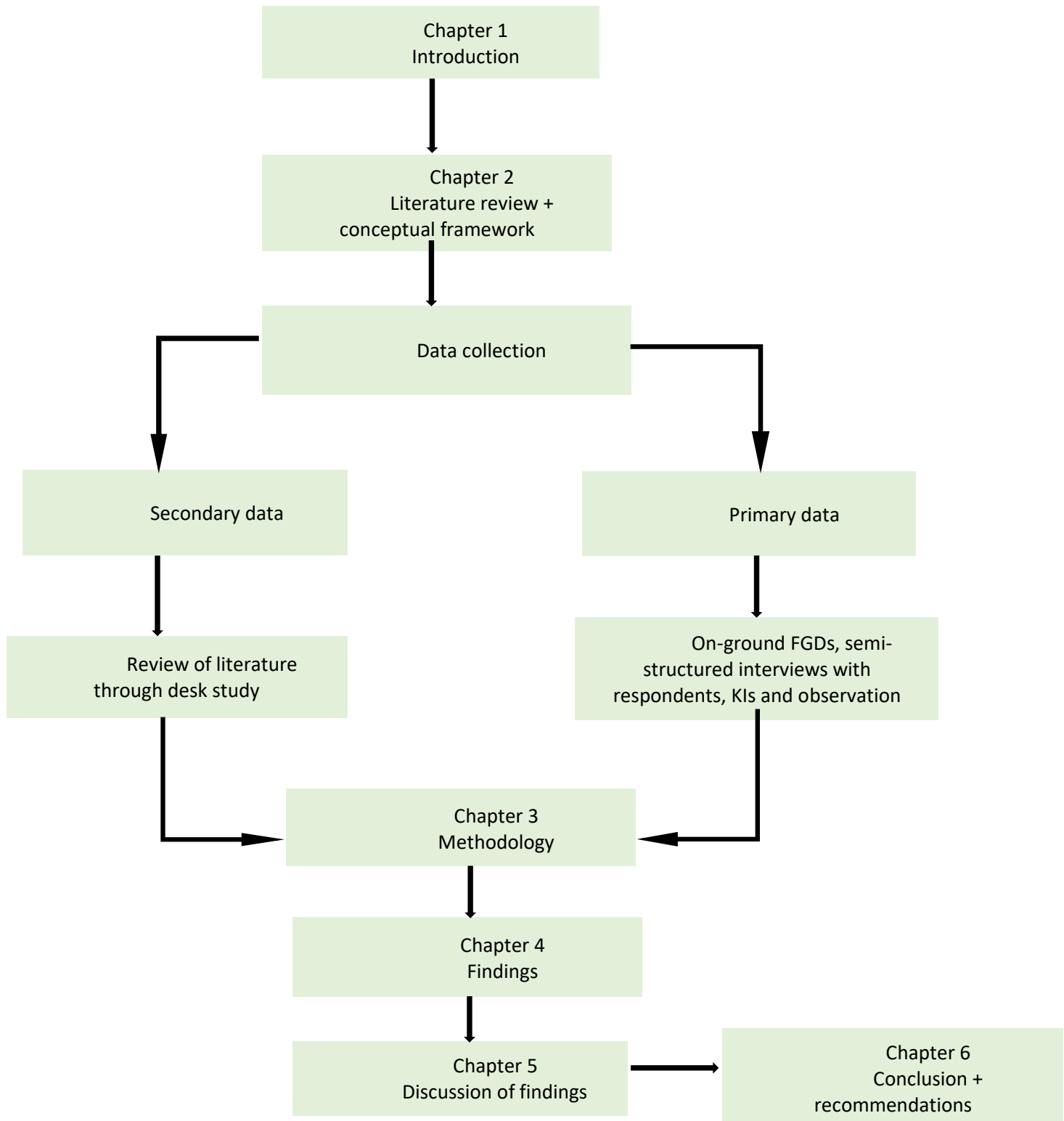
In my context, the research was conducted with the help of interpreters. The limitation with this was, the interviewee might have said something profound in response to my questions and the interpreter either misses out some bits of it during the translation or misinterpreting what the interviewee said altogether thus altering its meaning. During the interview however, I probed further in case I felt as though the answer given wasn't satisfactory enough.

Additionally, there were tendencies of the interviewees selling short the projects they were involved in through making themselves appear more vulnerable and poorer than they were, with the assumption that there was a financial benefit/grant to be given to respondents. This in effect may affect the quality of the results collected and the thus results may not give the actual picture of the financial situation of all refugee women in Kiryandongo camp. However, besides probing further, I was upfront with some respondents who asked about possibility of getting a grant by stressing to them this was simply a research study but availed to them options of using the locally available NGOs that provide funding to business owners that they could take advantage of if they qualified.

Lastly, the research was conducted with my own personal biases of the suffering that women and children go through during conflict and most men are nowhere to be seen. This information I mainly obtained from the literature I read prior to the field research and it was confirmed when I was in the field as I saw most women toiling in the markets to earn a living while the men spent the entire day playing board games. However, to take out my personal biases during the research, I purposed to interact objectively with the men to understand the situation they were in. This helped get the right information for my research.

### 3.7 Research design

Figure 5: Structure of the research design



Source: Researcher's data (2019)





*Photo: Sample of the bedsheets knitted by one South Sudanese woman*

## CHAPTER 4 FINDINGS



## CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS

This chapter presents the results of the study collected in the field using semi-structured interviews with refugee women, key informant interviews, focus group discussions with refugee men and women, participant observation and interaction with community members.

### 4.1 Background information of refugees

As highlighted in the research topic, this study focused on understanding the role IGAs play in empowerment of refugee women in Kiryandongo refugee settlement. From the field study, it was noticeable that these women are not one homogenous group; they comprise of different nationalities, with different cultures but bound together by a common problem; the refugee status. The refugees are mainly from South Sudan, Kenya, DR Congo, Rwanda and Burundi. This research however captures experiences of refugee women and men from South Sudan and Kenya as indicated in appendix 2.

Most of the refugee women interviewed mentioned their property was burnt to the ground including businesses, houses and the only thing they carried with them during flight were their children (at least 4 per woman), a few came with their husbands while the rest, the husbands either stayed back or were killed. This has led to a high number of female-headed households in the camp compared to male-headed households. This also represents through my results as most refugee women were from female-headed households (see appendix 3). Upon arrival at the Uganda boarder, the refugees from South Sudan and Kenya mostly arrived into the settlement with the help of UNHCR, that placed them at the reception centre until a plot of land was assigned to each family in the camp. Some were lucky to get plots of land and others, had running battles on the plots because most of them were assigned plots of land that had previously been given out to other people. Requesting for assistance from the concerned authorities in the camp was futile and as such, those who can afford have since resorted to renting rooms either inside the camp or in Bweyale trading centre, the main town situated in the host community. Most of the South Sudanese refugees have lived in the camp at least since 2013 while the Kenyans have been there longer; since 2007 as in appendix 5 annexed.

As a means of survival, the refugees receive a monthly donation from WFP and UNHCR of either food (beans, maize flour, cooking oil) or cash of 31,000 Uganda shillings (7.50 EUR) per person in a household. One can sign up to either receive cash or food, but not both and the quantity received is equivalent to the number of people registered under a particular household. Majority of refugees signed up to receive cash because it can easily be translated to cater for basic needs. Additionally, to this, soap, sugar and sanitary towels (for women and girls) are given on a quarterly basis. Settled with this new reality of fending for their families instead of relying on donations, majority of refugee women have started up IGAs. From my findings based on table 1 below, most common IGAs are mini-supermarkets, vegetable stands, tailoring, selling locally made perfumes (especially for South Sudanese), and other small activities that generate an income and keep them busy. From my observations, some refugee women were selling in the market in the trading centre, situated in the host community. They cited need to take advantage of the opportunities in the main market because most refugees were poor and they would buy seasonally, especially mid-month after the distribution of the rations. However, some refugee women had stalls in markets both inside the settlement and in Bweyale trading centre.

**Table 1: Disaggregated data according to nature of business**

Nature of business (N=21)		
Business	Number of women	women by business
Mini supermarket	9	43%
Vegetable stall	5	24%
Tailoring	2	10%
Selling perfumes	2	10%
Others	3	14%
<b>Total</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Source: Researcher's data (2019)**

From my observation and informal conversations, mainly refugee women engaged in the IGAs while men spent most of their time either gambling or playing board games. This I learnt is because in the South Sudan culture for example, men do not sell food items in the market. Women thus view their ability to engage in business as empowering them with the right skills and knowledge to fend for families, because majority of them were not working or running businesses prior to coming to the settlement. A lot of the profits from the business is used to buy food, medical bills and pay school fees. Majority of these women are also part of saving groups made up of mainly Kenyan and South Sudanese women, where they meet weekly and save in these groups. Socially, religion equally played a key role in bringing these women together, especially South Sudanese to find hope and healing. From my observation, the South Sudanese refugee women appeared to be more united and working together to survive compared to other refugees as evidenced by the social gatherings I was invited to i.e. fellowship, prayer meetings, birthday celebration, baby-naming ceremony, among others. This is because their families are traditionally tight-knit.

#### **4.2 Defining empowerment, agency and self-reliance**

This section explores how the different interviewees defined empowerment, agency and self-reliance. The information presented in this section includes data gathered through participant observation and responses from two FGDs conducted with refugee women and men in the camp. The responses were triangulated with responses from key informant interviews. Defining these concepts provided a stand point to understand the dimensions of empowerment of institutions, agency and resources on the conceptual framework, through the eyes of the refugees and KIs.

