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Refugeehood in Uganda's rapidly urbanizing cities

An investigation of the South Sudanese refugees' use of assets and community self-reliance to overcome humanitarian protection challenges in Arua city,
Northern Uganda



Picture: Vittorio Capici (2020)

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Abstract

In contrast with most studies analyzing urban forced displacement in Uganda, this study moves beyond the capital Kampala to explore urban refugeehood issues in one of the country's secondary cities. The case study investigates how a community of self-settled South Sudanese refugees living in the northern Ugandan city of Arua copes with the challenges of self-settlement, self-reliance and recognition. Data was collected over a period of two months of extensive fieldwork between January and February 2020 through semi-structured interviews and focus groups. In the absence of external humanitarian assistance and lack of a recognized urban refugee status, the study shows that refugees undergo several challenges, such as unfair competition for jobs and limited access to public services. This is often further exacerbated by contextual factors, such as Arua's uneven rapid urbanization. The research has found that members of the South Sudanese refugee community rely on shared community assets and the work of Refugee-Led Organizations (RLOs) to improve their situation and advocate for better life conditions within the city. The study recommends the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR), the Government of Uganda and other stakeholders to extend their humanitarian operations in secondary cities and work with RLOs to support the local integration of refugees in Arua.

Keywords: Urban forced displacement, secondary cities, Northern Uganda, self-settled refugees, collective livelihoods, community assets, refugee-led organisations

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*“It is important to continue researching the urban hell lived by the cities’ losers:
that is, to find and recognize who and what in the midst of hell is not hell.
To make it last and give it space”*

Calvino (1972, p.168)

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Acronyms

ABCD	Asset-Based Community Development
CRRF	Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework
CUT	Critical Urban Theory
DAR	Development Assistance in Refugee-hosting areas
GoU	Government of Uganda
IDP	Internally Displaced People
LGs	Local Governments (in Uganda)
MoLG	Ministry of Local Government
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
OPM	Office of the Prime Minister
RLO	Refugee-Led Organization
RWCs	Refugee Welfare Committees
SHS	Ugandan shilling (national currency)
SSURA	South Sudanese Urban Refugee Association
SRS	Self-Reliance Strategy
UN	United Nations
UNHCR	United Nations Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)
WFP	World Food Programme

1. Introduction

Today, about 55% of the world's population lives in cities, compared with only 30% in 1950 (UN, 2020). Our global society is predominantly *urban* for the first time in modern history. In some continents, the urban population has grown considerably faster than in others. The Sub-Saharan Africa region has witnessed the highest urban population growth trends worldwide, at above 4 per cent per year during the 1950-1990 period (UN-Habitat, 2015). Likewise, the displaced are also affected by and engaged in the process of urbanization. According to the UN Refugee Agency (hereinafter UNHCR), in 2019 the proportion of the global refugee population who moved to cities is estimated at 61% (UNHCR, 2019a). For displaced populations, the city can represent a site of independence and safety which is not always found in camps (Tannerfeldt and Ljung, 2006).

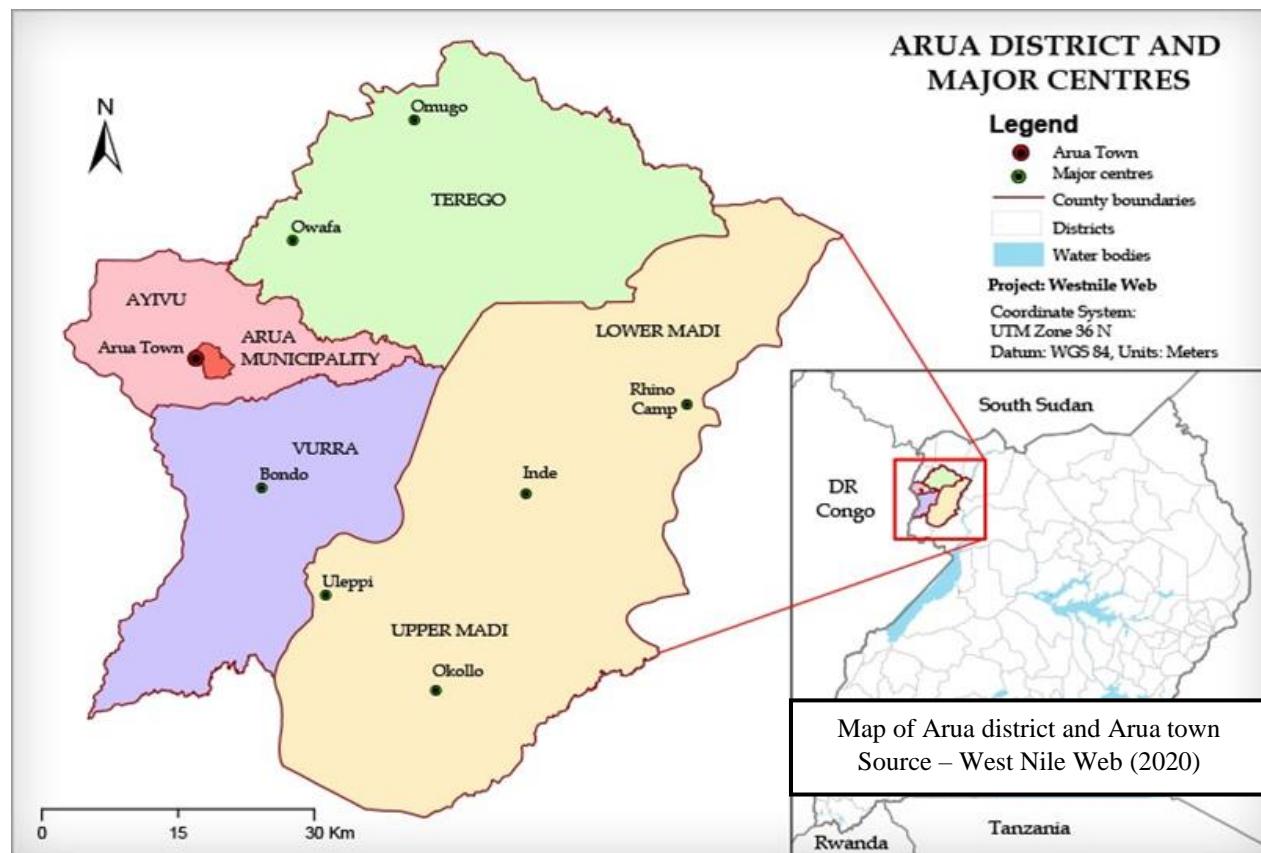
This research explores these phenomena through a case study carried out in Uganda. Its population of 35 million is expected to reach 100 million by 2050, while its annual urban growth rate of 5.2% is one of the highest worldwide (World Bank, 2016). At the same time, Uganda's refugee population has almost tripled since July 2016, reaching 1.4 million at the moment of writing of this thesis (UNHCR, 2020). While most of the research about urban displacement in Uganda has focused on the officially recognized urban refugees in the capital Kampala (Bernstein and Okello, 2007; Betts, Omata and Bloom, 2017; Easton-Calabria and Pincok, 2018) much less is known about the non-recognised self-settled refugee communities living in the country's secondary cities. In fact, according to the 2006 Refugee Act, urban and self-settled refugees in Uganda's secondary cities are not granted urban refugee status and therefore do not receive external humanitarian support in town (Hovil, 2018).

Currently, many urban centres across Uganda host thousands of self-settled refugees who have, nevertheless, been denied official recognition in the cities' national census (Cities Alliance, 2019). In Arua district, previous research has explored refugees' issues in rural refugee settlements located within the district (Hovil, 2002; Hovil and Dryden-Peterson, 2003). However, no previous studies have assessed the specific case of urban refugees residing in Arua city. In this thesis, I focus on a community of South Sudanese refugees living within Arua's rapidly shifting urban boundaries. Through an in-depth qualitative investigation, the research sheds light on the self-settled urban refugees' livelihoods and assets at household and community levels. Finally, the study explores how forms of community-based social protection supported by Refugee-Led Organisations (RLOs) contribute to the self-reliance and to the integration of refugees in Arua.

1.1 Arua, a rapidly growing refugee-hosting secondary city

My research takes place in Arua city, a sub-regional capital of Uganda's West Nile region. Due to its close proximity with South Sudan and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), which are respectively 75 km and 15 Km away, Arua is a frontier town at the crossroads of trafficked cross-border trade routes. During the primary data collection, Arua Municipality was preparing, together with other six municipalities across Uganda, to receive *City Status* by the central government on 1 July 2020. Through this change, Arua city's new boundaries have recently increased from 10.5km² to 60km² and the local authorities now administer a population which has grown seven-fold, from 60.000 to roughly 400.000 people (Arup, 2019).

Therefore, the study takes place at a crucial time for Arua's urban development and during a period of sustained forced displacement into the city. Arua district is currently providing shelter to 200.000 refugees (UNHCR, 2020), most of whom are officially registered in one of the several refugee settlements located in the district's rural hinterlands. Many other refugees, however, have self-settled in the urban outskirts of Arua. While official data by government agencies regarding the number of refugees living in Arua city do not exist, Arua municipality estimates that self-settled urban refugees make up 24% of its total urban population (Impact Initiatives, 2018).



1.2 Research Purposes and Questions

Urban refugees' livelihoods in secondary cities, and the impacts that forced migration can have on cities' urban development, are generally understudied phenomena. The study holds the potential for improved considerations of the dimensions of refugeehood in Uganda's emerging and rapidly growing cities. When it comes to shaping migration management, much of the dialogues and research focus on mega- and primate cities. However, systems of *secondary cities*, defined as non-capital cities with fewer than 500,000 residents (Roberts, 2014), in developing regions require attention as well. Drawing from the existing academic debates on displacement and mixed migration in Uganda, and based on the collection of qualitative primary data, this study explores: (i) how South Sudanese self-settled refugees in Arua build their livelihoods and assets vis-à-vis lacking protection and humanitarian assistance in town; (ii) the effects of the refugees' presence on the city's urban development from the point of view of municipal authorities and host community members. These issues are increasingly important due to the expected changes that the new city plans will bring to the Arua's rapidly urbanising informal areas. To pursue these research purposes, and guided by its analytical framework, the paper aims to answer the following research questions:

1. How do self-settled South Sudanese refugees in Arua build their assets despite the lack of a recognised urban refugee status and the absence of humanitarian support in town?
 - 1.1 To what extent do refugees resort to forms of community-led social protection measures and in what way are they useful to build their self-reliance?
2. How does urban forced displacement in Arua impact the host community members and the city's urban development?

In Chapter 2, the paper proceeds with a review of the literature which analyses Uganda's national refugee policies, the achievements of the government's progressive refugee management model as well as its challenges to ensure assistance and protection to self-settled urban refugees. In Chapter 3, I present the URbAN analytical framework. I will illustrate how it can help to analyze the urban refugees' use of collective self-reliance mechanisms to reduce the negative impacts of absent external humanitarian support. It will focus on the important role of refugee-led organizations to

provide community-led safety nets and to lobby for the refugees' right to live and integrate in the city. I discuss about the methods used for the data collection and the study's ethical considerations in Chapter 4. In Chapter 5, I present and discuss the results of the data collected, which I have divided by theme. Finally, in Chapter 6, I provide my conclusive remarks and recommendations for further research.

2. Literature Review

This chapter reviews the literature debates about forced displacement issues in Uganda. It starts with a discussion on the country's national laws and policy frameworks and it proceeds with the questions surrounding vulnerable communities' livelihoods in rapidly urbanising cities. This will provide an understanding of how the current Ugandan national legal framework on refugee management affects self-settled refugees in secondary cities and, why this is relevant to analyse the livelihoods, assets and vulnerabilities of South Sudanese refugees in Arua.

2.1 Uganda's national refugee policies and impacts for self-settled refugees

Since 1962, Uganda has been hosting refugees and asylum seekers at an average of about 161,000 per year (UNDP, 2017). The freedoms, rights and obligations granted by the Government of Uganda (GoU) to refugees are derived directly from the international and regional refugee instruments adopted by the government¹ and from the current national refugee laws and policies. In 2006, the GoU introduced the *Refugee Act* and, in 2010, the *Refugee Regulations*, which today form the backbone of Uganda's current approach to refugee management. According to UNHCR (2019) (b), "the 2006 Refugee Act and the 2010 Refugee Regulations allow refugees freedom of movement, the right to work, establish a business, own property and access national services, including primary and secondary education and health care" (p.7). Uganda's progressive legislation on matters related to refugee hosting granted the country attention and support by partners and international actors.

¹ Specifically, the 1951 Refugee Convention and the 1969 OAU Convention Governing the Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa (Mujuzi, 2008).

In 1999, Uganda was one of the first countries in the world to implement the UNHCR's Self-Reliance Strategy (SRS), which is today still at the backbone of Uganda's refugee model (Ahimbisibwe, 2014). According to the SRS, refugees arriving to Uganda are given plots of land to grow their food and can move in and out of the refugee settlements. Ideally, this has the aim of pushing them to become self-reliant within a period of four years (*ibid.*). The rationale behind the implementation of the SRS is that refugees have assets, skills and capabilities that make them *agents of development* rather than a burden on the hosting environment (GoU, 1999). Since many years, most of the refugees in Uganda have found shelter in the refugee settlements located in the country's northern regions and especially in the West Nile region, where the city of Arua is located. The refugee hosting districts in the West Nile have historically suffered from endemic poverty, substandard infrastructure and meagre economic growth compared to the rest of the country (Hovil, 2007; Ahimbisibwe, 2014; Ilcan et al., 2015). The GoU and international donors have worked together to ensure that the emergency response gradually turned into an opportunity to bring development to the West Nile and other regions (Hovil, 2018; Betts et al., 2019). Through the Development Assistance for Refugee-Hosting Areas (hereinafter DAR) policy, the GoU channels donors' funds towards the creation of development opportunities for both refugee and host communities through a 50-50 financial trademark (Ahimbisibwe, 2014).