##### **Empowerment**

In this study, the researcher defined empowerment as a process that helps people to have control over their own lives with the ultimate goal of self-reliance. Data collected from key informant interviews explored the different dimensions of this definition. WPDl defined it as “availing knowledge

and skills to people to contribute positively to society. This includes making them aware of their rights in peace processes, to equip them in peace building through peace dialogues.” SSWBA holds the same school of thought, but with inclination on empowering South Sudanese women and youth only. BRAC on the other hand defined it as “ability to have a meaningful life, more women than men.” This the interviewee backed up by stating “the BRAC policy is almost 90/10 representation of women versus men in all our programming.” Another KI, a youth leader views it as “giving ability to South Sudanese to exploit their potential while in the camp and even when they return to South Sudan.” The two chairpersons interviewed view empowerment as giving hand-on skills through vocational training to women and youth in the camp to earn a living. However, the chairpersons also remarked that most of the empowerment initiatives by NGOs were directed towards women and youth, and the men were deliberately being left out. This was disempowering to the men and such imbalance in empowerment initiatives may derail the efforts of poverty eradication programs.

Through the FGDs, refugee women and men held different schools of thought of what empowerment was to them. All the women appeared emotional when giving their responses, and most of their responses were personal and applicable to them as an individual, occasionally agreeing with each other. Some of them defined it as “ability to do things wasn’t able to do before and taking my children to school like run a business, plan for my family,” “right to do anything equal to men like walking around freely in the camp without fear of being attacked,,” and “give ladies their right to raise up their daughters the right way with dignity.” Most men defined it as “giving power to women economically,” “sharing profits with my wife,” “developing human and different types of skills for men and women to help themselves” and “equal education for girls and boys, sharing rights and partnership in the home.” In general, all the respondents were in agreement with empowering both women and men, to have the similar opportunities. However, two refugee South Sudanese men disagreed with the concept. One of them was Mr. CK, a 37-year old man married with children and runs a hardware shop in Bweyale centre strongly stated;

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*“Women are slippery nowadays. Empowerment should not be too much especially for a married woman otherwise she will not respect her husband. Women are being given too much power, so we should reduce women empowerment because some families are breaking because of women empowerment. I support but not to a large extent”*

Mr. CK, 37-year-old South Sudanese refugee

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This argument by Mr. C touched a nerve of most men and sparked a heated debate bordering some men’s backward thinking about empowerment and treating women like they aren’t human beings. This led to the refugee women citing some of the ways in which men were disempowering women in societies, some of which included; men had the ability to walk freely anywhere they wanted in the camp but women could not do that for fear of being raped, and looking after children; some men also forced their wives to produce many children and made all decisions without the wife; men verbally threaten their wives and asserting his control over her because he paid over 50 cows in dowry; stopping the girl-children from going to school; and keeping women home and not allowing them to work in the markets or get a job. This also coincided with what Miss FT, a 45-year-old South Sudanese woman who is now widowed mentioned;

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*“In South Sudan, women were given rights by men; a woman could not do anything without permission from the man, either a husband or any man in the house, including fetching water, going to the market, doing business, etc. But now, things have changed to women taking control of their lives since people are scattered everywhere because of the war”*

In comparing results from both the KIs and the refugees, it is evident that the KIs equate empowerment to skills building. Much as some refugee women and men argued it to be skills building, they also viewed it from the point of being able to exercise their rights equally for both men and women, regardless of their refugee status. Much as majority of refugee women and men agreed empowerment was a worthy concept, there were loopholes that needed to be addressed to ensure that each one achieved this ability to exercise their rights for example excluding refugee men from development initiatives.

From my observation, much as each person gave a different understanding for empowerment, it boiled down to allowing every person to have full control of their lives, physically, socially, economically, psychologically and emotionally. There were barriers recognised in women achieving empowerment and strides should be made to address this.

### **Agency**

From the researcher's perspective, agency was defined as the ability to pursue goals, express voice and influence and make decisions. During the FGDs, I personally found translating this term difficult to the women, without having to give a leading explanation and also trying to differentiate it with empowerment for the benefit of the participants. With a couple of clarity here and there, most refugee women were able to define it as "the ability of women to make their own decisions." One refugee woman, 41-year-old single mother of 5, who runs a vegetable stall agreed and cited;

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*"I agree with the importance of a woman making her own decisions because like me, most women in the camp now are single mothers so, they make all the decisions. And the families are still standing strong"*

Miss MK, mother of 5 operating a vegetable stall

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Another refugee woman though, a single mother of 4 who doesn't run any IGA remarked that it was alright for one to make all the decisions but also being a refugee was "like a tag" on them. Because of this, most of them didn't have a lot of freedom to express themselves for fear from the oppressors, to which the rest of the women seconded. The refugee men on the other hand defined agency as; ability of one's voice being heard; ability to express yourself depending on one's level of thinking; women being able to make decisions over number of children to have. However, not everyone was in agreement, as Mr. C again noted.

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*"As for me, I tell my wife to do something and she must do it. It is dangerous for a woman to make some decisions on her own"*

Mr. CK, 37-year-old South Sudanese refugee

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The KIs defined it as teaching refugees their rights in order to know about peace processes; and consulting refugees before a project was launched. The chairpersons however don't agree because they expressed that most times, implementing partners don't consult the camp leaders before a project was launched in the camp so, they felt their agency was violated.

Through my observation, even though most women weren't able to speak English, they were able to freely express their opinions in the language they were comfortable in. The only limitation they had in expressing themselves was the tagline of refugees for fear of either being chased away from the selling stand or shop.

In conclusion, most women and men agreed that agency was the ability of giving everyone a chance to make their decisions at least, regardless of their refugee status as the KIs view it as working together with refugees in project design and implementation. Some women also felt their ability to make household decisions in the camp was now empowering. However, some refugee men noted that women shouldn't have the ability of making all decisions on their own.

### **Self-reliance**

The ultimate goal of measuring empowerment in this research is to achieve self-reliance for refugee women. The researcher defined the concept as the ability to maintain and sustain life with little/no external assistance. The results from interviews with KIs defined it as ability of a refugee to be able to sustain themselves to survive both in the camp and also use the same skills when they left the camp; training of refugees and host community with skills they can use to earn money; and giving practical hands-on skills to refugees to earn money to help them survive. Miss FD from BRAC, who is a Ugandan national and has worked in the camp for the last one year stated;

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*"As BRAC, our motto is big is good but small is beautiful. So, in whatever we do, we strive to make sure that the women have some skill they can use to help them survive in the camp."*

Miss FD, Program Officer, BRAC

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From the FGDs, the refugee men were animated about defining it, because they felt as though this is what staying in the camp had taken away from them as men. Majority of the refugee men as such defined it as the ability of having no assistance in doing business; allowing women to go and work in order to contribute to the household expenses; looking for more sources of survival outside the camp because there wasn't enough in the camp. One refugee man in his early 50's was angry at what living in the camp had turned him into.

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*"staying in camp has made me very useless and weak as a man. I had a great job in South Sudan, and I could look after my family. Imagine for the 4years I have lived here, I have to depend on hand-outs from UN. Now I am like a woman waiting for her husband to provide for everything. It is humiliating so playing this board game stops me from being stressed."*

Mr. GP, 50+ year old unemployed man

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Majority of the men were amused by Mr. GP's submission; some laughed it off whereas others identified with him. Asked if they had tried some business ventures, majority replied with a "where is the money to start?" response. One man particularly was upfront and stated;

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*"even if things are bad, I can't go and sell in the market, selling cabbages, tomatoes like a woman. It is not our culture, that would make me appear weaker even. But also, these NGOs give money to only women to start businesses and leave the men out"*

Mr. JP, unemployed South Sudanese man

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Women who were already engaged in IGAs felt proud defining what self-reliance was because they felt they were already on the path to achieving it, or at least their small businesses gave them a boost of confidence. Most defined it as the ability of having own business to earn money; ability to support not just themselves but families as well because their husbands weren't there anymore; and having less support from WFP and UNHCR. Most women agreed they appreciated the money and food donations received to support their families but, it wasn't enough. One of the refugee women, who has been operating a mini-supermarket for 6years remarked,

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*"sometimes I also want to change my family's diet, but I am unable to. So, if I have a business, I am able to at least support myself when the food from UN gets finished."*

Miss GD, 46years old, business woman for 6years

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Overall, all the refugee women and men involved in this research viewed self-reliance in economic and social terms; having IGAs to support their families. Majority of them, especially women are already working towards achieving self-reliance, while still in the camp, to prepare them for when they returned home. The refugee men interviewed on the other hand, don't identify as being self-reliant because they aren't involved in any IGAs. For now, they sit and hope for NGOs to give them start-up or simply wait for peace to return in South Sudan to get back their lives. There are highlighted challenges in achieving this but at least, the women already part of a movement to achieve this goal of economic empowerment.

From my observations during the interviews, it was noticeable that women were selling at least an item at every corner of either the trading centre, in the camp, at food distribution points, reception centre, etc. It didn't matter what they were selling, what mattered most was the ability to turn anything into tangible cash. Miss BK, a South Sudanese selling locally made perfumes stated that selling any item to support her family was much better than her engaging in prostitution as a means of survival.

Going by the definitions provided above in this section, the research thoroughly gives an understanding to research sub question 1: how women and men in Kiryandongo defined empowerment, self-reliance and agency.

#### **4.3 Perceptions of refugee women towards the IGAs in building skills and dignity**

The second sub question explores how refugee women perceived IGAs towards skills building and dignity. To better understand their perceptions, 21 refugee women were interviewed using semi-structured interviews. The analysis of their perceptions is based on the resources; one of the dimensions on the conceptual framework. This dimension is further measured using the indicators of social capital, skills building, and dignity as explained below.

From the interviews, it was realised that the refugee women had access to resources at their disposal that they used either individually or collectively to exercise their agency. This dimension was assessed using the indicators of social capital (networks among the women), skills built, and dignity acquired through self-confidence. The outcome of measuring this dimension is networks and coalitions created, built self-confidence and increase in knowledge and skills.

##### **Social capital**

Through the data gathered, it was evident that Village Saving and Loaning Associations (VSLAs) played an integral part of the refugee women's lives because 81% (17) of them belonged to one (created by them). Through these groups, women said they had created what they term a sisterhood,

built on trust. Beyond the financial benefit they got from the group, they also run to it when they had personal problems for example, if someone had a sick child they were visited, if someone wanted to travel, a colleague could watch over the child(ren). This I observed was common among the South Sudanese women; they appeared more organised and closer, probably because they were the majority in the settlement. However, they also attributed it to the South Sudanese culture of having large families and being communal. Additionally, the bond had been made stronger by the fact that they were in a foreign country under unpleasant circumstances. Miss TM, who had lived in the camp for 6 years now noted;

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*“living in this camp feels like living in the middle of nowhere, and most of us lost families during the war and this is the only family we know now so if we don’t unite, how will we survive in this place?”*

Miss TM, lived in camp for 6 years

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Through the strong networks created, it had been easier to also grow their human capital through trainings offered to them by the KIs e.g. English language, financial literacy, skills building through business boot camps, and growth of financial capital through zero interest loans to invest in their businesses.

The ability of refugee women working together had also given them time to engage in other activities outside running their IGAs to build their social capital. One of such avenues was holding prayer meetings and fellowships in the market and settlement. This I observed was attended by mainly South Sudanese women. They noted that such meetings helped them to find meaning as to why they were refugees and healing from the death of loved ones and forgiving the people who caused the animosity.

However, the downside in building this social capital has led to segregation and tribalism in the groups where the South Sudan women preferred working alone, without involving the other refugee women. This has such fuelled internal conflicts along tribal and religious lines and as such a big stumbling block to development initiatives in the camp.

This was confirmed through interviews with KIs where SSWBA is an initiative targeting only South Sudanese refugee women, the youth leader representatives, and both chairpersons interviewed were all South Sudanese. This implied other refugees from other countries and host community were likely to be left out when designing initiatives.

### **Skills building**

This indicator was measured based on the refugee women’s acquisition of skills that they could use while in the camp and also when they returned to their home countries. The refugee women were asked to compare their experiences doing business before and after moving to the settlement. Of the 21 who were interviewed, there is almost an equal number of refugee women who either had jobs or operated a small business or were farmers in their home countries. 10 women had businesses and 11 didn’t have any experience prior to coming to the camp. Of those who were doing it prior, they stated it was better doing it in their countries because the South Sudan and Kenyan currencies were more stable than the Ugandan one, although they had lost everything during the war and were starting afresh in Uganda. One respondent, Miss GK, a mother of 5 who now operates a tailoring shop recounted her ordeal of what she lost during the war;

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*"I had done business for over 15 years, I had 10 sewing machines, from which I designed bedsheets and I was earning good money. But, when the conflict broke out, my shop plus everything in it was burnt to the ground. I fled with only my children and some little money I had saved. When we arrived in Uganda in 2014, I started afresh. Now I have 3 machines as you can see. I now train other refugee women and Ugandans how to make these bedsheets because it is a new business here. I thank God my life was spared. If you have life, there is still hope"*

Miss GK, single mother of 5

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More than half of the women noted however, they had acquired more skills that they can harness even while in the camp or when they returned. These skills included but not limited to financial literacy, learning English, how to write a business plan, etc. These were trainings organised by NGOs targeting purposely women and youth only, excluding the men. The English language has been especially instrumental in helping the refugee women interact freely with the host communities. The ability of them developing skills was confirmed by interviewing the KIs who work directly with the refugee women and have since registered tremendous results in their self-confidence overtime.

### **Dignity**

Basing on findings with the refugee women, it is evident the women felt a sense of dignity and self-confidence with the ability to earn an income, instead of depending on donors. Some of the women prided in the fact that they were able to feed their families even after the monthly rations were done, and also that they didn't have husbands they could turn to. Additionally, the refugee women also felt like they were receiving almost equal treatment and respect like their male counterparts or even more because they earned an income and most of them were women and could stand on their own. Below are what some respondents stated;

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*"respect comes from respecting yourself, but I think it is also encouraging that most of us don't have husbands so instead of doing prostitution, we are working to support their families"*

Miss EK, single mother of 3 and runs a vegetable stall.

*"Camp has more women so, men have no much of a choice. I earn money and spend on the family and my husband appreciates"*

Miss N, married woman who has lived in the camp for 3years

*"Earning money makes you respected by both women and men"*

Miss AJ, 22-year-old single woman who came to the camp as a child 6 years ago

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From my observation, most refugee women felt a sense of dignity and high self-confidence based on the businesses they had. The refugee women who appeared to be having flourishing businesses appeared more confident and easily expressed themselves as opposed to those who had struggling businesses. Most of these who had struggling businesses appeared to be underselling themselves the more, with the hope there was financial help tied to me interviewing them.



#### **4.4 Collective action and leadership in the refugee settlement**

To answer sub question 3 about how collective action and leadership among refugee women was shaped in the refugee settlement, the research presents results collected from 21 refugee women interviewed using semi-structured interviews. This was answered through exploring the indicators of leadership, and collective action based on the conceptual framework. Its outcome is ability of women being in groups, individual and collective leadership and influence in decision-making at household and community level.

##### **Collective action**

To measure the level of refugee women's working together, the researcher gathered data on some of the associations that existed to ensure the refugee women worked together. I discovered that most of the organisations that support the refugee women preferred working with organised groups, and it was also confirmed by both the refugee women and KIs. Out of the 21 refugee women interviewed, 81% (17 women) of them belonged to women-only Village Saving and Loaning Association (VSLA) of 10-15 members, where they met every week and saved at least 1 EUR per person per week. They stated it was women-only because most men were not earning steady sources of income that enabled them to save per week. 19% (4) of the women either saved on their own or didn't belong to any saving group. 2 of them stated they worked on their own because they didn't earn enough to be consistent with the weekly saving required while in the group. The other 2 however cited past experiences of constant fights in the group and since the group disintegrated, they preferred to work on their own. These groups were made up of both South Sudanese and Kenyan refugee women, but the majority were South Sudanese. Additionally, these groups were set up and organised by women themselves, where they appointed a chairperson to lead them, one refugee woman to keep the saving box and 2 other refugee women to keep the keys to the saving box. All this was done on a basis of mutual understanding and trust.

Through these groups, refugee women are also able to express their grievances and challenges to their leaders, among which is accessibility to financial support to their groups. From such meetings, the leaders lobbied implementing partners for funding and 2 refugee women mentioned they received financial support from Danish Refugee Council (DRC) and Save the Children to boost their businesses. These groups have also played a key role in providing loans to women at zero interest, since they don't have enough collateral to borrow from banks, thus providing a boost in their businesses.

From my observation, the refugee women who belonged to the saving groups had more thriving businesses compared to those who worked on their own as evidenced by the stock of merchandise on sale, average sales they made in a day, number of clients that frequented their stalls and shops.

##### **Leadership**

The leadership indicator was measured through semi-structured interviews with the 21 refugee women through asking them in case they held any leadership positions in the camp and how leaders were elected. Generally, it was observed, through the ranch chairpersons interviewed, that all the 17 cluster leaders but one, was a man. The appointment of the ranch chairpersons was done through the OPM as these liaised directly with the refugees and implementing partners in the settlement. The cluster leaders were appointed using the help of the chairpersons to provide leadership to each cluster and these reported to the respective ranch chairperson. In the saving groups however, the women had more control in appointing their leaders as they did it based on one's interest to lead, success of their business, integrity, team work, and personality, among others. The role of the group chairperson was to ensure peace, unity and growth of businesses in the group. Most of the leadership roles were assumed by the refugee women in the saving groups through elections

amongst themselves. These leaders also acted as points of contact with the local leaders in the camp or organisations implementing projects in the camp. Among the 21 refugee women interviewed, 16 did not hold any leadership positions and 5 of them did; of these 2 were chairpersons, 2 accountants and 1 person kept the group saving box. These leadership roles were voluntary, with no financial motivation but, Miss E, the chairperson of one of the groups, a 43-year-old-single mother of 4 who has run one of the most successful vegetable stalls in the camp for the last 3years noted;

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*“The ability to lead these women has improved my self-confidence and worth after my husband divorced me. My role is to enforce discipline and unity in the group and encouraging other women to work. Usually when there is any problem either in the group or market, we talk through it as a group. For example, most South Sudanese have a habit of spitting in public so, in our group we agreed that whoever was found doing that in the market would pay a fine of 5,000 shillings (1.50EUR) and now I see improvement.”*

Miss E, divorced mother of 4

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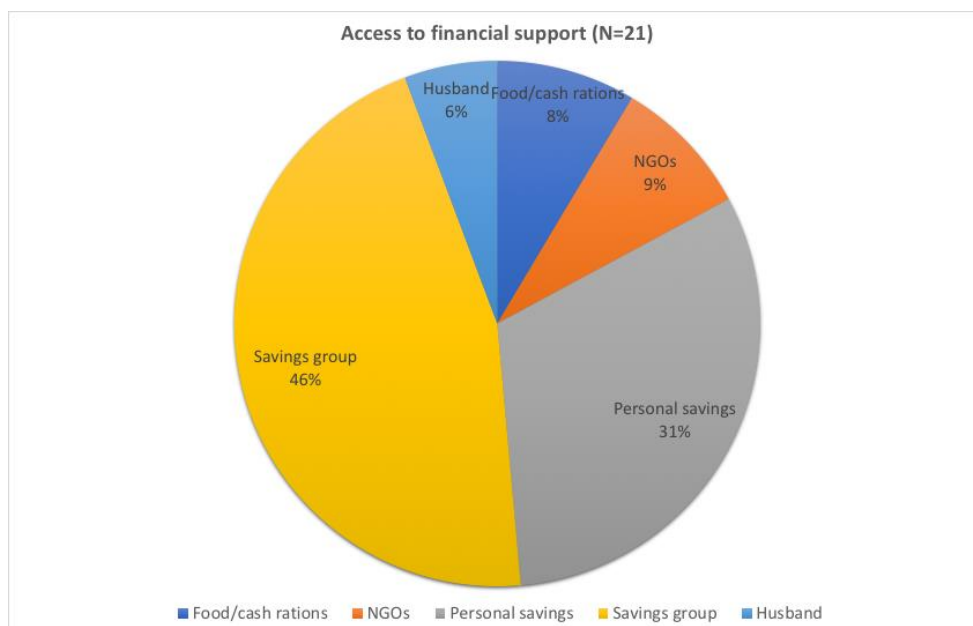
This opportunity also gave the leader a leverage to mentor and guide other refugee women on financial literacy. Most of the women said they did not hold these positions because of commitment to their businesses, or simply not interested. However, three of them weren’t actively engaged as leaders but, they mentored other refugee women in tailoring and running a mini-supermarket to ensure that they got better profits. This confirms from literature leadership, whether formal or informal had the potential of building confidence of women.