The GoU therefore considers *refugee-hosting* a central pillar of its development cooperation with regional and international partners. This helps to explain why the government has progressively centralised control over how refugee emergency responses are planned and implemented. As stated by Meyer (2006), "the responsibility for refugee policy and programmes was transferred from the Ministry of Local Government to the Office of the Prime Minister (hereinafter OPM) in 1998, within which the Ministry of Disasters and Emergency Preparedness was established, with refugee policy as a central focal point" (p.1). The scholarship on refugee affairs in Uganda has identified key challenges behind the centralised and developmental approach adopted by the government. Those are relevant for the context of this study as they produce effects and consequences for the lives of self-settled refugees and refugee-hosting cities.

In-depth research on the implementation of the Ugandan SRS model has found that the GoU has *de facto* linked refugee self-reliance to a settlement-based assistance model (Hovil, 2007; Ilcan et al., 2015; Easton-Calabria and Omata, 2018; Betts et al., 2019). According to Hovil (2018) "the GoU and UNHCR have effectively redefined a refugee as someone receiving assistance and

living in a camp, which is in direct contradiction to both the 1951 Convention and the 1969 OAU Convention” (p.6). For self-settled refugees who decide to move out of refugee settlements or move directly from their towns of origin to places where the government and UNHCR do not provide assistance, this is equal to forfeiting the kind of livelihoods support and protection that they need (Hovil, 2007; Bohnet and Schmitz-Pranghe, 2019). According to Kaiser (2006),

“the status of such *self-settled* refugees in Uganda is uncertain. They are unrecognised as refugees by the GoU, nor are they recognised or supported by UNHCR. As *aliens* rather than refugees, they occupy a precarious and ambiguous status, enjoying neither the rights of Ugandan citizens, nor the protection and limited material support of refugees in settlements” (p.604).

As a result, while “official” refugees fall under the control of the national government structures, self-settled refugees refer to local governments when living outside of the recognised refugee-hosting areas (RLP, 2005). This taps in another major challenge identified by the literature, which affects how local urban governments in Uganda cater for the needs of self-settled refugees and their hosts. The non-recognition of refugees in fact poses a burden for local governments which, under the 1995 Constitution and the 1997 Local Government Act, are responsible for the delivery of public services and urban development planning (Steiner, 2008; Kiyaga-Nsubuga and Olum, 2009). According to Bohnet and Schmitz (2019), “decentralised government units hosting self-settled refugees are underfunded and struggle to ensure the provision of adequate services for both hosts and refugees” (p.18).

The literature about urban refugeehood shows that the benefits to hosting refugees can outweigh the costs if structures and policies are set up to promote inclusive urban development (Jacobsen, 2001; Crisp, 2012; Lyytinen and Kullnberg, 2014). When those do not exist, or are not fully implemented, however, the negative effects for cities’ dwellers can be plenty. The literature about urban forced displacement in Uganda is biased towards the capital Kampala, which could be because government interventions and research generally view that this is where most urban refugees live in the country (see Section 2.3). However, this paper aims to fill this gap by exploring how self-settled urban refugees, host communities and local authorities perceive and deal with this phenomenon in Arua, one of the country’s main refugee-hosting secondary cities (Cities Alliance, 2019). In the next sub-section, I will review the literature debates about urban forced displacement and then contextualise those in relation to Uganda and to the city of Arua.

2.2 Cities: Emerging spaces of refuge

In 2014, UNHCR decided to officially begin a review process regarding possible alternative models to encampment, which culminated in the publication of the *Alternative to Camps Policy*. The policy recognised for the first time that “millions of refugees have settled peacefully outside of camps in urban areas, living on land or in housing that they rent, own or occupy informally or in hosting arrangements within communities or families” (UNHCR, 2014, p.4). Generally, access to social services, and economic opportunities push refugees to move away from refugee camps/settlements to towns and cities (Dryden-Peterson, 2006; Jacobsen, 2006; Betts et al., 2014; Monteith and Lwasa, 2017; Betts et al., 2019). While they frequently face challenges familiar to the urban poor and other migrants, the urban displaced are further disadvantaged by virtue of the trauma of displacement, non-possession of sufficient documentation, limited support networks and effective restrictions on their rights to work (Mystadt and Verwimp, 2009; Wyrzykowski, 2010).

The economic and political environment in low- and middle- income countries poses several challenges for refugees. Xenophobia and discrimination frequently impact the lives of refugees, who are often perceived as contributing to rising crime rates, environmental degradation and the over-burdening of state services (Lyytinen and Kullnberg, 2013). The provision of identity documents and urban refugee status can reduce exploitation and harassment of urban refugees. (Sanval, 2012; Betts, Omata and Bloom, 2017). However, as stated by Crisp (2012) these interventions often do not take place in cities since “supplying humanitarian aid to the urban displaced resembles development activities, more than the traditional support to encamped people” (p.25). Undocumented migrants and refugees living informally in cities are often found alongside equally marginalised natives in overcrowded slums and shantytowns with no security of tenure, rudimentary water and sanitation facilities, and very limited access to basic services (Pavanello, Elhawary and Pantuliano, 2010; O’Loghlen, 2015). According to Bernstein and Okello (2007), “due to the self-sufficiency principle, urban refugees in Uganda who opt to live as unregistered are unable to receive any material support from UNHCR and partner organizations. As a result, public services and employment opportunities might be denied to refugees” (p.52).

Against the idea that urban self-settled refugees might move to cities because they are already self-reliant, earlier research in Uganda’s West Nile region shows that self-settled refugees move to cities due to the same preoccupations and priorities as those of settlement

refugees: insecurity, the availability of better economic opportunities outside, kinship or family ties and access to superior education and health services (Dryden-Peterson and Hovil, 2004; Kaiser, 2006; Hovil, 2007). Previous studies have found that another important element to take into consideration to the study of urban refugeehood is community relations, and more specifically trust (Madhavan and Landau, 2011). For instance, inter-ethnic cooperation, or tensions, can determine whether refugee households have access to networks of shared assets and community-led social protection in the absence of traditional humanitarian structures (Marfleet, 2001; Hynes, 2003; Miller, 2018; Herbert and Idris, 2018). The livelihoods of urban refugees are dependent on the highly commoditized nature of the urban environment in which labour is a household's most important asset (Moser, 1998; Dimanin, 2012). Furthermore, if compared to rural-based communities, urban dwellers use their financial resources to purchase commodities which have less chances to be produced in the city than in the countryside, such as food (Orsini et al., 2013).

An urban household's asset portfolio is also characterized by financial resources going into housing. Several studies have demonstrated that while most urban households pay monthly rent to landlords and use their homes primarily for shelter, others use housing to generate income through renting rooms and conducting home-based income activities (Moser, 1998; O'Loghlen, 2015; Addaney, 2017; Baeumler, et al., 2017). Forced displacement in rapidly urbanizing cities can pose several impacts to refugees and hosts, especially for those who live in the cities' informal areas. It should not be assumed that the effects are always equally felt across host and refugee communities (Chambers, 1986; Scott, 1998). For instance, Mystadt and Verwimp (2009) assert that "the better-off hosts and refugees would be more likely to gain from the presence of refugees and refugee programs while by contrast, the poorest hosts and refugees could loose from competition for food prices, work, wages and local services" (p. 2). In the last sub-section, I will briefly present the scholarship analyzing forced displacement in Uganda's secondary cities.

2.3 Urban refugeehood in Uganda's secondary cities

Previous forced migration scholarship in the northern Ugandan districts, and more specifically in the West Nile, found that while refugees are aware of the absence of humanitarian support in the region's urban areas, an increasing number of them move to cities to achieve self-reliance (Dryden-Peterson and Hovil, 2003; RLP, 2005; Dryden-Peterson, 2006; Hovil, 2007). Previous research

has found that while refugees in the capital Kampala receive a refugee identification card and a letter outlining their right to work, this possibility does not exist for those who have self-settled in the country's secondary cities (Hovil, 2007; Arup, 2016; Hovil, 2018; Bohnet and Schmitz-Pranghe, 2019). Studies have found that self-settled urban refugees in Arua and around the West Nile region live mostly in cities' informal and peri-urban areas due to lower house rent and service costs (Hovil, 2002; RLP, 2002).

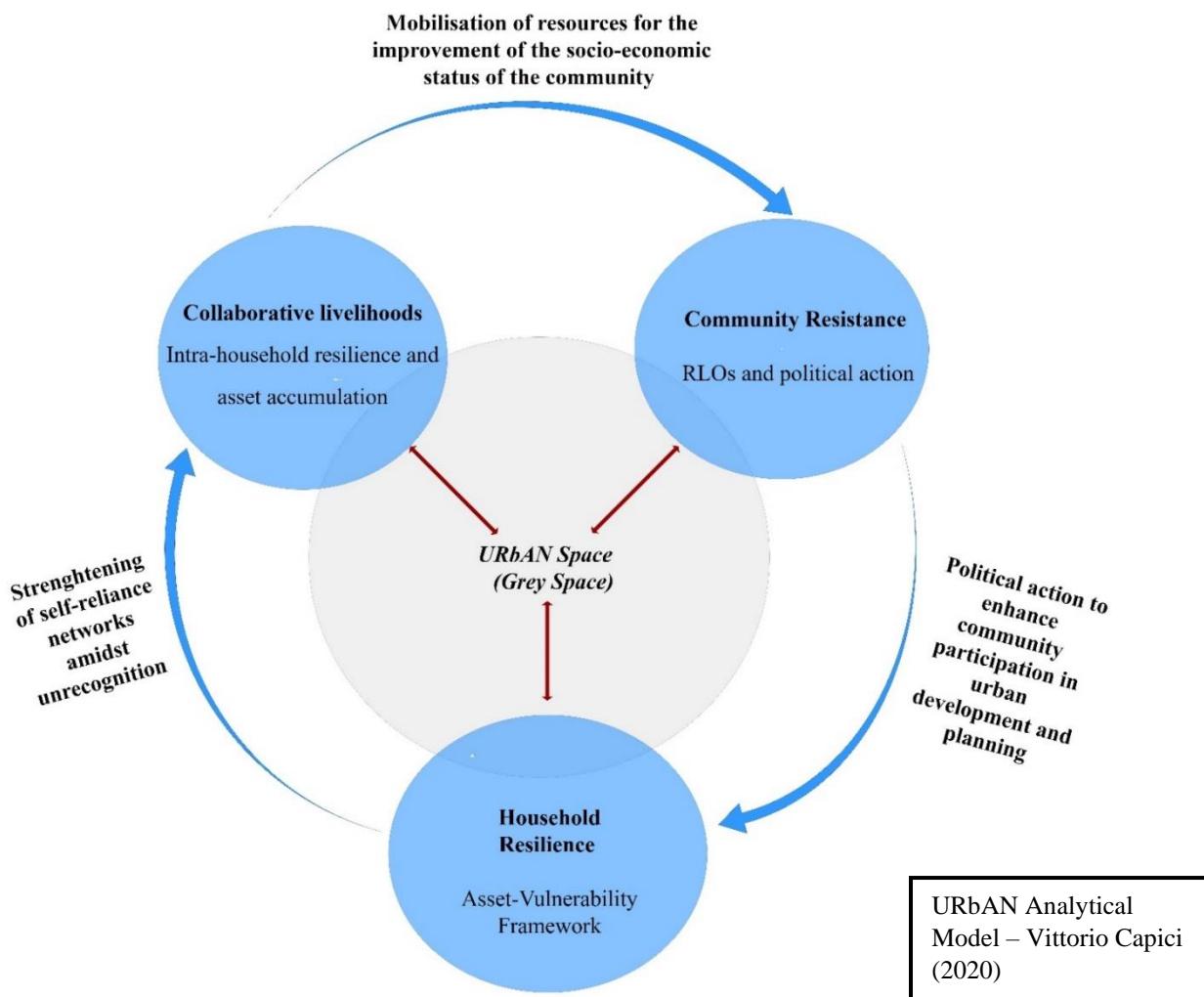
Informality is a double-edged sword: on the one hand, it allows communities to maintain a low profile and avoid registration/profiling (Grabska, 2006; Keivani, 2010; Crisp, 2012); on the other hand, it forces urban refugees to live in often underserved neighborhoods (Pavanello, Elhawary and Pantuliano, 2010; O'Loghlen, 2015). In Northern Uganda, where the services and opportunities provided by the rural refugee settlements structure has gone under stress since the outbreak of South Sudan's civil war in 2013, the growth of secondary cities is becoming a prominent pull factor for refugees (Cities Alliance, 2019). In Arua, previous studies by Arup (2016) and Cities Alliance (2019) have found that its inhabitants face most of the same issues faced by urban dwellers in other rapidly urbanising secondary cities, such as (i) weak or dysfunctional governance systems; (ii) unplanned urban development and urban sprawl; (iii) environmental degradation; (iv) increasing privatisation of urban infrastructure and services; (v) non-existing or weak social policies and social cohesion measures.

Throughout this explorative case study, the analysis aims to evaluate how and why self-settlement to Arua occurs, to what extent it improves or worsens the assets and vulnerabilities of urban refugee households and, finally, how those survive through the consequences of legal unrecognition under the current Ugandan national refugee legislation. Some anticipations can be made about the research process and findings. Previous research on urban refugeehood in Uganda suggests that self-settled refugees make use of social networks, shared assets and forms of community-led social protection in order to become more self-reliant vis-à-vis the lack of external humanitarian assistance. Finally, an urban refugee community is anticipated to benefit from forms of collective action and inter-ethnic cooperation to the achievement of recognition within the city. The next section will introduce the analytical framework.

3. The URbAN Analytical Framework

3.1 A model to understand refugee communities' self-reliance in secondary cities

The **URbAN** (*Urban Refugees-based Assets Networks*) **Framework** aims to reflect the centrality of urban refugee households' networks of assets and resources for the achievement of community self-reliance and recognition at the local urban level. Additionally, the model helps to analyse the role of refugee groups and refugee-led organisations to support the urban refugee community with forms of collective social protection and (political) representation at the local level.



3.2 Self-settled refugees' assets and vulnerabilities in (urban) grey spaces

Secondary cities, their informal neighbourhoods and peri-urban areas present vulnerable urban populations with several challenges. To reflect the centrality of informal urban spaces for refugees' livelihoods and experiences in the city, the URbAN model departs from Oren Yiftachel (2009)'s concept of *grey space*. According to Yiftachel (2009),

"the concept of grey space refers to developments, enclaves, populations and transactions positioned between the lightness of legality/approval/safety and the darkness of eviction/destruction/death. Grey spaces are neither integrated nor eliminated and exist outside the gaze of city authorities and city plans" (p.250).

The red arrows in the visualisation of the model underline the framework's focus on the social rules and norms of the city's *grey spaces* to understand how those influence the livelihoods of the urban refugee community. The framework places emphasis on the (i) urban refugee households' capacity to build assets; (ii) intra-household collective resilience and asset accumulation strategies; (iii) the role of community networks and refugee-led organisations to help refugees to secure livelihoods and urban rights. In order to study how refugees build their households' asset portfolios, I used Caroline Moser's ***Asset Vulnerability Framework***. According to Moser (1998), her model "seeks to identify what the poor have rather than what they do not have, and in so doing focuses on their assets" (p.11).

It is the practical nature of Moser's framework, and its step-by-step structure to studying livelihoods that compelled me to choose her framework. Moser's framework considers four main aspects: **(i) access to labor**; **(ii) human capital** (i.e. access to health, employment and education); **(iii) productive assets** (i.e housing and food); **(iv) household relations** with other households to pool income and sharing consumption (Moser, 1998). Through the adoption of the concept of *grey space* and the focus on households' existing assets and vulnerabilities, the URbAN framework aims to analyse how urban refugee communities integrate locally in the city (e.g. through learning the language, building social networks, participating in the informal economy) despite adverse external conditions. In contexts in which households' potential to achieve self-reliance is affected by limited basic rights and access to opportunities, urban refugees rely on informal networks of trust and collaborative asset-building strategies (O'Loghlen, 2015; Betts and Omata, 2016). In the next sub-section, I will introduce how those been integrated in the URbAN framework.

3.3 Asset-Based Community Development

In a previous study on self-settled refugees in Arua district, Hovil (2007) found that “the blurred legal identity and status of self-settled refugees is further enhanced by a context in which hosting others is not contingent upon refugee status being recognised, but rather on family and kin ties” (p.614). In other words, while the lack of recognition of their status does not allow self-settled refugees to have access to humanitarian assistance and protection, they are able to survive in the city thanks to shared assets and networks that they build among themselves and together with members of the host communities. Against this backdrop, the URbAN framework adopts the Asset-Based Community Development (hereinafter ABCD) approach to analytically reflect on how refugee households make use of *community assets* to address livelihood challenges and reduce vulnerability. According to Ying Xu and Maitland (2017), “while the aid community, and in some cases broader legal structures, contribute to refugee community dependency, as their displacement becomes *permanently temporary* and financial support wanes, the need for refugees to take initiative to build their communities becomes crucial” (p.3).

Through the integrated use of a Participatory Action Research (PAR) tool - *Photovoice* – the study focused on the refugees’ experiences of community self-reliance in the absence of established forms of social protection support. According to Kretzmann and McKnight (1996), “ABCD provides an analytical approach to study and map what collective issues that households have individuated in their environments and how they exercise agency in decision-making and problem-solving” (p.26). The issues mapped by the study are mostly those that have been found in Arua city’s informal areas, where refugee communities and their hosts cope with lack of adequate public services, forms of spatial violence and lack of opportunities. Rather than only providing a snapshot of refugees’ livelihoods, the use of the ABCD approach guides the study of how refugee communities organise to exercise voice, to debate, contest and oppose vital directions for collective social life with the aim of redistributing wealth, access and rights in the city (Campbell, 2006; Bernstein and Okello, 2007; Easton-Calabria and Pincok, 2018). In the next subsection, I explore Critical Urban Theory (CUT) to analyse how refugee-led initiatives and forms of collective self-reliance can be useful to enhance collective self-reliance and negotiate rights.

3.4 The power of networks: Collective action to achieve urban citizenship

Sustainable livelihoods frameworks such as those developed by Chambers and Conway (1991) and Moser (1998) have provided pertinent representations of the range of factors to consider when researching people's livelihoods. However, they have been often criticised for their missing consideration of power dynamics in complex humanitarian settings (Blaikie et al., 1994; Norton and Foster, 2001; Bohle, 2007; De Haan, 2012). Relatedly, several studies have documented how urban refugee communities organize collectively to challenge the established rules of their urban space, acquire rights and consolidate resilience (Pavanello, Elhawary and Pantuliano, 2010; Pantuliano et al., 2012; O'Loghlen, 2015). However, in a global refugee system still largely based on the top-down delegation of authority, refugee-led initiatives struggle to *horizontalize* local refugee politics. According to Betts, Easton-Calabria and Pincok (2018),

"whether in camps or urban areas, the dominant humanitarian model remains premised upon a provider/beneficiary relationship. In parallel to this model, however, is a largely neglected story: refugees themselves frequently mobilize politically to create community-based organizations as alternative providers of social protection, services and livelihoods" (p.11).

To tackle these issues, the URbAN framework uses a rights-based approach, based on Critical Urban Theory, to underscore the historically created, politically mediated and socially contested nature of urban spaces (Brenner, 2012). Rather than focusing on the expression of cities as centers of capital accumulation and bureaucratic rationality, CUT aims to explain how urbanization creates spaces of resistance among those who are adversely affected by urban development (Marx, Stocker and Suri, 2013). A concept used within CUT to refer to these issues is Henri Lefebvre (1968)'s *right to the city*. He identified the concept as "a right of no exclusion of urban society from qualities and benefits of urban life" (p.138). The concept does not refer to a specific right, but rather to a right to have rights in the urban space: a collective effort by the city dwellers to reclaim their space in a city through active participation in decision-making and horizontal power structures (Kofman and Lebas, 1996; Purcell, 2014).

Far from being just a theoretical concept, a right to urban citizenship for the forcibly displaced would require a reconceptualization of the debate on citizenship and durable solutions to forced displacement. Citizenship, defined at the most basic level, refers to the "rights, duties, and membership in a political community of some kind" (Brown, 2013, p.874). When lived,

however, citizenship is not solely a political concept that entails rights and responsibilities but also, a *social concept* which is expressed through the strength of the sense of belonging to, and in recognition of, a community (Grbac, 2013; Hovil, 2016). According to Crisp (2017) “the built, political and social elements of the current discourse on urban displacement limit the discourse and practices of local (urban) integration and acquired citizenship” (p.89). In this context, the URbAN framework ultimately aims to provide an analytical basis to understanding how the forcibly displaced use forms of community self-reliance and political action to gain their right to live and thrive in the city. The case study provides an insight into how international and national actors could support the recognition of self-settled urban communities as citizens of the city. In this sense, the framework contributes to understanding the precious contribution of the forcibly displaced, and their vulnerable hosts, to the making of rapidly urbanizing spaces.

4. Methodology

4.1 Research Design and ontological and epistemological perspectives

The complexity of the issues surrounding urban refugees' local integration in a rapidly growing city, and the desire to acquire in-depth knowledge about a relatively understudied dimension of forced displacement, led me to pursue an explorative qualitative case study (George and Bennett, 2004; Creswell, 2009, Flyvbjerg, 2011; Starman, 2013). Furthermore, the study adopts a mixed strategy for qualitative data collection. I used semi-structured interviews, Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) and a participatory research tool to collect extensive information from different target groups (Morgan, 1997; Longhurst, 2010). While semi-structured interviews and participatory research were used with key informants and urban refugees, FGDs have primarily been carried out with host community members, whose views about the impacts of urban displacement have been often neglected in previous research (Maystadt and Verwimp, 2009). The research sought to learn from people's own experiences and perceptions to understand how urban self-settlement has changed their lives. Epistemologically and ontologically, the study has therefore adopted interpretivism (Mikkelsen, 2005).

The position of interpretivism in relation to ontology and epistemology is that interpretivists believe that the reality is multiple and relative (Hudson and Ozanne, 1988). The knowledge acquired in this discipline is socially constructed rather than objectively determined (Carson et al., 2001) and perceived (Hirschman, 1985; Berger and Luckman, 1967). Interpretivists believe the researcher and his informants are interdependent and mutually interactive (Hudson and Ozanne, 1988). The South Sudanese urban refugee community in Arua has played an active role in the research. In the words of Kurt Lewin (1944), one of the founders of PAR, “action research begins from the interpretations of a community of itself. It should be considered as a tactic to studying a social system while emphasizing the importance of bottom-up attempts at solving social problems” (p.3). In the next sub-section, I will present how I sampled my data collection sites.

4.2 Site sampling and access issues

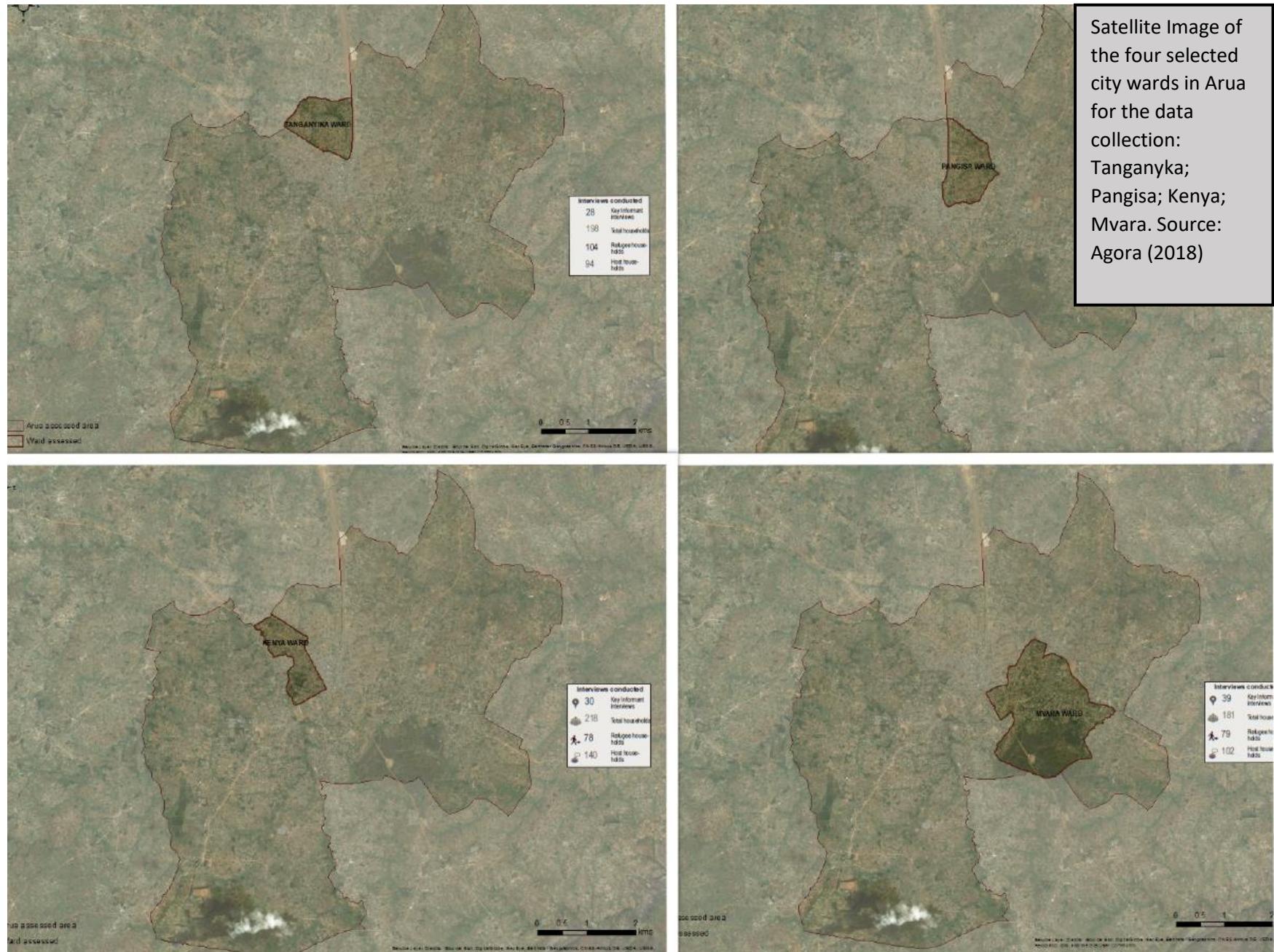
Arua municipality is divided in two divisions, *Arua Hill Division* and *Oli Division*, each of which is subdivided in six wards (i.e. neighbourhoods): *Mvara*, *Kenya* and *Bazaar*, located in the former, and *Pangisa*, *Tanganyka* and *Awindiri*, located in the latter. When deciding on the site sampling, my main goal was to discover how urban development affects refugee communities and their hosts. To operate the selection, I relied on two main strategies. First, my active cooperation with the South Sudanese Urban Refugee Association (hereinafter SSURA), a refugee-led organisation, allowed me to sample the locations in the city where there was a high concentration of refugee households. The SSURA representatives also allowed me to access the urban refugee community and acted as gatekeepers for the research.

Second, I used a recent study which had evaluated a WASH emergency response directed to refugee and host communities in Arua and comprising a total of 12 urban and peri-urban areas (Agora, 2018). The comparison of the information provided by SSURA and a quick analysis of this study led me to select all the three wards in the peri-urban and informal areas of the Oli Division as well as two additional wards in the Arua Hill Division, namely Mvara and Awindiri. Additionally, I have also selected one peri-urban area, Ediofe, which is outside the old town boundaries and within the areas that will be administered by the new city council. The Bazaar ward, located in Arua Hill, was left out of the data collection process since the area is mostly devoted to businesses and markets.

4.3 Research-sensitive data collection methods and sampling

The nature of the study required some attention during the various stages of the data collection process. Researching about urban refugeehood in secondary cities in Uganda could be regarded as sensitive since the GoU does not officially recognise the presence of refugees in those areas. In order to gain access to refugees and key informants in the Arua's local government, I used a research-sensitive strategy following what Johnson and Clarke (2003) define a *safety network*. I thus relied on the help of a reputable group of gatekeepers and informants to obtain the credentials to access the self-settled refugee community and other relevant local actors. I carried out the data collection over a period of two months, from the beginning of January to the end of February 2020. The interviews took place across all five of the selected locations. Moreover, Key Informant Interviews (hereinafter KIIs) were conducted in Arua and Kampala and online via Skype. Furthermore, triangulation of the interviews with the municipal authorities in Arua were conducted with city authorities in the Northern Region's capital Gulu to compare refugee responses in the two cities.