#### **4.5 Decision-making, access and control of resources**

Lastly, to answer sub question 4, the autonomy of women making decisions was assessed using the indicator of decision making, access and control of resources both at household and community level.

This indicator of agency was measured through interviewing refugee women to assess who makes decisions over how money was spent and on what at household level, and access to financial help to start a business. Using data collected through the interviews, the refugee women had more than one source of financial support to start their businesses. Majority started out using personal savings either from home countries or an external source and along the way, they got loans through their VSLAs.

**Figure 6: Sources of financial support women have access to**



**Source: Researcher's data (2019)**

From figure 6 above, 46% of refugee had access to financial help through their saving groups at zero interest to start their businesses, 31% from personal sources, while the rest were either supported by NGOs (DRC and Save the Children), cash rations or by their husbands. One woman in particular mentioned she didn't have any money so, due to the trust she had earned among people in the market, she normally picked merchandise from one Ugandan man to sell, and kept profit realised.

The refugee women however still complained of limited financial capitals to grow their businesses and as such, they received minimal profits from them. From interviewing the KIs, they confirmed offering financial support to some women however, limited budgets hindered them from being able to reach every single woman. Another was, much as the women were in groups, the level of organisation and financial literacy was lacking to help them make the best use of the finances. The target audience being refugees, they lacked stability in doing business and most of them gave up easily. WPDI for example cited instances where they had supported women and youth with tailoring machines and baking equipment to groups and they either abandoned the items or carried it with them back to South Sudan without informing group members.

When asked how the profits from the business was spent, all the 21 refugee women mentioned a big portion was spent on household bills i.e. food, education, medical bills; some of it re-invested in the business, portion of it saved. Miss AJ, testified how much impact her vegetable stall had contributed to her savings;

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*"I started with barely 4,000 shillings (1 EUR) in 2014. The biggest thing I have achieved from this business has been buying a motor bicycle to earn more to send my 3 siblings to school. I hired someone to ride it and I am paid on a daily basis"*

Miss AJ, 22-year-old youth from South Sudan

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Refugee women were also asked about their involvement in making decisions on either how money was spent, whose idea it was to start the business or involvement in making other decisions within the household as indicated in table 6 below. These refugee women are either from male-headed or female-headed households and indicated in table 2.

**Table 2: Level of decision making in the household**  
**Household decision making (N=21)**

Level of decision making		Number of refugee women
Who has a final say on what kind of business to start?	Woman	19
	Husband	0
	Both	2
Who has final say on how money is controlled (budgeting & spending)?	Woman	18
	Husband	0
	Both	3
Who has a say on decisions made on behalf of the household?	Woman	16
	Husband	0
	Both	5

**Source: Researcher's data (2019)**

Data gathered during the interviews indicated that, of the women doing businesses, 19 of them started it out from their own motivation to support their families. 2 of the ladies came up with the idea to start the business together with their husbands. Miss TB, a 21-year-old South Sudanese woman who has been in business for only one year noted;

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*“When I came to Uganda, I had to drop out of school, and I got married. I wrote my business plan, presented it to my husband and he gave me money to start. So, this business was my own idea in order to support my husband and also save some money to hopefully go back to school after I give birth.”*

Miss TB, 21year old South Sudanese

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When asked about how money was controlled and spent in the household, 18 refugee women said they had full control how the money was apportioned and spent in the household, because they were female headed households. This was the case even with those who had husbands that had stayed back in South Sudan. Some of these refugee women whose husbands stayed back were not receiving financial support from them either so, the women run the households. 3 of the refugee women decided on expenditure together with their husbands. Lastly, 16 of refugee women interviewed agreed that they were the father and mother of their households so, every decision pertaining the livelihood of their family was in their hands. Only 5 of the refugee women worked together as a couple to make such decisions. Additionally, age did not play a key role in decision making at household because even the unmarried stated they made the decisions by themselves.

At a community level, the refugee women's decisions were mainly represented through the VSLA leaders. Meetings were held every week in the groups and in case there was an issue to be addressed, it was handled as a team. Generally, every refugee woman interviewed felt that they were involved in decisions made pertaining the groups.

#### **4.6 Institutions influencing empowerment of refugee women**

From the study, the researcher also identified community institutions external influencing empowerment and agency of refugee women.

## Family

Of the 21 refugee women who were interviewed, only 2 were still single (see appendix 2). The rest of the women fled conflict with at least 4-6 children and their biggest motivation to involve in the IGAs was to be able to support the children and offer them a better life. However, even with the two refugee single women, they were supporting their siblings through school and other household expenses. Driven by the tie to protect and provide for their families, the refugee women have embarked on engaging in the IGAs. This is also partly driven by the fact that 71% of the refugee women as indicated in table 4 are from female-headed households, meaning the responsibilities of taking care of the household has shifted from men to women and as such, women have risen to the occasion to shoulder this responsibility alone. This is what one of the refugee women noted;

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*“My husband stayed back in South Sudan and he also went blind, so, I needed to do something to support my family.”*

Miss PK, a 45-year-old mother of 4.

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## Cultural norms

Additionally, the refugee women interviewed noted that they didn't experience any cultural barriers in the camp preventing them from engaging in IGAs. When the refugee women were asked to identify some cultural limitations in the camp that impeded them from doing business or how refugee women who run businesses were viewed separately from men, all the 21 agreed that at the moment, there were no cultural limitations to them doing any business as this stage was now for survival; all women had the ability to engage in whatever kind of business. In fact, one of the refugee women from Kenya was doing the business together with her husband. However, 4 of the refugee women interviewed cited that, this culture changed when they got to Uganda. They stated that there were certain tribes in South Sudan that believed that a woman's only role is engaging in her reproductive roles.

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*“Previously, women were not allowed to work in South Sudan because men provided for everything but now, men have no choice because most men remained in South Sudan.”*

Miss FT, South Sudan refugee woman

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This was also confirmed during interviews with the KIs. WPD and BRAC for example noted that they were still working on undoing some cultural burdens that the women experienced back in South Sudan. They noted that most of the women in the programs were reluctant to freely talk to the men during the classes and also reported late for the trainings because they didn't want to leave their children alone for so long. So, a training that would normally go for 3 hours a week, they conducted it for 2 hours to give the women ample time to go back and take care of their children whilst attaining knowledge to help them become economically empowered. Through this, they have been able to register a high number of refugee women attending the trainings.

This information was also confirmed during the researcher's observation as it was evident that it was mainly women vending in markets in either small vegetable stalls or bigger shops in the camp, while majority of the men played board games. The other men who sold in the trading centre were mainly more financially established and majority were Ugandan nationals.

### **Social factors**

To understand the challenges faced by refugees and KIs to achieve empowerment for self-reliance, the analysis was done based on information from interviews, FGDs and observation. Some of refugee women interviewed expressed their dissatisfaction while expressing their opinions in the saving groups. Although 15 women agreed that their opinions were listened to during the weekly meetings, others expressed dissatisfaction with it. The 2 unmarried women interviewed as per table 1 stated they weren't listened to because they were much younger than the other refugee women. Some of the refugee women also mentioned there were always constant quarrels in the markets with women from host communities and because of their refugee status, most times they simply kept quiet for fear of being evicted from the markets because Uganda was "not their home."

### **Economic factors**

From the side of the refugee women, they attribute the lack of financial assistance as a stumbling block to the growth of their businesses; there weren't jobs especially for the youth and men and majority of them were idle in the camps; lack of vocational skills to aid the refugees earn an income; language barrier that impeded trading effectively with host community; for the refugee women who sold in the markets, high rent for the shops were levied on them by the landlords who are Ugandans with the assumption that South Sudanese have a lot of money; and also poor infrastructure inside the settlement i.e. lack of access to electricity, congested classrooms, poor and/or no housing, insufficient supply of water as they had to buy it every day.

The KIs on the other hand also had their own share of challenges for instance; reduced donor funding to this particular settlement due to its protracted nature; laxity of the government agencies to work alongside NGOs in improving livelihoods of the refugees; BRAC stated with the women they worked with, their husbands always took away the money; poor work attitudes from the refugees and most of the refugees didn't look at the settlement as their permanent place of residence and as such, gave up easily; NGOs also noted there was poor anger management among the refugees due to the bitterness they inhabit. These factors weren't confirmed during interviews with the refugee women. During the interviews however, one Kenyan woman noted that most South Sudanese were easily angered and violent either in the saving groups or within the community.

### **Instrumentalization of refugees**

To better understand this, the general situation of the refugee women was assessed based on the livelihoods and condition of living through observation and interactions with the refugees themselves. For example, when refugee women were asked about receiving help from NGOs as indicated in figure 6, only two people out of the 21 had ever received this support. Moreover, there wasn't much registered impact on their businesses, as reported by the implementing partners. Some refugee women felt they were being used by some of the NGOs to enrich themselves as they cited the high level of corruption among the NGOs, where money meant for empowerment was diverted by the people in-charge. The news-spread and impact registered of such initiatives in the media gave a glossier picture of improved well-being of the refugees and as such, the implementing partners kept receiving more funding. Unfortunately, this didn't match with the reality on ground.