A total of 25 interviews with South Sudanese refugees, 8 FGDs with the host community, 20 KIIs and 3 participatory workshops were conducted to collect the necessary data for the study. Thanks to the SSURA representatives, who also assumed at times the role of translators when the use of the English language was not comfortable for the respondents, I managed to carry out all the interviews that I had planned with the refugees. However, I would also like to acknowledge that their presence might have influenced in some way the course of the interviews due to their role within the community. Moreover, when forced to use a translation to conduct the interviews, some aspects might have got lost. Nevertheless, because English is an official language in both South Sudan and Uganda, I was able to easily conduct the interviews without much use of translations.



I decided to sample the respondents using purposive sampling (Patton, 2002). I used categories (i.e. age, place of origin, sex, occupation) to put together a quota sample to produce a heterogenous combination of data and contextual information (Laws et al., 2003). The host community members selected for the FGDs were also selected through purposive sampling in each of the five wards. According to Morgan (2011), “the comparative advantage of focus groups as an interview technique lies in their ability to observe interactions on a topic” (p.4). To ease the free flow of information during the FGD sessions, I decided to select the FGDs members according to *segmented samples* (Morgan, 2011). There are many ways and variables onto which the researcher could base his/her segmentation (i.e. ethnicity, age, sex, occupation, etc.). As I believed that the impacts of urban displacement might have differed among host communities’ female and male members, I decided to segment the groups according to sex.

I therefore organised one all-female and one all-male FGD per selected wards. Each of the FGDs sessions lasted an average of two hours. KIIs were conducted with local and national government officials following snow-ball sampling (Guetterman, 2015). While some of the KIIs took place in Arua, I handled the bulk of the interviews in Kampala, where the main national government offices and those of international organisations are located. I interviewed representatives of international organisations, UNHCR and Cities Alliance, research organisations (i.e. Refugee Law Project and the International Refugee Rights Initiative), and one NGO (i.e. Norwegian Refugee Council). Furthermore, I have also conducted a triangulation of the data in the Northern Region’s capital Gulu to compare and assess my findings regarding the local governance aspects of refugee management. I produced a total of five different sets of interview guides to carry out my interviews. Those are based on earlier scholarship and the results of my preparatory interviews. For the FGDs interview guides specifically, I followed Morgan (2011)’s advice to use “the list of questions to help channel the discussion without necessarily forcing the group into a predetermined mold” (p.4). In the following and separate sub-section of this chapter, I will briefly introduce an additional data collection method which I have used in my study, *Photovoice*.

4.3.1 The use of Photovoice: A Participatory Action Research (PAR) tool

Photovoice is a Participatory Action Research (PAR) tool typically used with marginalized populations that have been silenced in the political arena (Wang and Burris, 1999). Using ethnographic techniques that combine photography, critical dialogue, and experiential knowledge, participants reflect on and communicate their community's concerns to represent their culture and to expose social problems (*ibid.*). Together with the help of the SSURA representatives, and the collaboration of an elementary school headmaster, three workshops took place at the Arua Public Primary school on 26-28 February 2020. I provided the refugees with disposable cameras which they used for a period of one week.

During the workshops, we used their photos to discuss about the key issues that they had individuated in their hosting environments, as well as the community assets that they use and need support with to address the livelihood challenges that they face. According to Sutton-Brown (2014), "photovoice methodology is typically used with marginalized groups to identify and represent their community's strengths and concerns from their own perspective through the use of a specific photographic technique" (p.169). This methodology provides a culturally grounded and contextually situated site for reflection on visual images, associated meanings, and social action. During the workshops, the group produced the *proposals for change*, a set of community solutions which I will present after the analysis and discussion of the results. This methodology is not inherently empowering, and an imbalance of power between the researcher and the participants exists (Sutton-Brown, 2014). I tried to tackle this limitation by co-organising the workshop with SSURA.

4.4 Method for Analysis

The data gathered was coded into five themes allowing for a condensation and analysis of what was found theme by theme (Mikkelsen, 2005). Following the recommendations for coding by Creswell (2009), a preliminary list of themes was created based on anticipations. Flexibility during the data collection and analysis process allowed for unanticipated topics to also be included. During the data analysis stage, with the help of the computer software NVivo, the findings were coded and distributed according to the following six themes: (i) Arua: A rapidly urbanising

secondary city and its growing refugee-hosting identity; (ii) Hidden losers among the hosts: effects of urban displacement on grey spaces; (iii) Integrating the forcibly displaced in urban development: the key challenges; (iii) Access to services: from discrimination to privatisation; (iv) Housing and food: when tangible assets become tangible vulnerabilities; (v) Surviving through (denied) access to work and employment opportunities; (vi) The path to a local Right to the City amidst national neglect and unrecognition. In the next sub-section, I will briefly address some specific ethical aspects of my study.

4.5 Ethical considerations and positionality

Striving to comply with good research ethics (Laws et al., 2003; Mikkelsen, 2005), several precautions were taken during the research process. Prior to all the interviews, the respondents were informed about the purpose of the study and my independence from the organisation I was working for at the time of the study. Furthermore, before starting the interviews, I explained how the results would be presented once the study was completed and ensured that the interviewee(s) knew about the voluntary nature of the participation to the study (please see Annex IV-VII). All the urban refugees agreed to be mentioned in their own name, while among the government officials and UNHCR/NGOs/Research Institutions a few expressed their wish to keep anonymity. No compensation was offered to the respondents apart from small donations, such as refreshments during the meetings and reimbursement for transport to the interview locations. All interviewees gave their spoken consent before the interviews started and before the audio recording was switched on. The whole process was overseen by SSURA representatives, who ensured that the data collection methods that I followed respected the cultural values of my respondents.



*Picture 1:
Isaac and
Albert explain
the meanings
of the pictures
they have
taken for the
Photovoice
exercise*



*Picture 2:
Photovoice
Group work
presentation
and results
discussion*

5. *The Case Study*

5.1 Findings and Discussion sorted in themes

In the following chapter, I will present the findings of my explorative case study. The section is divided into seven separate sub-sections, which also include the discussion of the findings to provide immediate reflections about the results. In **Section 5.2**, I will introduce the results of my interactions with local and national authorities, UNHCR, NGOs and research organizations regarding the impacts of forced displacement on Arua's urban development. In **Section 5.3**, I present the findings of the FGDs with host community members about their perceived effects of the presence of self-settled refugees in Arua. In **Section 5.4**, I tackle the key challenges that the respondents within the South Sudanese urban refugee community provided on their livelihoods, assets and vulnerabilities. This section is further divided in three sub-sections tackling access to services (**5.4.1**), housing and food (**5.4.2**), employment (**5.4.3**). Lastly, **Section 5.5** introduces the key results on the South Sudanese urban refugees' intra-household cooperation and collective advocacy at community level to improve their livelihoods conditions in Arua. This section aims to find the answers to the following research questions:

1. How do self-settled South Sudanese refugees in Arua build their assets despite the lack of urban refugee status and absence of humanitarian support in town?
 - 1.1 To what extent do refugees resort to forms of community-led social protection measures and in what way are they useful to build their self-reliance?
2. To what extent does urban forced displacement in Arua impact the host community members and the city's urban development?

5.2 Arua: A rapidly urbanising secondary city and its refugee-hosting identity

Arua is an important regional trade centre for Uganda. Due to its stability and urban growth of the past twenty years, the town has attracted businesses and investors from Northern Uganda and neighbouring countries. Due to instability in the wider region where it is found, however, the city and its district also became a reference point for thousands of forcibly displaced people fleeing the less stable nearby provinces of DRC and South Sudan. Today, Arua is divided into two administrative divisions, Arua Hill and Oli Division. Each of the two divisions is formed by three wards, or neighbourhoods. *Kenya, Mvara* and *Bazaar* in Arua Hill, and *Pangisa, Tanganyka* and *Awindiri* in the Oli Division. Arua Hill is since the early British colonial times the wealthiest part of town where most of the services and businesses are located. Meanwhile, the Oli Division has historically been the workers' quarter, where informal workers, migrants and refugees have settled due to its lower costs (Personal Communication, Interview with Arua's Mayor, 4 February 2020).

Arua is confronted with similar problems as those faced by most rapidly urbanizing spaces of the Global South, such as a weak local governance system which struggles to implement effective urban development planning policies, low management capacity of physical, economic and social development, scarce stimulation of public revenues and insufficient national funding to meet the city's needs (Personal Communication, Interview with Arua Municipality Senior Planner, 26 February 2020). In the words of Arua's Mayor,

"you can see that the population in Arua Hill is small and they have a bigger area. The population in Oli is big, but the area is small and it is not expanding properly. We get most of our meagre local revenues from Arua Hill. The hotels, the bigger area for business, the market, the good roads, UNHCR and NGOs offices are all in Arua Hill. Arua Hill is the strength of this municipality. Meanwhile, in the Oli side there are settlements in the slum form. There we have many challenges. Those are areas where people settle where there is no urban infrastructure and services (Personal Communication, interview with Arua Mayor and Deputy, 4 February).

Despite the *new city status* officially granted by the GoU on 1st July 2020, and the possibilities for public and private investment that the new plans could bring, local authorities do not hide their preoccupations regarding Arua's urban development trajectory. As stated by Muzeid Khemis, principal administrator (LC3) of Oli Division,

"for the good number of years that I have been administering the Oli Division, I could see how Arua's urban development is uneven. Here in Oli, we cannot provide the same services that they

can provide in Arua Hill. Despite being less people, in Arua Hill they have the Regional Referral Hospital, here in Oli, in the Tanganya ward, we have only one health centre, which cannot provide for all the population here. This distribution has never been equal. Our health centre in Oli has only two doctors, the majority of the 90.000 people living in this division cannot access health centres. The same goes for sanitation, water points. If with the new city this is not addressed, problems will only get worse” (Personal Communication, interview with LC3 Oli Division, 13 January).

Uganda’s decentralization context offers very few examples of good practice of financial decentralisation and devolution of budgetary powers to local authorities to manage governance and service delivery issues. Moreover, according to Steiner (2008), “although the responsibility for the majority of publicly provided services was transferred downwards, the central government still exerts considerable influence over how financial resources must be used” (p.62). This problem is also reflected in the lack of additional funds and competences that local governments have vis-à-vis the implementation of refugee policies and emergency responses, a prerogative retained by the central government. According to a Senior Representative of the Refugee Law Project,

“the flawed assumption is that urban refugees and the smaller towns hosting them will be able to manage the emergency by themselves. More than an assumption, I have to say, this is a political decision of the central government here in Uganda. You know, the central has always feared the local. Historically, this is where problems came from. This is where opposition is bred (Personal Communication, Interview with RLP Senior Representative, Kampala, 17 February).

In the next sub-section, I will present the study’s findings from the FGDs with the host community and a discussion of the results.

5.3 Host community members’ perspectives on urban forced displacement

Historically, humanitarian action during refugee responses has been criticised for not paying enough attention to refugee-hosting environments during their prolonged responses. In this context, the failure of the current Ugandan refugee regime to extend its policies to urban refugee-hosting environments exposes refugee and host communities to several challenges. Robert Chambers (1986), in an article entitled *Hidden Losers? The impact of rural refugees and refugee*

programs on poorer hosts, is one of the first scholar to have paid attention to the problem of refugee pressure on rural hosting environments. According to the author, “the plight of so many refugees is so desperate, their numbers are so vast, and the difficulties of achieving durable solutions for them are so daunting, that they appear to deserve all the attention they can be given” (p.246). During the FGDs with the hosts, the respondents have underscored the importance of including their concerns when key urban interventions are designed.

However, this can be extremely difficult to achieve in cities where local authorities do not receive additional support to expand service delivery and undertake necessary investments in urban infrastructure. According to Crisp (2012), “some cities prepare for sudden influxes of people, but most struggle and cannot keep up with the growth of their population. Urban planning, poverty reduction strategies, slum upgrading, and other community development interventions must take full account of new demographic realities” (p.526). The biggest refugee-hotspots in Arua, namely the slum areas of the Oli Division and the peri-urban areas like Ediofe, are under great pressure. During my FGDs with the host community in those areas, the respondents identified several key challenges, which I summarised in the table in the following page.

One must be careful, however, not to overlook diversity within the host category and the different ways in which hosts are impacted by the presence of displaced populations and humanitarian operations (Scott, 1998; Cole, 2017). In my study as well, I found that certain members of the host community, such as landlords, businesses, and private service providers were able to profit in many ways through the presence of refugees. The most educated among the hosts benefitted likewise from increased salaries and employment opportunities in the relief sector (FGDs with the Host Community Members, 14-16 January 2020). The FGDs with the members of the host community have touched upon the past and current urban development in Arua, and its benefits and shortcomings. In most FGDs, one key issue identified by the participants was the uneven urban development across the city. This view was corroborated by the LC3 of Arua Hill division who conceded that:

“my family and I are lucky. Here in Arua Hill we have the biggest market, the regional hospital, the tarmac roads. We are lucky. Did you go to Oli division yet? You should see how people live there. They live in slums! They are idle, most of our youth is there. There are no jobs for them, they steal and do some petty business, but that’s it. I have family living there, it’s really hard for them” (FGD with Hosts, Arua Hill Division, 15 January 2020).

Table 1: Hosts' key challenges identified during FGDs

1. Existing urban infrastructure, such as access roads, water points and solid waste connection to water services in the informal areas of Tanganyka and Kenya wards – Oli Division – are either missing or under extreme deterioration;
2. Fragile services' access points, such as the Oli Health Centre and all the primary and secondary public schools located in Oli, are struggling due to increasing provider/user(s) ratio. The Oli Health Centre has only two doctors for a population of ninety thousand people;
3. In the hosts' perception, weak service provision is under pressure due to the presence of refugees, thus causing pre-existing health and sanitation issues to worsen (i.e. higher transmission of communicable diseases such as HV/AIDS; Hepatitis A/B) or 'new' diseases to spread (i.e. Ebola from neighbouring South Sudan and DRC);
4. The unbalanced presence of refugee households in Oli strains natural and physical resources in uneven ways across the city;
5. The capacity of local administrative offices to manage larger and informal urban and peri-urban areas has become less effective and local communities have reported to be less involved in urban planning than before the arrival of the South Sudanese urban refugees in 2013;
6. The prices of some goods (i.e. food-items, medicines, fuel) has increased, thereby making some households more vulnerable;
7. Housing prices have increased throughout the city. Many native homeowners complained about the damages that their properties undergo due to the higher numbers of tenants that the refugees report initially;
8. Urban environmental degradation in the informal areas is rampant (e.g. tree-cutting for production of charcoal; water pollution due to lack of sanitation facilities; increased air pollution due to increased traffic congestion);
9. Where refugees have been employed as cheap/casual labour in the informal sector (i.e. *bodaboda* drivers, restaurant/café employees, farmers) wages for the hosts have gone down;
10. Destabilising effects deteriorating refugee-hosts relations have been registered (e.g. Competition for natural resources; security problems linked to the presence of South Sudanese rival factions in Arua).

(Personal Communication, FGDs with the Hosts, 14-16 January 2020)

Members of the host community from the Oli wards have also reported a particularly low participation in local urban community planning forums, known as *community barazas*. Participation in urban development was lower for women, who appeared to be less involved than their male counterparts. According to one female respondent,

"in my area, it's a problem of poor mobilisation. I don't understand but according to me only men participate. You find them getting the information that women don't get. So, when meetings are called to discuss public works that affect our wards and our own houses, women are never consulted. We are just told, and this is damaging us. Every day I walk at least two hours to fetch water from the closest borehole, I am tired of this. Why don't they ask us where we need them to build boreholes?" (FGD with Hosts, Oli Division, 14 January).

Discussions about development and participation in urban planning are particularly relevant in the context of the expected new city plans. In general, while the new city status is contributing to the local communities' hope to see their needs met, many of the respondents have expressed feelings of caution and scepticism. For instance, a respondent shared that:

"we welcome the city thinking that the services will improve, but the negative part is also there... whereby... in Oli Division, we have slums. Many people who occupy the places here have not leased their lands, they will lose their houses and they will have to move. Rents will be more expensive, I will also be affected" (FGD with Hosts, Oli Division, 4 January).

5.4 Integrating self-settled refugees in urban development: The Key Challenges

In their study about refugee livelihoods in Kampala, Betts, Omata and Bloom (2017) introduce the concept of *refugee economies*. Through a large N study, they demonstrate that refugee economies represent a distinctive analytical space insofar as refugees face formal and informal institutional barriers and distortions in their economic lives compared to nationals or other migrants. Likewise, my study highlights, through a different methodology, the need to discuss about *refugee urbanities* to underline the complexity embedded in the displaced communities' interactions among themselves and with the hosting environment. The issues faced by urban refugees in Arua can be similar, but at the same time very different from those faced by the local communities.

Secondary cities in Uganda present urban refugees with several challenges. The first could be considered *institutional*, or systemic. Bernstein and Okello (2007) state that "while refugee

populations are growing across all urban centres in the country, the official position of UNHCR and the GoU is to reduce assistance to urban refugees to a minimum. Humanitarian assistance goes only to refugees living in rural settlements and in Kampala, but it is been currently denied to those who reside elsewhere" (p.48). Another challenge is *trust* within the refugee community. Madhavan and Landau (2011) establish trust as an important factor in the building of social capital. The refugees' remembrance of the South Sudanese civil war, and the atrocities that the conflict continues to cause, do not stop at the border. In urban refugee literature, it is typically noted that mistrust amongst the refugees is rooted in the reasons for flight (Marfleet, 2001; Hynes 2003; Jacobsen, 2006; Kaiser, 2006; Pavanello et al., 2010; Miller, 2018; Herbert and Idris, 2018)

Therefore, while this thesis focuses on the relevance of social structures in vulnerability reduction and rights acquisition, it is also important not to treat urban refugees' community structures as a *protection ideal* (Meagher, 2010). Most of the groups that I came across during my data collection process are from Equatorian tribes (e.g. Kakwas, Kukus, Pajulu). These groups are all *Barre* speakers and therefore share stronger bonds with the fellow native Lugbara tribes. In this context, the findings have revealed a tendency within the urban refugee community to exclude the two historically rival tribes in South Sudan, the Dinka and Nueri, from these networks of self-support. According to Celina,

"the difference between the ethnic groups is still there. People are still in the healing process. It will take time for us to come together as one. Nueri and Dinkas are not with us even within town. We keep distance from them. They killed themselves in the forest, in Barifa forest. But here, for us, we come from the Equatoria region in South Sudan. We are Barre speakers. In Arua there are people of our tribes... Kakwa, Pajulu, Kuku, we combine together... Most of us speak Lugbara, the local language. With these people, we are one. With the Nueri and the Dinkas... who knows, they have done a lot of harm to us" (Personal Communication, Interview with Celina, Mvara ward, 21 January).

Despite being often well integrated in the local social fabric, South Sudanese tribes still face local integration issues in Arua due to mistrust and confusion about their refugee status. One example is their low to non-existent involvement in the local *barazas*, community forums where local urban development and planning are discussed. According to Mary,

"for example, they are going to work on this road. When they were having the meetings, we did not get informed. The LC1 came down only once and said that we were going to have a road here. The new road will be built on our house property, and we have no money to fence our land. But the decision was already made, and we could not have any option. Why didn't they call us for the

baraza? We would have voiced our opinion. We would have said no to their plan. Now will they force us to leave?" (Personal Communication, Interview with Mary, Kenya ward, 20 January).

UNHCR's *Alternative to Camps Policy* states that one of the nine key principles of UNHCR's work with refugees and asylum seekers in towns and cities of low – and middle-income countries is *community orientation* (UNHCR, 2014). According to the document, "UNHCR will foster the development of harmonious relationships amongst different refugee groups and their hosts (p.7). However, the experience of urban refugees in Arua shows that, despite the existence of community networks, the lack of proper refugee responses in Arua's informal urban spaces exposes communities to limited protection through their urban life. During the *Photovoice* exercise with the self-settled refugees from the peri-urban area of Ediofe, one refugee shared a pressing issue in her hosting areas related to *access to water and sanitation facilities*.



Picture 3: Women in Ediofe collect water for cooking and bathing at a poorly built and contaminated water point.

As a response to a conflict between the refugees and the host community members at a severely overused waterpoint, the local authorities have built a separate borehole for the refugees without consulting them in the planning phase. The refugees soon realised that the water access point had been dug without the development of the necessary infrastructure. Even more dangerously, it had been built proximity of a public toilet. When complaining with the local authorities about the pollution of the water, they were told that “we have no rights to complain in the city. They told us that they don’t have more money to build another water point and if we don’t like it we should go back to the camp” (Personal Communication, *Photovoice Exercise*, 26 February). In the next sub-sections, I will introduce the study’s results on refugee assets and vulnerabilities in Arua. I will focus on how the practices of *grey spacing* and the lack of urban rights affect refugee communities and, specifically their (i) **access to services** (i.e. education and health); and (ii) tangible assets, both in the form of **resources** (i.e. housing, food) and **claims** (i.e. work and employment opportunities).

5.4.1 Access to services: From discrimination to increased privatisation

In the realm of refugee assistance, it is commonly believed that refugees who move to urban centres do so because they are more self-reliant than their counterparts in the camps. However, as stated by Crisp (2012), “unassisted refugees cannot really be regarded as self-reliant if they live in abject poverty and do not receive support to access primary services and become active members of their host society” (p.536). *Resilience* is not a static condition. On the contrary, a household’s capacity to be, or become, resilient is dependent on the continuous interaction of an extended range of factors. When displaced persons move to urban areas, they often self-settle in informal and peri-urban areas where overall costs are lower. However, they soon discover that those are also the most underserved neighbourhoods of their city (RLP, 2002; Pantualiano et al, 2012, Sanyal, 2012).

Without safety-net mechanisms in place to face the difficulties that might arise with a sudden and sustained refugee influx, pre-crisis weaknesses in public service delivery might run the risk of becoming unsustainable. The URbAN framework and Moser (1998)’s livelihoods model emphasise the importance of “social services to ensure that people are acquiring skills and knowledge and economic infrastructure such as water, transport, and electricity – together with health care – to safeguard the productive use of their acquired skills and knowledge” (p.9). Arua’s

local authorities are currently struggling to ensure good quality services provision to their populace, especially in the Oli division where most refugee households are found. In their study, Arup (2016)'s researchers found that "there have been good efforts in Arua to reduce infectious diseases, keep the streets clean and provide basic services. But while local revenue collection is lacking, haphazard growth continues and extra pressure is put on city services from people coming from outside, these tasks prove difficult to fund" (p.22).

Although there are not official disaggregate statistics about the urban refugee populations in Uganda's secondary cities, UNHCR (2018) (c) has found that "out of all the South Sudanese refugees who have self-settled in Arua district, 85% are women and children" (p. 5). Access to services, and especially education for children and healthcare for pregnant women and the elderly, were cited among the chief motivations for self-settlement in town. According to Monica,

"living in the town, the difference is that in the town there's a lot of services, like medical services, good schools... But in the camp, in the settlement... There are not good services in the camp... That's why some people decide to come and live in the town, so they are nearer to the services..." (Personal Communication, Interview with Monica, Mvara ward, 21 January).

The 2006 Refugee Act and the 2010 Refugee Regulations accords urban refugees the same treatment as nationals regarding basic education² and grants them access to public healthcare³ (GoU, 2006; 2010). However, in line with the findings of previous studies in Kampala (Wyrzykowski, 2010; Dimanin, 2012), the study's results in Arua show that refugees are denied access to free and public education and healthcare services. All the 25 refugee households have reported issues of discrimination and/or limited access in the public services provision in Arua. As stated by Juru,

"there are differences in school fees payments whereby citizens pay less and the non-citizens pay more. Here at Arua Primary the difference might reach Shs 40k a month (approximately 10 euros). Regarding healthcare, when you want to access the hospital or a health centre, they ask you for a national ID. If you don't have it, you can't access. Then, if you don't have it you also have to pay for drugs which the nationals are given for free. The refugees in the settlements get all these things for free. But the healthcare and education you get in camps is not enough, it is really bad there." (Personal Communication, Interview with Juru, Ediofe, 23 February)

² Art 29(1)(e)(iii) Ugandan Refugees Act.

³ Art 29(1)(e)(vii) Ugandan Refugees Act.

Dysfunctional and discriminatory public services mean that urban refugees are often forced to rely on out-of-pocket expenses to access services. Moser (1998) asserts that “oftentimes, a decline in both quality and accessibility of public services forces households to allocate their meagre financial resources to access private services” (p.9). This has enormous consequences for urban refugees. According to Easton-Calabria and Omata (2018), “the privatization of social services with ‘user-pay’ models as a means to minimize public support inevitably creates disparities among refugees in their ability to access these services” (p.1465). More research should be conducted to understand how the refugees’ higher reliance on private services is affecting their household portfolios and creating disparities among refugee communities. Bilal shared that

“fellow South Sudanese go to these private schools and private clinics because people are treated equally, no matter who you are or where you come from, you pay the same. But in the government schools and health clinics, if you are a foreigner you pay differently. So if mothers have money, they prefer to send their children to private schools because the quality is higher and they do not feel discriminated. For healthcare is the same”. (Personal Communication, Bidal, Mvara ward, 21 January).

5.4.2 Housing and food: When tangible assets become (tangible) vulnerabilities

In this sub-section, I will first present my findings on the refugees’ access to food and then the results on housing. There have been relatively few studies on the nutritional status of urban refugees and IDPs – in contrast to the intense scrutiny accorded to the health and well-being of IDPs and refugees in camps. According to Crisp (2012), “cuts in the food entitlements of encamped IDPs and refugees may attract media and NGO attention while the chronic hunger of urban displaced people goes unreported” (p.532). During the data collection, households reported to depend on food aid distribution from the settlements to satisfy their needs. This can pose several challenges. In the words of Victoria,

“we depend on the foot rations from the camp, we go there once every month to collect our food. The camp is far, it can take me two days to reach there and two days to come back. I don’t have money to build my own hut in the camp, so we usually sleep at a friend’s. Even if it’s becoming hard for me to afford this trip, I have to go there because if you miss the distribution three times, they don’t give you food anymore” (Personal Communication, Victoria, Ediofe, 23 February).

Despite SSURA's demands to organise food distributions in, or at least closer to Arua, OPM has refused several times to hold discussions on the topic (Personal Communication, Interview with Batali and Sikita, SSURA Representatives, 21 February). As food aid distributions in the settlements do not satisfy households' consumption, self-settled refugees in Arua turn to urban markets to meet their needs. However, also the market often presents them with challenges. Anna states that

"there's discrimination in the market... When you are in the market and you don't know the language, the price is higher... When you ask for something, they start speaking among themselves about increasing the price 'this one is South Sudanese, increase the price'. When you know the local language, you'll be paying the same price as the others. It is a price discrimination. People here have the feeling that South Sudanese have the money, but they don't know that South Sudanese are suffering even more than them" (Personal Communication, Anna, Awindiri ward, 21 January).

Similar problems were voiced out with regards to housing and house rents. Most have linked this issue to their undermined refugee status and public perceptions. According to Manaz,

"there is a difference between what we pay and what Ugandans pay for rent... We share in four families, the whole compound is 650K [150 euros] per month... The host community would refuse to rent for more than 300K [70 euros]... But they refuse to give us the same price. Maybe they think South Sudanese have money... That we can afford more... But it's not true. I almost finished savings now. If it comes to go back to the camp, I don't even have the money to build a house in the camp, so that is the situation that I'm in now" (Personal Communication, Interview with Manaz, Tanganyka Ward, 21 January).

Several factors might influence a household's decision of where to self-settle in the city. I will mention the two most recurrent ones during the interviews. First, household members might decide which area and/or compound to live in according to family and ethnic links. As mentioned above, most of the self-settled groups in Arua belong to Equatorian tribes and therefore share stronger bonds with the fellow native Lugbara. While the town offers less chances for violent confrontation than the refugee settlements, the Dinka and Nuer tribe members who have self-settled in town are still considered the main culprits for the long-lasting civil war in South Sudan. As a result, the members of these two tribes seem more prone to be marginalised by the rest of the urban refugee community.