### **Opportunistic use of the "refugee" title**

From observations made during data collection, interviews with the respondents and interactions with the local people, it was evident that there were groups of people, either host communities, refugees or implementing organizations, who were misusing the refugee status for personal gains. For instance, most of the refugees registered a higher number of people in their households on their meal cards than they actually were in order to get either more cash or food because the loophole with the system is, the higher the number of people in the household, the more



you are given. Most of these people were either living in South Sudan or staying in another camp. This also saw some refugees registering in more than one camp in order to take advantage of the aid benefits.

Additionally, some Ugandans also registered as refugees in order to get free plots of land or the food/cash rations, thereby denying those who actually deserved it from getting the rations. This was also evidenced while I conducted the interviews. Some accepted the interviews but mid-way through the interviews, they confessed they weren't refugees but rather nationals, who thought there was a financial support being given to the interviewees.

The sense of entitlement was also evident especially among the South Sudanese refugees, grumbling about how the aid received was little, Uganda government's inability to take care of them, implementing NGOs abandoning them and directly asking for money before being interviewed, especially the refugee men. This culture of entitlement is promoting a culture of laziness especially among the men.

Lastly, some South Sudanese refugees expressed disappointment in being asked for payment of about 250,000 Ugx (63 EUR) per person to register as a refugee in case they miss the initial verification phase (this is a different registration upon arrival), yet development agencies portrayed it as being FREE. Some refugees have also been asked to pay up to 500,000 Ugx (125 EUR) by some NGOs in promise of either being given a job or funding for their initiatives. Talking to the refugees, they are dissatisfied with this approach and they claim that OPM and UN employees working in these departments are aware of this, but nothing was being done to address it. One refugee man, a 35-year-old youth worker stated;

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*"they say registration is free of charge and so, why do refugees accept to pay? Whoever pays does so at their own risk, yet no stringent measures are being put in place to protect the refugees"*

Mr. KT, South Sudanese youth worker

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Because of desparacy, most of these refugees pay this amount. This simply goes to prove the level of impunity and corruption that exists in the Uganda refugee management system and unfortunately, it is the innocent that normally suffer. For example, based on The Irish Times newspaper article dated May 26, 2019, UK, Japan and Germany suspended refugee aid to Uganda because of a corruption scandal and worse still, the perpetrators had not been brought to justice yet.

**Figure 7: Newspaper excerpt in The Irish Times**

# Germany follows UK in suspending refugee aid to Uganda

Money withheld over corruption scandal in east African country's refugee programme

© Wed, May 29, 2019, 06:00

Sally Hayden in Kampala



Allegations of corruption in Uganda's refugee programme led to the discovery that there were 300,000 fewer refugees in the country than previously thought. Photograph: Michele Sibiloni/Getty Images

Germany has followed the UK and Japan in suspending some aid meant for refugees in Uganda, in reaction to what they say is a lack of justice and accountability after last year's corruption scandal in the African country's refugee programme.

Source: The Irish Times, 2019

To summarise, the information provided in this section above exhaustively provides answers to research questions 2: perceptions of refugee women towards the IGAs in building skills and dignity; 3: how collective action and leadership are shaped in the refugee settlement; 4: influence refugee women have in decision-making, access and control of resources at household and community level and 5: community institutions influencing empowerment and agency of refugee women.





*Photo: Researcher talking to refugee women during one of the informal meetings in the host community*

## CHAPTER 5 DISCUSSION

## CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to gain an in-depth understanding how IGAs have been used as an empowerment instrument to improve agency for self-reliance of refugee women in Kiryandongo settlement. In this chapter, the results from the findings would provide a blueprint when designing strategies of integrating empowerment and IGAs for refugee women.

### 5.1 Imagining the past, rethinking the future of empowerment

In this study, empowerment was defined as a process that helps people, especially women and men exercise their agency and have control over their own lives with the ultimate goal for self-reliance. Based on findings from the field, the refugee women confirmed this argument as majority of them equated empowerment to ability to be given rights to do something they had never done before for example, earning an income, making own decisions, etc. The refugee men on the other hand viewed it through the lens of giving power to women equivalent to same power given to men. The KIs defined it as giving skills to vulnerable people to have a meaningful life. What was clear was, all these interviewees gave their understanding of empowerment based on their context, implying that there's no single definition of empowerment. Furthermore, it confirms Kabeer et al, (2008) definition as having power within that enables people to believe in themselves and accomplish things, they did not know they were capable of doing, and the power that comes from working together to claim what is rightfully theirs. This therefore goes to confirm that there is no single definition of empowerment, the concept is abstract and can be adopted by development partners in relation to their programming need.

However, some men also took the concept of empowerment with a pinch of salt. During the FGDs especially, two refugee men argued that empowerment was a good thing, but it shouldn't be advocated for too much especially for a married woman as it makes the man lose his power in the household. Some refugee men also stated the pain in being excluded from development programs by the NGOs. The motives for their exclusion wasn't fully explored due to my personal bias during data collection of men being lazy as I observed majority of them played board games while the refugee women engaged in IGAs. Due to this bias, my interaction with refugee men was limited, after conducting the FGD with them. My limited interaction in engaging them in informal conversations could mean that I missed out on important pieces of information to include in my research, to back up the empowerment concept. This biasness was further fuelled by the two camp chairpersons (ranch leaders of the settlement) requested for money from me in order to conduct the research, with the assumption that I represented an NGO. This I noticed was also clear with the refugee men during mobilizing for the FGDs. Their first questions were; "are you going to pay me," "what do I benefit from the research?" From my observation as well, I noticed most of the refugee men simply complained about being excluded from empowerment programs, and all they did was play board games the entire day, while the women strived to sell even the smallest quantity of items to get an income. This imbalance in development as such places women at a better advantage over men however, it could have grave consequences if the man feels threatened by a woman's position of earning an income. Marcus *et al* (2015) warns that majority of men tend to be threatened by this shift in women's economic independence as they feel devalued by women "taking over their roles" and as such viewed as "empty trousers". Majority of men tend to become violent as a way of asserting his dominance over the woman. This was confirmed by one key informant who stated some women they trained complained of their husbands taking away the money they earned from the businesses. These claims weren't confirmed by the refugee women I interviewed during my data collection because majority of the women hailed from female-headed households and those who were married mentioned they made decisions together with their husbands. My research therefore contributes to body of literature alluded by Olivius (2014) where organisations view the concept of empowerment as "adding and



stirring” women into their programming for the purpose of getting donor funding, yet the reality on ground is different. Regardless, I appreciate the notion of inclusive empowerment of men, youth and women as a means of achieving sustainable and gender equal development.

Additionally, the understanding of agency for both the refugee women and men was similar; giving someone the freedom and right to make their own choices-legal empowerment. However, they felt as though their status of being refugees didn’t give them the liberty to exercise their agency. And as such, even if they felt their rights were being violated, they were reluctant to speak up for fear of being marginalized further in a foreign land. It is as such important for development partners to explore further the concept of empowering refugees on their legal rights. There’s limited literature on the legal empowerment of refugees to address inequality, violation of human rights and exclusion among protracted refugees. During my field study, I learnt that the KIs mostly focused on empowering refugees to understand the peace and human rights issues in their countries of origin. Little was done to empower them with their legal rights while in the host country. Purkey (2013) notes that addressing this would improve administration of justice in the refugee camps, increase accountability of the host state governments and aid agencies, and contribute to achievement of durable solutions either by providing durable solutions through skills building or empowering refugees to be the drivers of initiatives aimed at attaining social justice.

Lastly, all the refugee women, men and KIs agree that self-reliance was the ability of refugees to acquire skills in order to reduce on the dependence on humanitarian aid. Much as the refugee women were more engaged in the IGAs, many of them stated there was not much benefit obtained from the IGAs, apart from being able to take care of their families. However, I also observed there were tendencies of the interviewees selling short the success of their businesses through making themselves appear more vulnerable and poorer than they were, with the assumption that there was a financial benefit/grant to be given to respondents. This in effect might have affected my results captured about level of self-confidence and self-reliance of the refugee women. As such, the results from this study may not give the actual picture of the self-reliance and level of dignity obtained through IGAs of all refugee women in Kiryandongo settlement. For some of the refugee women, I felt drawn to their stories and their struggles and I ended up buying some items from them, even though I really didn’t need them. However, for some, I was upfront with those who asked about possibility of getting a grant by stressing to them this was simply a research study but availed to them options of using the locally available NGOs that provided funding to business owners that they could take advantage of if they qualified.

## **5.2 Empowerment on social capital building**

Based on the findings on perceptions of refugee women towards social capital, skills and dignity, results show that refugee women, especially from South Sudan who are engaged in IGAs felt the strong social capital and skills they had acquired during the period they have lived in the camp had given them a sense of dignity and boosted their confidence. The refugee women felt they had acquired enough skills in running a business, financial literacy, knowledge of peace processes and improved literacy level, which skills they could harness while still in the camp and upon returning home. Through their social networks, they not only had access to financial help but also a sisterhood bond that they could turn to in case they needed to. This, according to Mayoux (2002), goes to confirm that there is a positive relation between social capital, financial sustainability and empowerment, as long as it serves the interests of the beneficiaries. Reflecting upon my period in the camp, I can relate to the sisterhood bond among especially among the South Sudanese women, because they are traditionally tight-knit families. I was invited to share in the festivities. These moments bonded us, and through it, I earned their trust. This made them more receptive to me throughout my data collection process, because almost each one knows the other. This constant interaction with the refugee women in informal settings has helped me in explaining concepts in this research, which I wouldn’t if I had

conducted a desk study and as such, providing reliability to my results. As a researcher, it helped me appreciate that conducting research in the natural setting is as important as the respondents because as Austin and Sutton (2014) noted, “in the real world, the environment and context influence behaviors and outcomes.”