Picture 4: A shared compound by two families in Awindiri ward, Arua Hill. The compound has two houses and a separate and shared kitchen (the building on the right).



Picture 5: A shared compound by four households in Tanganyka ward, Oli Division. The compound includes four houses and a common little cooking pit (in the bottom left).

More research should be conducted to assess how this is affecting their livelihoods in town. For instance, Matthew shared that

“we are in good terms with everyone here. We have many tribes here and we get along well. But there are some groups here who we would never join. There is some sort of segregation here. For example us, Western Equatorians, we integrate well among ourselves and with Ugandans. We have to be honest with you, the Dinkas and the Nueris are the cause of the war. In everyone’s hearts, we hate these tribes. We don’t want to have anything that can relate us to them, they only bring trouble” (Personal Communication, Interview with Matthew, Ediofe, 23 February).

Second, some households select their preferred area based on the possibility to acquire land and build their own house. While only few of the screened households have the financial capabilities to buy land, others who have, however, encounter bureaucratic challenges to register their land titles. Despite urban refugees have the right to own property in accordance with the 2006 Refugee Act⁴, they have reported instances of financial extortion by local authorities in to process their requests. As Mary has shared,

“there is a big problem with our land title. We bought this land in 2015. We want to register it through the acquisition of a land title. The information was announced that since Arua is going to become a city then they requested us to acquire the land title... So, to avoid problems in the future, we want to do so... But they have asked us a lot of money, almost double of what they asked to my Ugandan neighbours. Why is that? If they do not lower the prices for the land title, we will be forced to sell our land. But we do not want to, it’s a question of money...” (Personal Communication, Interview with Mary, Kenya Ward, 20 January).

5.4.3 Surviving through (denied) access to work and employment opportunities

In a recent nation-wide analysis, the Uganda Bureau of Statistics (UBOS, 2019) has found that over 50% of Uganda’s GDP is attributed to the informal sector and more than 80% of the labour force work in the informal sector. Arua’s urban economy also consists of a large unregulated, informal sector which provides low-paid and mostly unskilled work. With 50% of its population under 15 (Cities Alliance, 2015), a survey by SNV (2016) found that Arua’s youth unemployment is extremely high, at over 85%. According to Arup (2016), “the share of unemployed youth in

⁴ Art. 29(1)(e)(i) Ugandan Refugees Act.

Arua is likely to be even higher considering the large number of refugees who have self-settled in town, which are known to be mostly minors” (p.30). UNHCR (2009)’s policy on urban refugees as well as the report on alternatives to camp (UNHCR, 2014) call for increased protection space, legal support and advocacy to build the resilience and self-reliance of urban refugees.

Understanding resilience within a society means understanding desired outcomes, ambitions and wellbeing from a community perspective (Yotobieng and Syvertsen, 2018). However, as stated by Béné et al. (2014), “in the humanitarian discourse, the increasingly popular concept of resilience often lacks conceptual clarity and, in many instances, appears to be little more than a new word inserted to replace old humanitarian paradigms” (p.614). In order to assist urban refugees to become self-reliant, the Refugee Act guarantees their right to engage in agriculture, industry, and commerce in accordance with the applicable laws.⁵ In principle, this measure reinforces the rights of urban refugees to be gainfully employed and to contribute to the local economy. In practice, however, the situation is different, since the Act provides that refugees have the right to work just like *aliens in similar circumstances*⁶ (Gou, 2006; 2010).

According to Addaney (2017), “the Immigration Department wrongfully interprets aliens in similar circumstances to mean that refugees require work permits just as aliens require work permits to enter the country. This lack of clarity implies that government officials, potential employers and refugees are often deceived” (p.239). In her analysis of urban refugee livelihoods in Kampala, Macchiavello (2003) asserts that “locals are responsible for creating most of the obstacles when a forced migrant asks them for a job. As they do not know how they are to behave, they often refrain from employing refugees altogether for fear of running into trouble” (p.11). For self-settled refugees, the possibility of finding a job in Uganda is seriously hampered at the onset. Structural constraints expose the South Sudanese refugees in Arua to many forms of abuse and exploitation while seeking work and employment opportunities. According to Silvia,

“before coming to Uganda, I was a project coordinator at a construction company in Yei [South Sudan]. I tried to look for a job here but it’s very hard. The adverts say ‘for citizens’. It’s only people with the national IDs who can apply. They don’t take any Refugee IDs, or even South Sudanese passports. When they put an advert, you see a queue of hundreds of people just for that single job... this is another challenge. If only we would be given the same opportunities as those of us in the camp, we could live well here. We could contribute to the development of Arua” (Personal Communication, Interview with Silvia, 6 February 2020).

⁵ Art 29(1)(e)(iv) Ugandan Refugees Act.

⁶ Arts 29(e)(v) & (vi) Ugandan Refugees Act.

Against this backdrop, those who have the funds/sponsorships enrol in university courses to have access to some work placements. As stated by Isaac,

"I have already completed my university degrees in Business Management in South Sudan but I could not find a job here. Someone advised me to get a Ugandan degree so I could at least study and work on something. I am pursuing a Diploma in Procurement and Logistics Management. Most of us cannot afford the high fees, I have a sponsor. I hope that the education I got here in Uganda will allow me to go back to South Sudan and find an even better job than before" (Personal Communication, Interview with Isaac, 23 February 2020).

Besides few lucky members of the community, however, most self-settled refugees are unable to afford to pay university fees in Uganda. With employers refusing to recognise their degrees from South Sudan, or not allowing them to compete for employment altogether, urban refugee households have reported to survive on earlier savings, remittances and informal work. However, as most of the refugee households either do not have access to these assets or cannot afford to survive solely on them in the long-term, many make use of intra-household/community assets and participation in refugee-led organisations. These assets could be considered as sources of *resistance*. In a few sentences, Joseph explains why:

"before you go, I want to tell you something. We came here because in South Sudan we could have died. I lost many people. I thought that by coming here I could have built a new life. Then I see how the government here treats our people in the city. They don't allow us to work, they make us pay more money to access the hospital and schools. We are becoming poorer by the day. Some of us want to go back home, but I can't. I have my children here. So, I will stay here." (Personal Communication, Interview with Joseph, Tanganyka Ward, 21 January 2020).

My study found that refugee-led social protection within the refugee community provides a crucial safety net for their survival in the city. While previous studies have already elaborated on the refugee-led initiatives in Uganda's capital Kampala (Bernestein and Okello, 2007; Pincok, Betts and Easton-Calabria, 2020) this study explored the work of these informal institutions in Arua's context. These initiatives are numerous and provide shared assets supporting the community. For instance, Rebecca shared that

"I am part of one of these groups. We get together two Sundays a month to share some savings and other things. We are called 'Damana Women Association'. It works like this. If we are meeting today at your home, we come with something that you need, say... soap. Then everyone brings a bag of soap, and if you want other items... like sugar. And then you give any money you want to

give... It's from your savings. The money is registered and kept. It is used whenever one of us needs it. You can also use it as a loan for your business. The overall principle is, you borrow, you use it and you give it back with 10% interest. It works very well. We are thirteen people now and more people want to join" (Personal Communication, Interview with Rebecca, Pangisa Ward, 23 February).

Next to the work of these refugee-led initiatives, the South Sudanese community is also particularly invested in lobbying for more inclusive participation in local decision-making. In the next subsection I will briefly introduce how the South Sudanese Urban Refugee Association lobbies to provide political representation for its members despite a national context in which refugees are formally not allowed to pursue political representation to see their demands met. SSURA engages regularly with local authorities and helps to connect the self-settled community in Arua with the diaspora and international organisations and NGOs.

5.5 The path to a local Right to the City

While the GoU and UNHCR have granted refugees to have a consultative and representative body to represent them at settlements level, the so-called Refugee Welfare Committees (hereinafter RWCs), those are not established by law, they are not initiated by the refugees themselves and operate only on settlement-specific issues (Zakaryan, 2018). At the urban level, then, refugee communities do not even have RWC structures and are instead incorporated into Ugandan local councils. However, even in those they cannot vote or assume leadership roles because they are reserved only for Ugandan citizens since "*a person shall not be a member of a local government council unless that person is a citizen of Uganda* (Local Government Act, article 9(2)). Although many of the forcibly displaced have resided in Uganda for over 20 years, which is the residency period required to apply for citizenship, this is typically an unviable option for most refugees.

Article 14(a)(2) of the 1999 Uganda Citizenship and Immigration Control Act (UCICA) in fact excludes refugees from the path to citizenship, since "a person is only eligible for citizenship if neither of his or her parents and none of his or her grandparents was a refugee in Uganda" (GoU, 1999). Furthermore, although Article 29(g) of the Refugees Act of 2006 states that refugees

have the right of association. refugees cannot engage politically to challenge the status quo because, according article 35(d), “refugees shall not engage in any political activities within Uganda, whether at local or national level” (GoU, 2006). Pincock et al. (2020) have found that “Refugee-Led Organisations that emerge to fill gaps in service delivery and social protection in Uganda find themselves in a delicate situation; able to legally register and run, but having to operate in ways that do not disturb the existing official organisational balance of power” (p.12).

This top-down approach to refugee participation in local and national forums where refugee governance issues are discussed, however, does not necessarily mean that RLOs do not engage in local politics and decision-making. Even outside the capital Kampala, it is possible to find RLOs and urban local governments working together to make refugee responses more inclusive and participatory. In Arua, the main example is provided by SSURA. According to Batali, one of the leaders of the organisation,

“SSURA was formed in September 2016 as a result of the influx of South Sudanese refugees in Arua and Koboko. We faced a lot of resistance. Initially SSURA formed as a committee, not as an activist organisation. But as issues kept on coming up, it was necessary for us to form an organisation which could fight for full recognition of the rights of South Sudanese urban refugees. SSURA is meant to speak with one voice, beyond our internal divisions in South Sudan, for all our brothers and sisters who are voiceless. We will not stop fighting until the Ugandan government and UNHCR recognise our existence, our right to work, to send our children to school, to build our livelihoods” (Personal Communication, Interview with Batali and Sikita, 21 February).

In 2018, SSURA has successfully lobbied with Arua Municipality to set-up a Municipal Development Forum, a citizens’ forum/platform to discuss matters related to urban development with the local authorities. While the success of a RLO might be measured based on whether it received capacity/financial support by UNHCR and/or the national government, my research found that SSURA managed to establish itself by reaching out beyond Uganda’s borders. In 2019, one of its members was invited together with Arua’s Mayor to an international forum organised in Bern, Switzerland, by Cities Alliance, an international organisation affiliated to the United Nations (Cities Alliance, 2019). For organisations like SSURA, international connections are vital to build their capacity and enabling their strategies. Timothy, a South Sudanese urban refugee who has been a displaced person in Uganda for five times in his life, concluded our interview stating that:

“they tell us that we are not Ugandans. Look, many of us who have been here as refugees several times went to Ugandan schools, speak the local languages and have friends and often mixed

families. We integrate well here despite all the difficulties. They can increase school fees for our children, make us pay more money to go to the health centres, ban us from finding a job. But until we have a community here, until we are forced to stay here. They might be right, after all we are not Ugandans. We are South Sudanese, we love our country. But we should also be able to fulfil our right to be recognised as citizens of Arua, we are part of this city and unless they will come and take us back to the settlements by force we will continue to be” (Personal Communication, Interview with Sikita, 27 February).

Refugee-led social protection and refugees' active engagement in urban politics not only helps to address refugees' vulnerabilities, such as lack of food, shelter, education and healthcare. It also involves influencing local and international structures, such as laws and humanitarian systems, to ensure that self-settled urban refugees have access to rights and access to opportunities. Through this case study, the results have shown that urban refugees in secondary cities in Uganda face distinct issues from refugees living in Kampala or in other refugee settlements. The URbAN framework helps to understand how, in the absence of external humanitarian protection structures, refugee-led initiatives and political assets are key to the survival of self-settled refugees when local integration policies are not actively pursued by the central government and its partners.

6. Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to improve the understanding of the dimensions of refugeehood and the refugees' challenges to achieve recognition in Uganda's emerging and rapidly growing cities. It focused on what differences self-settlement has brought to refugees' livelihoods, assets and vulnerabilities. Specifically, the thesis aimed to answer to the following research questions:

- 1) How do self-settled South Sudanese refugees in Arua build their assets despite the lack of a recognised urban refugee status and absence of humanitarian support in town?
 - 1.1 To what extent do refugees resort to forms of community-led social protection and in what way are they useful to build their self-reliance?
- 2) How does urban forced displacement in Arua impact the host community members and the city's urban development?

With regards to the first research question, the results show that, if compared to protracted displacement in refugee settlements, self-settled refugees move to Arua because of its better services, higher chances to find employment and overall enhanced opportunities to integrate in their host communities. Through ethnic, family and kinship ties, refugee communities are able to navigate through complex networks of transactions, trust and informality. Ugandan secondary cities like Arua can potentially be considered as suitable refugee-hosting environments due to the urban development and socio-economic prospects that they offer to their population and newcomers.

However, the current legal unrecognition of self-settled refugees in Uganda creates grounds for discrimination, harassment and hampers the chances of refugees to become self-reliant. When examining refugees' livelihoods, this study detected that the respondents placed utmost importance on networks of community self-reliance and shared assets. Against the idea that urban refugee households move to cities because they are already self-reliant, this study shows that self-reliance is a process and not a fixed cause of their urban self-settlement. As such, if an urban refugee community is left without appropriate protection and assistance mechanisms, the risk is that their community responses will not be sustainable and inclusive in the long term.

To answer the second research question, the study has also found that as forced displacement and rapid urbanization intertwine in Arua, structural and pressing challenges affect the lives of refugees and their hosts. Pressures are not equally felt across the city. They concentrate the most where vulnerable populations struggle to survive through the informality of their neighborhoods. Urban refugees self-settle mostly in informal and peri-urban areas where the trade-off between costs and benefits is negatively impacting their access to services, their involvement in urban development and their participation in urban planning. While still not reflected by global and national policy implementation, alternatives to the current laws and regulations in refugee-hosting countries should be considered and explored.

Lifting the gaze to look at the academic and policy debate on the *Right to the City* as an alternative durable solution for urban refugees in a protracted situation, this study is too small and narrow to present a strong argument for the discussion. Yet, in the case of the South Sudanese urban refugees in Arua, it detected that self-settlement has led to an increased sense of permanency and security. To contribute to those are Refugee-Led Organizations such as SSURA, which could play a crucial role in contributing to the urban refugee response in Arua and other cities. Finally, the data collection for this study was carried out just before Arua and many other towns in Uganda were given a new *city status*. Therefore, specifically in this context, more research is needed to evaluate how Arua's future urban development will affect refugee and host communities. This study therefore recommends further research and programming to be conducted in order to support local integration strategies which can provide urban refugees in Uganda with humanitarian assistance and alleviate the socio-economic and environmental pressures on refugee-hosting cities.

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Annex I: List of South Sudanese respondents and SSURA Reps.

Name	Sex	Occupation/Role	Age
Sikita	Female	SSURA Rep.	30+
Aliya	Female	Women of Hope Rep.	40+
Batali	Male	SSURA Rep.	50+
Timothy	Male	Teacher	60+
Susanne	Female	Housewife	30+
Mary, N.	Female	Accountant	40+
Anis	Male	Student	20+
Juru	Female	NGO Worker	30+
Victoria	Female	Student	30+
Mary, S.	Female	Housewife	40+
Matthew	Male	Farmer	50+
Mary, R.	Female	Teacher	40+
Florence	Female	Student	20+
Gordon	Male	Student	<20
Bidal	Male	Student	20+
Celina	Female	Retired	60+
Monica	Female	Local Administrator	30+
Silvia	Female	Local Administrator	30+
Anna	Female	Com. Dev. Officer	30+
Rebecca	Female	NGO Worker	40+
Albert	Male	Student	20+
Isaac	Male	Student	20+
John	Male	Student	20+
Micheal	Male	Retired	60+
Martin	Male	Farmer	50+
Joseph	Male	Farmer	50+
Manaz	Male	Farmer	40+

Annex II: List of Key Informants

Name	Affiliation	Date and place of the interview
Isa Kato and Kalsum Abdul	Mayor/Deputy Mayor – Arua	4 February, Arua
Muzeid Khemis	LC3 Oli Division - Arua	14 February, Arua
Nesma Ocokoru	LC3 Arua Hill Division - Arua	15 January, Arua
Anonym	Senior Urban Planner - Arua	15 January, Arua
Raymond Ombere	Principal Education Officer	15 January, Arua
Dr. Onzubo Paul	Principal Health Officer	15 January, Arua
Amandjiru Rose	Arua Public Primary Principal	15 January, Arua
Anonym	OPM Arua	21 January, Arua
Hellen Abu	Slum Dwellers Fed. Officer	8 February, Arua
Batali Lo Modi	Executive Director SSURA	21 February, Arua
George Labeja	Mayor – Gulu	5 February, Gulu
Mukonyezi Evelyn	Senior Urban Planner - Gulu	5 February, Gulu
Ronard Mukuye	Cities Alliance Uganda	11 February, Kampala
Fuzia Nkuyingi	IRRI Senior Researcher	11 February, Kampala
Anonym	Sr. Rep. Refugee Law Project	17 February, Kampala
Anonym	Sr. Rep. Norwegian Refugee Council	17 February, Kampala
Anonym	UNHCR Urban Displacement Officer	18 February, Kampala
Sonja Meyer	CRRF Uganda Secretariat	18 February, Kampala
Lucy Hovil	Professor, University of London	16 February, Online
Stephanie Loose	UN-Habitat Human Settl. Officer	6 March, Online

Annex III: Photovoice SHOWeD Table - Community Challenges and Assets



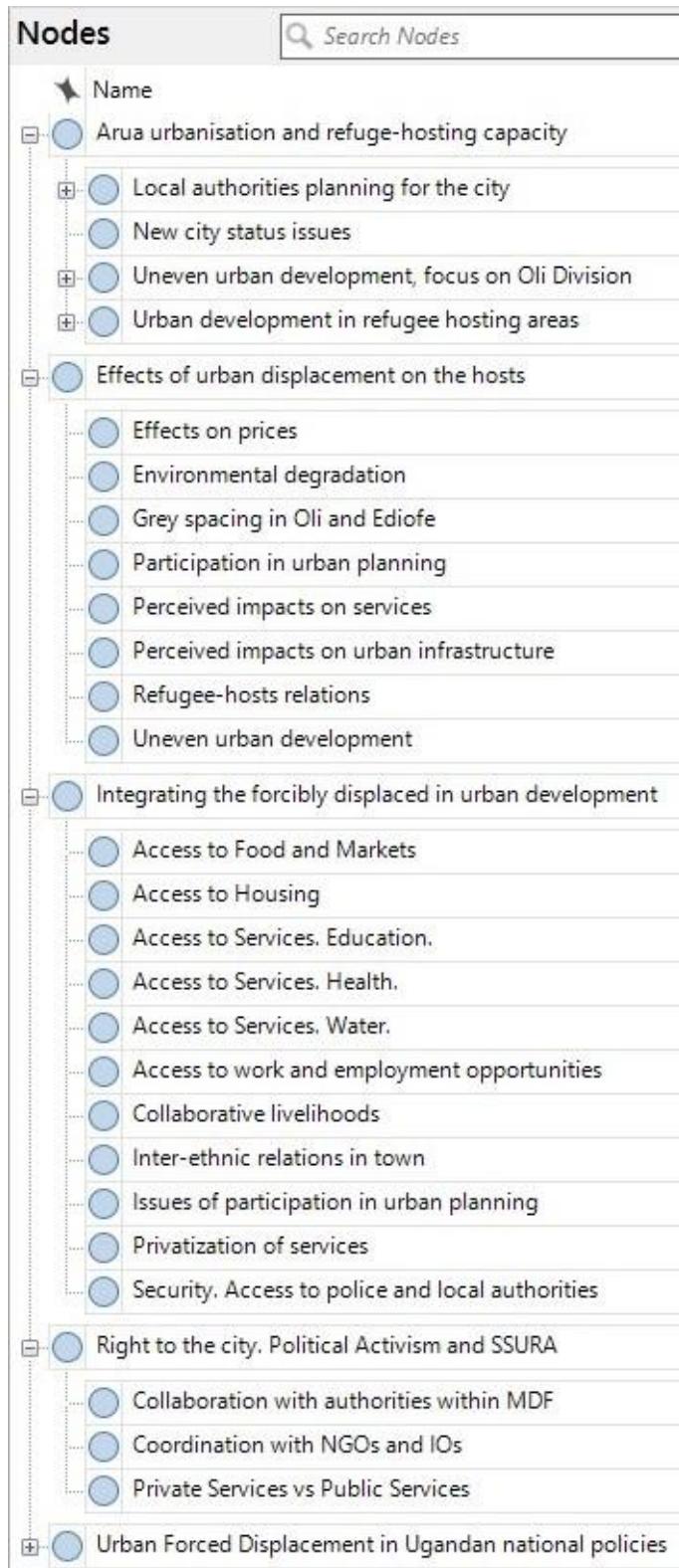
Annex IV: Participatory action through community-led solutions

As part of the Photovoice exercise that I organized with SSURA on 26-28 February, the SHOWeD technique developed by Wang (1999) was used to map the urban refugees' perception of the existing challenges and community assets used to mitigate them. As a result, they produced a set of proposals which in their opinion could improve their livelihoods. They consist of the following:

Urban Infrastructure Development and Housing/Land	Access to public education, work and employment opportunities	Public health and food security	Local/Municipal Governance
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Reconstruction of damaged infrastructure in Oli Division and in its informal areas; - Construction of solar power units in refugee-hosting areas to offer solution to continuous power cuts; - Create access roads linking the wards in Oli division to the rest of the city and provide tarmac roads in informal areas; - Pilot and establish a garbage collection system throughout in peri-urban areas; - Establish a city-wide ordinance which grants refugees a right to be included in urban planning at both ward and city level; - Establish clear housing guidelines for housing development in town and eliminate discrimination against refugees for acquisition of land titles 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Establish a city-wide ban ending higher school/university fees for refugees; - Improve access to education possibilities across Arua for adult education; - Circulate a municipal official notice among private businesses and enterprise clarifying refugees' right to work; - Coordinate with external donors and actors to employ urban refugees in Arua's new urban development projects alongside the host community; - Establish a public fund to help existing refugee associations and organisations to develop and improve capacity; - Seek collaboration with international partners to provide vocational/skills trainings to self-settled refugees in town 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Establish a city-wide ban ending discrimination in access to public healthcare; - Equip Oli Health Centre with more doctors and equipment; - Support the already existing refugee-led health promotion and good sanitation campaigns; - Provide informal areas with more public sanitation facilities; - Provide free healthcare checkups for refugees in town; - Work alongside OPM and UNHCR to establish a food aid distribution for refugees in/closer to town; - Sensitise local businesses in the market to provide equal food prices for refugees; - Strengthen municipal monitoring over complain mechanisms through LCs; 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Support a partnership between local authorities' and refugee associations and external actors to conduct an accurate census of the number of refugee households in town in order to improve local urban planning and budget; - Build the capacity of the Municipal Development Forum beyond its consultative role; - Improve refugees' and hosts' inclusion in urban planning by making urban plans transparent to the community; - Prepare for a city-wide reparation scheme to compensate households which will have to leave their homes due to urban development; - Assign urban lots to the creation of urban agriculture plots to both hosts and refugees.

Annex V: Nvivo for Sorting the Data

These themes and sub-categories were used in the computer software Nvivo to sort the data.



Annex VI: Interview Guide for the urban refugees in Arua

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UNIVERSITY

MSc Thesis Title:

Unlocking refugees' local integration in secondary cities: An investigation of the South Sudanese urban refugees' use of collaborative assets and collective action to achieve a 'right to the city' in Arua, Northern Uganda

Interview Guide

Description of the topic

In the recent decade, researchers have started discussing about the nexus between rapid urbanization and forced migration. The increasing urbanization rate taking place all around the world brought 55% of the population worldwide to live in cities. The global refugee population reflects this trend. Around 60% of the refugees worldwide now live in urban areas. In Uganda, recent UN reports estimate that 8% of the refugees present in the country live in urban areas.

While the attention towards the specific urban dimensions of refugeehood is on the rise, gaps exist in our understanding of the issues, coping strategies, failures and successes that people who become refugees experience during periods of forced displacement in foreign cities. Insofar as urban refugee studies are concerned, the majority of the available research has addressed these topics in big cities and capitals. However, with *secondary cities* growing everywhere worldwide, more research is needed to understand how refugees are able to access livelihoods and services in smaller urban centres, as well as if, and how, they are able to shape the socio-economic processes leading to the expansion of the city. The focus of the research is on the successes and challenges

that the South Sudanese self-settled refugee community members are currently facing in Arua, Northern Uganda. Through an exploratory case study, the MSc thesis aims to:

- 1) Enhance the understanding of the urban refugee experience lived by South Sudanese women and men, girls and boys, who have self-settled in Arua;
- 2) Research the urban dimension of refugeehood in the context of a secondary city from the point of view of the interviewed refugees, the host community and Arua's city administrators;
- 3) Study the different challenges and opportunities faced by refugees and hosts in a growing city such as Arua (i.e. housing, access to services, employment, household relations);
- 4) Situate the debate in the context of Arua's urbanization process, therefore focusing on important aspects, such as urban planning, service delivery management and citizens' participation
- 5) Shed light upon Uganda's refugee management model for cities and comprehend the roles of the GoU, LGs, NGOs and UN Agencies to address this dimension of refugeehood.

Useful information for the interview:

- The researcher will take a moment to introduce himself, the nature and purpose of the research and his main research interests; Clarify that I am affiliated with Lund University and I am independent from any organisations;
- The researcher will present the interviewee(s) with a participant consent form detailing the aspects concerning the interviewee's participation to the study. The interview will continue only upon reaching a full understanding and agreement with the interviewee(s);
- The researcher will ask the interviewee(s) for their preference with regard to attribution or anonymity, including use of audio recording;
- The interview will be semi-structured in format, with sequence and wording of questions changing in response to the particular participant. It will last for approximately 45 minutes;

To the members of the South Sudanese community in Arua

Thank you for accepting to participate in this study. My name is Vittorio and I am here to collect your opinions, ideas and comments about your life experiences in Arua town. While much information is collected about the people living in the settlements, it is not so often that organisations, the municipality and OPM come to ask you about the opportunities and challenges you face in Arua. In conducting this research, I hope we can work together to deconstruct the life you live in town, how you get around, where you live and how do you spend your time. I would like to “see the city through your eyes” and if you are willing, I would like to come with you and see the places where you live, where you work and where you spend time with friends and family.

Interview Questions:**Part 1 - Demographic and Background Questions**

- Could you please introduce yourself, tell me your name, your age and where do you originally come from in South Sudan? (If it suits the interviewee, also the past occupation/education level in South Sudan and the current one)
- How did you come to the town and why?
- For how long have you lived in Arua town?
- Are you here by yourself? With your family or friends?
- Are you registered in one of the settlements? If so, which one? Do you still go there sometimes? What is the difference between living in the settlement and living in town?
- Are you aware of your rights and obligations regarding your legal status in Uganda?

Part 2 - Housing / Household relations

- Where do you live in Arua town?
- Could you describe your neighborhood and your home to me?
- If you are willing, could you tell me if you/your family own the house you live in or if you are renting? If you are renting, could you tell me if the price has changed since you moved to Arua and by how much?

- Do you live by yourself or with someone? If you live with someone, who do you live with? Could you please provide me with some examples about how you contribute to managing your household?
- Do you conduct any economic activity at your house? Do you possess land in town? If so, how do you (plan) to use it?

Part 3 - Human capital (Access to services)

- In the area where you live, what type of services (health centers, water points, schools, police posts, city authorities) are easy for you to access and which ones are more difficult for you to access?
- How would you describe the quality of these services? Please provide examples.
- Did you ever experience any discrimination/challenges in accessing those services?
- Do you use public transport? Do you own a vehicle/motorbike? Do you experience any challenges to use transport in/to town?