### **5.3 Empowerment through collective action**

From the data gathered about the refugee women, most of them found meaning and belonging in engaging in VSLAs. Of the 21 women interviewed, 17 women mentioned they belonged to a VSLA, through which they found social and financial support. Rankin (2002), alludes that such collective action among women, has the ability of challenging traditional microfinance programs through placing economic empowerment in the hands of women whilst building their solidarity to challenge dominant gender ideologies. Women empowerment happens when women work together and challenge dominant social norms and culture in order to improve well-being (Swain and Wallentin, 2009). For example, the South Sudanese refugee women noted that culturally, they were not allowed to earn an income, or engage in business but they were now doing that while in the settlement. Additionally, Roesch and Héliès (2007) notes that microfinances run by banks and NGOs aim at providing a reliable source of income but it also promotes excessive debt to the recipients, who have to pay the interest accrued by the loans. This justifies the cause of refugee women to work together to obtain zero interest loans amongst themselves. From my observations, the women who worked in groups seemed to have more thriving businesses through the number of customers they had, amount of savings per day, compared to women who worked on their own. This finding as such contributes to the body of literature that IGAs indeed work to economically empower women through collective action.

### **5.4 Empowerment in decision making**

To assess the level of decision making the refugee women had both at household and community level, 21 refugee women were asked who had the final decision on how money was spent in the household, and kind of business they engaged in and majority of them now made these decisions as they were in female-headed households, unlike before they came to the camp. This shift in power relations the women mentioned gave them a sense of independence and freedom to make their own decisions, which power they didn't have before. Many of them had husbands before, meaning they didn't have much decision-making power then. After moving to the settlement, their husbands were absent, and they gained the power. This would mean that moving to a refugee camp is empowering in itself, due to challenging the social norm, as noted by Swain and Wallentin. However, much as this seems like a good thing for the women, it doesn't form a logical basis to draw conclusions of women being empowered. The missing link in this study as such assumes the ability of women from female-headed households to make decisions is empowering. However, comparisons would have been more realistic with if enough data was collected about decision making at households by women from male-headed households. Marcus et al 2015 already warns that most men are always threatened by a woman's independence in making decisions and earning an income. This could also explain why most men use this as an excuse and play board games the entire day, instead of working hard to provide for their families. One clear example was given by one refugee man who cited he wasn't comfortable with his wife making all the decisions.

Additionally, majority of the refugee women interviewed stated their motivation to start their businesses was to be able to fend for their families and as such, the source of financial support came from either personal savings and backed up by loans from savings groups. Only 9% of the women (2) received financial backing from NGOs and 8% have used aid from food rations to be able to start out. This leaves a question to investigate the possibilities of rethinking donor aid for sustainability in order to alleviate poverty because from results, most refugee women interviewed didn't require financial aid to start their businesses. Olivius (2014) argues humanitarian policy emphasizes the participation



of women in programming however, women's participation has instead become an instrument for enhancing the effectiveness and efficiency of humanitarian operations rather than a tool for the promotion of empowerment. However, the representation of only 2 women out of 21 who stated they received financial help and attributed their success to this fund does not in any way undermine the efforts of development agencies working to economically empower the refugees. The key informants for example I talked to like WPDI had over the years offered financial support to 70 SMEs and BRAC had 360 beneficiaries in 6 months, and majority of these were refugee women, yet my sample size was only 21 refugee women who were randomly sampled for this study. This doesn't provide enough justification to logically conclude that NGOs weren't doing much in this regard. A more realistic conclusion would have been arrived at to assess the impact of donor funding if the beneficiaries of these initiatives were instead studied. I reflect upon my research process, I realize the time I had to carry out the research was limited and as such, I had a smaller sample size, which doesn't give me a firm ground to make a logical conclusion on the general situation of refugee women. However, it sets the ground for another researcher to have a bird view of life of refugee women in Kiryandongo refugee settlement, through the eyes of 21 refugee women and 2 FGDs of refugee men and women, selected from 16 out of the 17 clusters in the refugee camp.

## **5.5 Empowerment through cultural structures**

All the refugee women interviewed mentioned their major motivation for engaging in the IGAs was to be able to support their families. This was further qualified by Hall (2010) that families are significant emotional contexts that affect the decision-making power of women especially because of the ties women usually have with it due to their reproductive roles. These family ties and responsibility in the household has been both empowering and disempowering to refugee women. Empowering because women view it as an opportunity to work harder to provide for their families and earn personal income that they can save. Disempowering as it increases the burden on women's reproductive roles of looking after children, which time they would have used effectively to grow their productive roles. However, some KIs interviewed like WPDI have worked to strike this balance for the women by shortening the hours taken in their trainings to ensure the women acquire skills for personal development whilst having enough time to take care of their families. This is one of the ways in which development partners can work to mainstream gender in their programming, through taking into account both men and women's interests and concerns (SIDA, 2015).

Culturally, the refugee women interviewed felt the cultural norms surrounding South Sudanese women about engaging in businesses had been changed through their state of being in the camp i.e. they could now earn an income, work in the market, which wasn't the case before for some of them as men took care of everything. Krause (2014) argues that "forced displacement can break patriarchal patterns because refugees renegotiate and redefine gender relations while in settlements which could lead to women's empowerment." Marcus *et al* (2015) further adds that forced migration whether internally or across borders exposes women, men, boys and girls to new economic and educational opportunities and reduces exposure to the existing social norms in their countries of origin, that reinforce existing gender norms. However, they further warn that displacement could also serve to reinforce conservative gender norms if the community the refugees resided in practiced what was in their countries of origin. This research therefore contributes to inform that the South Sudanese staying in Uganda was working to their advantage as these structures were slowly being changed for the better. For instance, early body of literature by Mulumba (2007) indicated a refugee woman in a camp wasn't allowed to talk to any stranger, without the authorisation of a male figure. This she asserted was because women were viewed as property and unable to make decisions by themselves without the help of a husband or male figure. This was the assumption I went with, and I prepared for the worst. On the contrary, I did not experience any limitation talking to any refugee woman, and neither did they ask for permission from any male before talking to me, apart from language barrier which hindered our conversations. Even then, with the help of the South Sudanese male interpreters,

the women felt safe to talk and share anything with me, regardless whether other men were around or not. Majority of this data was collected with the help of two South Sudanese male refugees who acted as interpreters and mobilisers. As a researcher, this also helped me discover that you cannot carry out research alone.

## **5.6 Sustainability of the settlement**

Results from table 4 indicates the average South Sudanese refugee had lived in the settlement for 4-5years and others up to 6-7years, while Kenyans interviewed had lived there for 12years now. From my observation, I noticed that some refugees had also moved out of the settlement and either constructed houses or rented accommodation inside the host community. This confirms the argument by Hunter (2009) that conflict in refugees' countries always took long to be resolved and as such, most of them become protracted in their host countries, living indefinitely for more than 5years. For this particular settlement of study, majority of the refugees are protracted. The ability of the refugee women as such to engage in IGAs to improve their livelihoods works for the good of creating a sustainable refugee hosting model for the country. The success in the IGAs has been furthered by Uganda's refugee policy that allows for refugees to freely integrate with the host communities and run businesses (UNDP, 2017; Werker, 2007). This as such works towards creating a settlement that thrives on economic solutions driven by the refugees themselves. Moreover, the refugee women themselves expressed their desire to have businesses that reduced their dependence on rations. However, they expressed the most limiting factor to achieving this was limited financial support.

## **5.7 Opportunistic use of the refugee title**

Based on the findings from the field, it is absurd to find out that some individuals were using the refugee status opportunistically like charging refugees for registration or with a promise to be given funding. This gets one to question the level of accountability among the implementing partners. This is a very delicate matter that needs a lot of precaution to investigate further and unfortunately, I wasn't able to interview any implementing partner who handles registration of refugees to confirm this allegation. However, there were posters I noticed pinned up at the reception Centre and distribution points that read "All services, including resettlement, provided by UNHCR and its partners are FREE", with a call to report such a fraudulent activity for immediate action. However, Kibreab (2004) argues that such deeds have little or nothing to do with being a refugee as people do not become dishonest simply because they are refugees. It has to do more with the individual's moral upbringing. Such an act deprives other refugees from benefitting from the much-needed aid. This also permits one to question the actual number refugees living in the refugee settlements as reported by UNHCR; should we trust the statistics or not?



*Photo: Women queuing at food distribution center to receive food*

## **CHAPTER 6 CONCLUSION & RECOMMENDATIONS**

## CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### 6.1 Conclusion

This research centered on gaining insights on how empowerment through IGAs has influenced social capital, collective action, decision making and transformed cultural norms of refugee women in order to develop strategies that integrate IGAs with empowerment of refugee women. To arrive at the findings, I conducted my fieldwork over 6 weeks in Kiryandongo refugee settlement in Uganda. I interviewed refugee women and key informants. I also conducted 2 focus group discussions in the settlement with women and men refugees of South Sudan decent to gain a general understanding of the topic. Lastly, carrying out participant observation and informal conversations with the refugees helped to clarify the data collected thus increasing validity.

To answer the understanding of concepts of empowerment, agency and self-reliance, both men and women refugees agreed that the concepts served to provide one with their right to live dignified lives, regardless of their refugee status. Such rights included; engaging in IGAs, making their own decisions both at household and community, ability to acquire skills and use it for self-reliance. Some refugee men however argued that much as the concept of empowerment was a good thing, it shouldn't be too much, especially for a married woman as she would undermine the leadership of her husband in the home. Additionally, the study discovered that refugee women identified as being self-reliant to a certain extent, as evidenced in the IGAs they were running, compared to men. The refugee men expressed dissatisfaction at the fact that most development initiatives targeted only women and youth, excluding them, yet they seemed not to make any strides to engage in IGAs as they alluded that in their culture, "men don't sell vegetables in the market" but instead majority played board games the whole day.

The study found that refugee women especially those from South Sudan perceived that IGAs had made a great contribution in establishing social networks amongst themselves that they called a sisterhood and built on skills they could harness while still in the camp and upon their return back home. Through the sisterhood, they now had financial, emotional, moral and social support. The study also discovered that the social capital acquired amongst the refugees had also increased economic empowerment as they are able to take loans on zero interest and as such the women were part of a driving force behind creating a sustainable refugee hosting model as they were the solution to their problem instead of depending on rations. This was also evidenced by the flourishing businesses some refugee women had engaged in for 4-5years now.

To address sub-question three, the findings unraveled that because the refugee women have built social capital overtime, they are harnessing it for collective action, which is generally built on trust amongst themselves. Through their saving groups, it was surprising to learn that they were able to lobby organizations for financial support as most of the implementing partners preferred to work with organized groups. This the refugee women considered it empowering as it placed economic empowerment in their hands and strengthened their solidarity to challenge dominant gender ideologies that they faced prior to settling in the camp i.e. inability to make household decisions, run businesses or earn income.

In order to understand decision making at household and community level, the study found that majority of the refugee women were from female-headed households as opposed to before they came to the camp. It meant that decision making at household level was solely done by women. This, they perceived it as empowering to have autonomy in making decisions pertaining the family. The refugee women from male-headed households stated they made the decisions together with their husbands. However, the notion of refugee women from female headed households being able to make their own decisions equated to empowerment as assumed in this research doesn't entirely hold

true for all refugees. In fact, some men felt threatened by this new shift in power relations as they felt they had been rendered “powerless.” This could only deepen the cultural norms that limit gender equality, if not properly addressed.

Lastly, the refugee women perceived their ability to run businesses as challenging cultural limitation while in South Sudan. Family equally played a key role in motivating women to run the IGAs. However, limited financial backing from NGOs and increased levels of corruption were cited as limited to their ability of exercising agency. The refugee felt donors used them for their own gains of getting funding, yet they were not benefiting as much from their interventions.

## **6.2 Recommendations**

The objective of this study was to gain insight in what ways Income Generating Activities (IGAs) have improved agency and enhanced empowerment for self-reliance of refugee women in Kiryandongo settlement in order to make recommendations to RISE-UP Hub to develop strategies targeted at integrating IGAs with empowerment of refugee women. Based on this conclusion, the researcher came up with these recommendations;

Firstly, before RISE-UP Hub pilots its program in Kiryandongo refugee settlement, I recommend they understand what empowerment means for refugee men, women and youth to ensure the project objectives aligns with the needs of the refugees. From the research, the concept meant something different for refugee women, men and key informants. Luttrell *et al.*, (2009) notes that development partners could take into account the context of empowerment beyond its 4 dimensions of economic, human and social, political, and cultural empowerment when designing programs for empowerment.

Secondly, I recommend RISE-Up Hub to strive to include both men, women and youth in its programming because currently, its programs are targeted towards women and youth only. My findings revealed most NGOs in the settlement targeted only women and youth, excluding the men. Such men viewed the concept of women’s economic empowerment as emasculating them. Including them (men) in empowerment serves as a starting point in redressing gender norms with a goal for inclusive and sustainable development.

Thirdly, results from my findings present a glimmer of hope on the possibility of building a sustainable financial model for economic empowerment of the refugee women. This was evidenced through their formations of the VSLAs that offer financial support amongst themselves at zero-interest rate. Through these saving groups, they are also able to collectively lobby for funding and form a solidarity to challenge traditional gender norms they faced. I recommend this as better practice to be adopted by implementing partners working in refugee settlements to encourage refugees to work in groups. The sustainability is strengthened more because the solution is in the hands of the refugees.

Lastly, further research could also be conducted on the motives behind the opportunistic use of the refugee title for selfish gains. This also holds true since Uganda has lately experienced donor cuts for refugee initiatives due to corruption scandals. An undercover investigative research to unearth the perpetrators of this syndicate and obtaining interviews with victims of this manipulation would help shade light and gain attention of the global community to redress and streamline systems.



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## APPENDICES

### Appendix 1: Data disaggregated according to clusters

Data disaggregated by ranch and clusters																			
Ranch 1										Ranch 37									
Tools	A	B	C	D	E	F	K	S	P	G	H	I	J	L	MR	N	OQ	Total	
Semi structured	1	0	0	1	3	1	0	0	3	2	3	0	1	2	0	2	2	21	
FGDs (Women	1	0	1	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	1	0	1	8	
	0	1	1	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	2	1	0	1	0	0	0	8	
KIs															6			6	
<b>Note:</b> Data for FGDs lists individuals to capture representation by clusters but unit of analysis is two groups, each having 8 men and women respectively.																			



## Appendix 2: Number of respondents according to nationality

Nationality				
Tool	Participation	South Sudanese	Kenyan	Total
Semi-structured interviews	Number of participants (women only)	17	4	21
	Percentage of refugee women by nationality	81%	19%	100%
FGDs	Number of participants (men and women)	16	0	16
	Percentage of refugees (men and women) by nationality	100%	0%	100%

**Appendix 3: Data disaggregation according to marital status**

<b>Marital Status (N=21)</b>		
<b>Status</b>	<b>Number of women interviewed</b>	<b>Percentage of women by marital status</b>
Married and husband in camp	4	19%
Married and husband in S.Sudan	8	38%
Single (not married, no child(ren))	2	10%
Widowed/divorced	7	33%
<b>Total</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Appendix 4: Data of respondents according to age**

<b>Age (N=21)</b>					
<b>Age range</b>	<b>18-30years</b>	<b>31-40 years</b>	<b>41-50years</b>	<b>51+ years</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Number of women</b>	6	5	5	5	<b>21</b>
<b>Total percentage</b>	<b>29%</b>	<b>24%</b>	<b>24%</b>	<b>24%</b>	<b>100%</b>

# Appendix 5: Period living in camps versus period doing business

Period living in the camp (N=21)					
Nationality	0-1year	2-3years	4-5years	6-7years	10+years
South Sudanese	0	3	9	5	0
Kenyan	0	0	0	0	4
Period doing business (N=21)					
Nationality	0-1year	2-3years	4-5years	6-7years	10+ years
South Sudanese	9	3	5	0	0
Kenyan	1	2	0	0	1
<b>Key: Interpretation of age ranges</b>					
0-1years	since 2018				
2-3years	since 2016-2017				
4-5years	since 2014-2015				
6-7years	since 2012-2013				
8-9years	since 2010-2011				
10+ years	since 2008 and below				

## Appendix 6: Profiles of key informants interviewed

Institution	Profile
<b>The Whitaker Peace &amp; Development Initiative (WPDI)</b>	<p>WPDI is an initiative founded in 2012 by Forest Whitaker, an artist, a social activist and UNESCO Special Envoy for Peace and Reconciliation (WPDI, 2019). Its aim is to promote the values of peace, reconciliation and social development within communities impacted by conflict and violence.</p> <p>Since its pilot in Kiryandongo settlement in 2017, WPDI has trained over 730 youth and women in IGAs through business boot camps, supported 70 SMEs (small medium enterprises) financially, enrolled over 1000+ children and youth in conflict resolution education in schools, and supported 23 youth-led projects. Through their trainings, they also provide financial literacy and English training to women and youth to improve financial management from the businesses. Through these businesses, 19 women-only saving groups have been set up, each group having at least 15 members. To ensure inclusiveness throughout its programming, they adhere to the 70-30 rule; 70 percent refugees and 30 per cent host community.</p>
<b>South Sudan Woman Building Association (SSWBA)</b>	<p>This is an initiative run by a South Sudanese youth, aimed at training only South Sudanese women and youth to start income generating activities, educating them on peace processes and agreements, improving literacy levels and promoting peace through sports.</p> <p>Over the one year of its existence, women have been trained to start-up IGAs and five savings group, with 10 women each have been setup to this effect, registered increase in the literacy levels of the refugee women and conducted community dialogues and radio talk shows on conflict resolution and reconciliation.</p>
<b>BRAC Uganda</b>	<p>BRAC prides in its vision of a world free from all forms of exploitation and discrimination where everyone has the opportunity to realise their potential. They achieve this through large scale, positive changes through economic and social programs that enable men and women to realise their potential. For more than a decade, BRAC microfinance has enabled people living in rural and low-income communities in Uganda to access finance.</p> <p>In Kiryandongo settlement for example, it piloted the empowerment in livelihoods project for 6months aimed at offering apprenticeship, vocational training for youth-boys only and micro-enterprise training for women only. Through this project, 360 beneficiaries were impacted, including both refugees and host communities due to the 70-30 per cent refugee-host community policy. Through the microenterprises, 10 women groups were set up, with each group having 10-15 members and 8 of these groups are in the camp.</p>

## **Appendix 7: Verbal informed consent**


Hello,


My name is Jackie, I am a student and as part of my class work, I am conducting research to understand how income generating businesses has impacted lives of refugee women in this camp. My colleague here [referring to the interpreter] identified you as someone who can provide me with this valuable information. Do you think you are able to give me at least 15-30minutes of your time? [If they agree] I have a list of questions that I will be asking you. If you don't mind, I will be taking notes to help me remember what we have discussed. I will also be recording our audio conversation using this phone to remind me of our conversation. Don't worry, I will not share any of your personal details like name on any public facing platform. It will be used internally for my classwork. Do you have any questions? May we start? If agrees, recording starts and commence interview...

At end:

I really appreciate you giving me your time and the information.  
Have a nice day!

## Appendix 8: Permission letter from OPM to conduct the interview

  
THE REPUBLIC OF UGANDA  
**OFFICE OF THE PRIME MINISTER**  
PLOT 9-11 APOLLO KAGGWA ROAD. P.O. BOX 341, KAMPALA, UGANDA  
TELEPHONES: General Line 0417 770500, Web: www.opm.go.ug, E-mail: ps@opm.go.ug

  
Uganda  
Vision 2040

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In any correspondence on this subject, please quote No: **OPM/R/107**

July 3, 2019

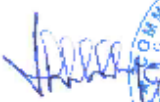

Ms. Jackline Alwedo  
Van Hall Larenstein University

**RE: PERMISSION TO CONDUCT AN ACADEMIC RESEARCH IN KIRYADONGO REFUGEE SETTLEMENT**

Reference is made to your letter dated June 27, 2019 in regard to the above subject matter.