Part 4 - Work/Study

- Are you employed, unemployed or are you a student?
 - If you are employed, are you self-employed or do you work for someone? Could you describe your work to me? What are the benefits and the challenges of your work?
 - If you are unemployed, what was your occupation before coming to Uganda? Are you currently looking for a job? What are the benefits and the challenges of the job market in Arua?
 - If you are a student, where do you study? What grade are you in? Could you describe your experience in the school/university you are in? Challenges and opportunities?

Part 5 – Social Capital/ Relationships with the South Sudanese community/host community

- How would you describe the relationship with the rest of the South Sudanese community? Could you please provide me with some examples?
- Are you involved in any groups, associations, organisations where you gather together with your fellow nationals? If so, could you provide me with some examples?
- How would you describe your relationship with the host community? Could you please provide me with some examples?
- Do you think you can approach easily the local community leaders? Do you feel included when decisions are made at the community level?

Right to the city

- In general, how do you feel about living in Arua town? Do you feel you have access to anything you want to access or do you feel restricted?
- Did you ever participate in any meetings (e.g. Municipal Development Forum) where urban planning was being discussed? Have you ever been asked for your opinion when public works close to your home were being undertaken?
- Arua will become a city in July 2020. Were you aware of this? What changes do you expect to happen? How do you feel?
- Where do you see yourself living in the next five years and what are your expectations for the future?
- Is there anything else you would like to tell me? Any question you would have liked me to ask you?

Shukraan! Thank you!

Annex VII: Interview Guide FGDs with Hosts

FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION WITH THE HOST COMMUNITY**MEMBERS IN OLI RIVER DIVISION, ARUA****Part 1: Demographic/Background Information**

- Please introduce yourself, tell us your age, where you live (i.e. which ward), what is your current occupation and any other information you deem relevant to share about yourself with the group.

Part 2: Participation of the FGD members in the city planning

- How has Arua town, your ward, changed in the last ten years? Could you describe some changes you have witnessed in the town?
- Which public services are you able to access easily and which ones are more difficult to obtain for you and your family? (e.g. focus on education, sanitation, water, health, housing)
- If you have a problem in accessing some services, what complain mechanisms do you use in order to reach out to the city administrators (i.e. Oli Division HQ)?
- Are there any public feedback mechanisms you can use in order to monitor the work of the division and municipality authorities in services provision?
- Do you feel you and your community are included in the ward urban planning process?
- When a new urban plan for your neighborhood is being drafted by the municipality, do you feel the municipality makes enough effort to consult with you? Could you provide the group with some examples?
- In July 2020, Arua will officially change its status to that of a city. How do you welcome this change? Positive and/or negative thoughts about it?

Part 3: Relationship with the South Sudanese urban refugees

- Since 2013, many South Sudanese refugees self-settled in Arua town. Could you tell us about your relationship with members of that community (e.g. family, friends, neighbors, colleagues, employees)?
- Could you tell us about some positive and negative changes you have experienced in your ward and in the town since the South Sudanese refugees arrived?
- How would you generally describe your relationship with the refugees? How often do you interact with them? Could you tell us about some positive and negative encounters you had with them?
- Are there any changes you would like to see in the way the municipality/OPM handle the presence of South Sudanese urban refugees in town?

Part 4: Conclusionary remarks

- Is there anything else you would like to add? Any questions you would have liked to be asked and you feel you want to contribute finding answers to?

Annex VIII: Interview Guide for Arua and Gulu Municipal Authorities**Arua and Gulu Municipalities****Key Informants**

As a researcher who is relatively new to the topic and to the context, I would appreciate if you did not take anything for granted regarding my knowledge of Arua/Gulu town. I am particularly interested in knowing about the town's main challenges, its strengths and achievements when addressing the demands and needs of its growing urban population. The research tries for as much as it can to reflect an image of the town through the eyes of its inhabitants and administrators. Finally, I would appreciate if you could share with me any detail, fact, personal opinion which you deem useful for me to answer the study's main research questions.

Interview Questions:Part 1: Demographic/Background Questions

- Please introduce yourself (i.e. name, age, place of origin)
- For how long did you live in Arua/Gulu town?
- How long have you been working for Arua/Gulu municipality and in what capacity? What is your current position?

Part 2: Arua Urbanisation / City Planning

- As a city administrator/representative and a city dweller yourself, what are the major strengths and challenges about living in Arua/Gulu? In which division/ward do you live?
- To the best of your knowledge, what are the most well-served neighborhoods in terms of service delivery in the town and what are the least supported by the city administration?
- Secondary cities like Arua/Gulu are said to have gone deep changes in the last few years and are projected to grow even more. How would you describe the changes the city has gone through in the last decade? How do you evaluate the town's urbanization process?
- In July 2020, Arua/Gulu will change its status from that of municipality to that of city. What are the changes you expect to happen as a result of this? Will the city dwellers also benefit from this change?

Part 3: South Sudanese Urban Refugees living in town and refugeehosts relations

- According to the current GoU's 2006 Refugee Act and the 2010 Refugee Regulations, refugees can only register in the refugee settlements and in Kampala. How many registered/unregistered South Sudanese refugees do you think are currently living in Arua/Gulu town?
- The most recent UNHCR estimates (August 2019) indicate that Arua/Gulu district currently hosts 25% of all the South Sudanese refugees present in the country. However, much less precise estimates exist with regards to how many refugees are currently living in Arua/Gulu. Why is that?

- Do you think that the current Ugandan refugee policies are addressing the needs of urban refugees living in the country's secondary cities? Do you think the policies are equally addressing refugees living in the settlements as well as in the town?
- Why have refugees decided to move to Arua/Gulu town? What is it that they access to in town which is not in the settlements? How has the decision of moving to town impacted their livelihoods?
- How has the presence of refugees impacted the town in your opinion? What was the impact for service delivery and urban planning? (i.e. could you provide any examples?)
- To the best of your knowledge and in your role as city administrator, how does the municipality engage with its citizens in urban planning? Are there any city forums-mechanisms with which city dwellers can voice their concerns/opinions regarding Arua/Gulu's urban development?
- Where does the South Sudanese urban refugee community live (e.g. wards, divisions)? To what extent is the place where they live related to their livelihoods? (Please elaborate on housing, employment opportunities, access to education/health facilities, relationship with the hosts)
- Do you think the urban refugee community members are included in the urban planning processes concerning the wards/divisions where they are currently living? If yes, could you provide some examples? If not, why do you think they are not involved?
- Since the large influx of South Sudanese refugees in the country in 2013, many have self-settled in Arua/Gulu town. How do you think they have integrated in the town? How would you describe their relationship with the local host community? (Please elaborate on any examples of integration, for instance ethnic/family ties, and conflict).
- What expectations did the urban refugees have when self-settling in town? Do you think those expectations have been met as far as you know?
- Which barriers do you see that hinder the South Sudanese urban refugees claim to the rights (e.g. right to work, to free movement and residence) they have been officially granted by the GoU? Please elaborate on knowledge about rights, access to infrastructure, services, employment.
- Do you think of other aspects regarding the livelihoods and rights of South Sudanese urban refugees living in Arua/Gulu town that I should be aware of?
- Is there anything else that you would like to tell me?

Thank you so much! Awadifo! Apwoyo!

Annex IX: Interview Guide for OPM and UNHCR

Office of the Prime Minister (OPM) officials and UNHCR Representatives

One of the key aspects of this research is to understand how the national and local authorities, together with their aid and development partners, frame the urban refugeehood questions in the context of urbanizing secondary cities like Arua. Are integrated approaches for urban development of the town being pursued? Do the South Sudanese urban refugees have their status recognized and preserved? What is the state of the art in Ugandan urban refugee policy? These and some other questions are being investigated by the researcher. The reason why a single interview guide was drafted for respondents from both institutions was not made with the intention of asserting that they share the same opinions. Rather, as the main custodians of the current national Ugandan refugee policy, the researcher thought to combine the questions in order compare and contrast the respondents' findings at a later stage.

Part 1: Demographic/Background Questions

- Please introduce yourself (i.e. name, age, place of origin)
- How long have you been working for OPM or UNHCR and in what capacity? What is your current position?

Part 2: Uganda (Urban) Refugee Policies

- Looking at the overall Ugandan national refugee policies, and based on the recent *Uganda Refugee Response Plan 2019-2020*, what are, in your opinion, the major strengths and challenges of the GoU's approach to refugee management?
- In 1998, the GoU decided to centralise refugee management by moving refugee affairs from the Ministry of Local Government to the Ministry of Disasters and Emergency Preparedness. Why did this change take place and what has been the impact of centralization of refugee management in the last 10 years according to your opinion?
- Uganda has been celebrated globally as a model for its implementation of the DAR initiative, the old SRS. What do you think are the major strengths and challenges faced by this policy framework?
- According to the **2006 Refugee Act, Section 44, Comm. 2**, "*an applicant or refugee who may wish to stay in a place other than the designated places or areas may apply to the Commissioner*

for permission to reside in any other part of Uganda." In your opinion, does this provision curtail a refugees' right to choose his/her place of residence and his/her freedom of movement?

- According to the current legal provisions, does a refugee's decision to self-settle somewhere outside a refugee settlement equal to the practical forfeiting of his/her right to assistance? To what extent are protection and access to services that should be guaranteed under the Geneva Convention and the Ugandan national refugee policy actually tied to the refugee' place of residence? (i.e. refugee settlement)
- Why do you think self-settled refugees would want to move from refugee settlements to urban centres? To what extent does this choice affect their livelihoods? Please provide some examples.
- According to the latest information available, the NDPIII draft states that *the repatriation of refugees to their home countries once peace has been realised needs to become an effective policy of government* (Chapter 2.3.2). Does this imply that the GoU only recognizes the value of *resettlement* and *voluntary repatriation* as the two official durable solutions to be implemented in the country? What is the GoU's position on *local integration*?

Part 3: GoU's approach to urban refugeehood in secondary cities

- According to the current GoU's 2006 Refugee Act and the 2010 Refugee Regulations, refugees can only register in the refugee settlements and in Kampala. What is the approach of OPM and UNHCR to urban refugees who self-settled in secondary cities (i.e. Arua, Gulu, Jinja) in Uganda? To what extent do OPM and UNHCR recognize and protect urban refugees living in the country's secondary cities?
- Although OPM and UNHCR possess precise statistics regarding the number of refugees currently residing in the refugee settlements, precise figures do not exist about those ones who self-settled in towns, such as Arua town. Why is that? To what extent do you think this impacts urban service delivery?
- To the best of your knowledge, have OPM and UNHCR come up with strategies and plans to support urban refugees and host communities living in Uganda's *secondary cities*? If so, which ones? If not, why?
- To the best of your knowledge, have OPM and UNHCR prepared to support the newly declared cities in the welcoming of immigrants and possibly urban refugees in the next few years?

Annex X: Interview Guide for NGOs, IPs and Research Institutions

Non-Governmental Organisations, GoU's Implementing Partners and Research Institutions

One of the key aspects of this research is to understand how the national and local authorities, together with their aid and development partners, frame the urban refugeehood questions in the context of urbanizing secondary cities like Arua.

Part 1: Demographic/Background Questions

- Please introduce yourself (i.e. name, age, place of origin)
- For how long did you live in Arua town?
- How long have you been working for your organization and in what capacity? What is your current position?

Part 2: Uganda (Urban) Refugee Policies

- Looking at the overall Ugandan national refugee policies, and based on the recent *Uganda Refugee Response Plan 2019-2020*, what are, in your opinion, the major strengths and challenges of the GoU's approach to refugee management?
- A key historical moment in Uganda's refugee policy was in 1998, when the GoU decided to centralise refugee management by moving refugee affairs from the Ministry of Local Government to the Ministry of Disasters and Emergency Preparedness, located within the OPM. Why did this change take place and what has been the impact of centralization of refugee management in the last 10 years according to your opinion?
- Uganda has been celebrated globally as a model for its implementation of the DAR initiative, the old SRS. What do you think are the major strengths and challenges faced by this policy framework? Does the policy differentiate between rural and urban dimensions of refugeehood? Please provide some examples.
- According to the **2006 Refugee Act, Section 44, Comm. 2**, "*an applicant or refugee who may wish to stay in a place other than the designated places or areas may apply to the Commissioner for permission to reside in any other part of Uganda.*" In your opinion, does this provision curtail a refugees' right to choose his/her place of residence and his/her freedom of movement?
- According to the current legal provisions, does a refugee's decision to self-settle somewhere outside a refugee settlement equal to the practical forfeiting of his/her right to assistance? To what extent are protection and access to services that should be guaranteed under the Geneva Convention

and the Ugandan national refugee policy actually tied to the refugee' place of residence? (i.e. refugee settlement)

- Why do you think self-settled refugees would want to move from refugee settlements to urban centres? To what extent does this choice affect their livelihoods? Please can you provide some examples regarding recognized urban refugee communities living in Kampala or non-recognised (urban) living in other urban centres?
- According to the latest information available, the NDPIII draft states that *the repatriation of refugees to their home countries once peace has been realised needs to become an effective policy of government* (Chapter 2.3.2). Does this imply that the GoU only recognizes the value of *resettlement and voluntary repatriation* as the two official durable solutions to be implemented in the country? What is the GoU's position on *local integration*?

Part 3: GoU's approach to urban refugeehood in secondary cities

- According to the current GoU's 2006 Refugee Act and the 2010 Refugee Regulations, refugees can only register in the refugee settlements and in Kampala. What is the approach of OPM and UNHCR to urban refugees who self-settled in secondary cities (i.e. Arua, Gulu, Jinja) in Uganda? To what extent do OPM and UNHCR recognize and protect urban refugees living in the country's secondary cities?
- Although OPM and UNHCR possess precise statistics regarding the number of refugees currently residing in the refugee settlements, precise figures do not exist about those ones who self-settled in towns, such as Arua town. Why is that? To what extent do you think this impacts urban service delivery?
- To the best of your knowledge, have OPM and UNHCR come up with strategies and plans to support urban refugees and host communities living in Uganda's *secondary cities*? If so, which ones? If not, why?
- In July 2020, Arua, together with other several towns in Uganda, will change its status from municipality to that of city. What are the changes you expect to happen as a result of this? Will the city dwellers also benefit from this change?
- To the best of your knowledge, have OPM and UNHCR prepared to support these new cities in the welcoming of immigrants and possibly urban refugees in the next few years?