This is to authorize you conduct an academic research in Kiryandongo Refugee Settlement for a period of six weeks, from July 3 to August 18, 2019.

You are requested to observe the rules and regulations governing the settlement. Office of the Prime Minister authorities in the settlement are hereby requested to accord you the necessary assistance.

Gerald Mwenya  
**FOR: PERMANENT SECRETARY**

C.C. Refugee Desk Officer  
Hoima

C.C. Settlement Commandant  
Kiryandongo

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OPM Vision: A Public Sector that is responsive and accountable in steering Uganda towards rapid economic growth and development.



## **Appendix 9: Interview guide ordered per research tool**

### **General research objective**

To gain insight in what ways income generating activities have improved agency and enhanced empowerment for self-reliance of refugee women in Kiryandongo settlement to provide recommendations to commissioner for improvement.

#### **1. Semi-structured Interviews with refugee women**

##### Guiding research question(s)

- i. How is collective action and leadership shaped in the refugee settlement?
- ii. What influence do refugee women have in decision-making, access and control of resources at household and community level?

##### Areas of knowledge needed

- Collective action amongst refugee women,
- leadership opportunities,
- decision making,
- Community institutions

##### **Number: 21 refugee women**

**Who?** Women refugees (refugee women from both male-headed and female-headed households running businesses)

##### Interview Guiding checklist

###### **Introductory questions**

- Cluster of participant:
- Interviewee's name:
- Age:
- Marital status:
- IGA(s) involved in and since when:
- Period spent living in settlement:
- Date of interview:

###### **Digging deeper**

- How did you arrive in this settlement?
- Who did you arrive with?
- What were you able to take with you when you arrived here?
- How long have you been in the settlement?
- What kind of issues/problems do you face with getting daily food, sanitation, clean drinking water etc.
- How have you dealt with such an issue?
- What was the motivation for engaging in this particular IGA? (for those involved in it)
- Where and what kind of support do you receive to help you engage in the IGA, both at household and community level?
- How did you get started, was someone helping you, if yes what kind of help or support did you get?
- Under what conditions did you get the help, are they expecting something in return?

- What tangible benefits have you realized in your life, both at a personal and household level from engaging in the IGA?
- What was the experience involving in IGAs before settling in the camp?
- How do you apportion the profits from the IGA in the household?
- With the ability to earn an income, how much control do you have how resources (money) in the house is spent?
- How involved are you in decision making with your husband or partner or male figure in your household on how resources should be spent?
- At an individual level, how has the ability to involve in IGA impacted your interaction with other refugee women?
- How do you collaborate with other refugee women involved in IGAs?
- How prepared do you feel to stand on your own during and after the camp?
- How do you feel refugee women who earn money are viewed in society i.e. are they better listened to, have a higher status in the camp?
- How do you think the refugee women who earn an income are viewed compared to men?
- What image do you think men in this settlement portray of women who earn an income?
- Do you think there are some cultural limitations to women engaging in businesses in this settlement?
- Are there particular challenges you face in your community that make it hard for your voice to be heard?

## **2. Key Informants**

### **Objective**

To get expert insights how IGAs work as an empowerment instrument in the refugee camp and how empowerment can be streamlined in programs targeted towards refugee women for self-reliance.

### Guiding research question(s)

- How is empowerment, agency and self-reliance defined by the key informants?
- How is collective action and leadership shaped in the refugee settlement?
- How do community institutions affect empowerment of refugee women?

### Knowledge needed

- Collective action, leadership, empowerment, agency, self-reliance and community institutions.

### **Number to interview: 6**

Who? 3 NGO representatives, 1 local leader, and 2 camp representatives.

### **Questions**

- Name (optional)
- Agency/NGO representing:
- Role in the settlement
- How long have you worked with refugees?
- What was your motivation to work in this community?
- Particular questions for respective key informants

#### **i. NGO representative**

- What program(s) is the organization you represent currently implementing in Kiryandongo refugee settlement?
- What are its objectives?
- How many people (men and women) have been reached by the program?
- On the general, what do you think has been the major success stories from these programs?
- How has it impacted the lives of the beneficiaries both negatively and positively?
- What do you think has been some of the challenges in implementation of programs in the refugee camps?
- How do you usually design and implement these programs to the target beneficiaries?
- How involved are the refugees, especially women in making decisions pertaining the design and implementation of the program?
- How have you as an NGO work towards making the refugees self-reliant instead of depending on aid?
- What is your view on programs that aim to empower women?
- How would you define empowerment in the context of your program(s)?
- To what extent has your program(s) achieved this?
- What about self-reliance, how do you define it in your program(s)?
- How has your program(s) contributed towards making women independent?
- How do you ensure constant communication with your beneficiaries (refugee women especially)?
- What activities or roles do women and men take in the project?
- What are some of the mechanisms in place to ensure that all refugees' voices are heard?
- What are the community social norms that you have noticed working with the community?
- Based on your experience, what do you suggest can be done differently to have both women and men actively engaged in IGAs for self-reliance?
- Any questions in relation to IGAs as an empowerment instrument?

**ii. 1 Local leader**

- What is your role in this community?
- Under what situations do the refugees seek for your help?
- What do you think about your influence in this settlement?
- What is your understanding of empowerment?
- What about self-reliance?
- What about agency?
- What would it mean for a refugee woman to have these 3 attributes in this settlement?
- How involved are you in the activities tailored towards empowering refugees in this settlement?
- What kind of activities do you see mainly men and women involved in in this settlement for income generation?
- In this community, who makes the decisions about the nature of businesses that women and men are involved in?
- How do people in this community feel about women involving in IGAs?
- What are the community social norms that you have noticed working with the community?
- Do the local leaders advocate for or against refugee women involving in IGAs? Please explain.
- What barriers prevent refugee women from engaging in IGAs? Please explain.

- In your opinion, what do you think has the local leadership done to either support or derail efforts of refugee women involved in IGAs?

### **iii. 2 Camp leaders**

- What is your role in this community?
- Under what situations do the refugees seek for your help?
- What do you think about your influence in this settlement?
- What is your understanding of empowerment?
- What about self-reliance?
- What about agency?
- What would it mean for a refugee woman to have these 3 attributes in this settlement?
- How involved are you in the activities tailored towards empowering refugees in this settlement?
- What kind of activities do you see mainly men and women involved in in this settlement for income generation?
- How much control do you always have in the programs run by the refugee women?
- How involved are you in the activities tailored to empower refugees in this settlement?
- During community gatherings, do you always discuss the issues of women and men engaging in IGAs for self-reliance?
- What usually prompts these discussions?
- What sort of topics do you discuss?
- What is the proportion of men and women involved in these discussions?
- What do you consider some of the challenges faced by refugee women in this settlement?
- For the women engaged in IGAs, how do you think they have contributed towards betterment of the community?
- Why do you think it is important (or not) to support women to be self-reliant?
- Based on your experience, what do you suggest can be done differently to have both women and men actively engaged in IGAs for self-reliance?

### **3. Focus Group discussions**

#### **Objective**

To gain a general understanding of the research topic for clarity and validation of the results.

#### **Research Questions to answer**

- How do refugee women in Kiryandongo define empowerment, self-reliance and agency?
- What are the perceptions of refugee women towards the IGAs in building skills and dignity?
- What influence do refugee women have in decision-making, access and control of resources at household and community level?

#### **Areas of knowledge**

Empowerment, agency, self-reliance, skills, dignity, decision making, access and control.

#### **Number to interview: 2 FGDs (men and women separately)**

#### **For women**

- What you do understand by the terms empowerment (power to do things you didn't think possible), agency (ability to make own decisions) and self-reliance (ability to live on your own with minimal help)?

- What does it mean for a refugee woman to be empowered, self-reliant and have agency as an individual?
- Given the status as a woman in the refugee settlement, how have these 3 attributes been exercised?
- Do you know of women who have faced a certain challenge in exercising these attributes? How?
- What can be done differently at household and community level to ensure that refugee women attain all these three attributes (empowerment, agency and self-reliance)?
- For the women involved in IGAs, what contribution has it made in their lives to give you a voice and make you empowered?
- How have these IGAs also impacted on skills for coping while in the camp and possibly upon return home?
- Why it is important to be self-reliant as a refugee woman?
- How are decisions made in the household, especially for women who come from male headed households?
- And for the women from female-headed households, who makes the decisions in the household?
- Usually with the sales from IGAs, who determines how the money is used in the household?
- What are some of the cultural values that determine how men and women earn income at the household level in this refugee settlement?
- How have the men in the households or community supported (or not) the quest for empowerment and agency?

#### **For men**

- What does empowerment, agency and self-reliance mean?
- What does it mean for a man when the wife or partner is empowered and self-reliant?
- How have some men contributed towards disempowering refugee women?
- How can men, given the important role they play in families and society help to advance the agenda of making women empowered and self-reliant?
- What is your opinion about a woman making decisions and having control to resources (money from IGAs) within the household? What would it mean for you as the man of the household?
- What are some of the cultural practices in place that hinder women from being able to earn their own income for self-reliance and empowerment?
- What might be done differently to ensure that empowerment is realized for both men and women in this refugee settlement?

#### **4. Participant participatory Observation checklist**

##### **Objective**

To gain a sense of reality and what isn't being told during the interviews to help me validate the data I have collected

##### **Knowledge to be acquired**

Skills (business, financial literacy, literacy), self-confidence, leadership roles, cultural practices,

- Who? Refugee women and men
- Checklist
- Time and day:
- Where (Village):

- What skills do women portray for survival?
- Are women confident during the interactions?
- Do they openly express their opinions?
- Do the refugee assume leadership positions voluntarily?
- How are the leadership positions apportioned according to male and female refugees in the settlement?
- For refugee women in the male headed households, how do they interact with their husbands in general?