

# **NEW ISSUES IN REFUGEE RESEARCH**

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## **‘Refugees asked to fish for themselves’: The Role of Livelihoods Trainings for Kampala’s Urban Refugees**

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## Introduction

As refugees' average length in exile becomes longer and the world's number of displaced people rises – currently estimated at 60 million<sup>1</sup> – there is a dire need to focus on assistance that extends beyond the emergency phase. Long-term aid for refugees is commonly known as 'development assistance'. This aims to enable refugees to 'secure the basic necessities of life, such as food, water, shelter and clothing'<sup>2</sup> while also 'contributing to poverty eradication in refugee hosting areas'.<sup>3</sup> UNHCR has highlighted livelihoods as a main tool for fostering refugee self-reliance in impoverished countries, and has dedicated substantially more funds to livelihoods programmes since the 2008 creation of its Livelihoods Unit. The importance of livelihoods is emphasised in the 2014-2018 Global Strategy for Livelihoods, which introduced thirteen priority countries for livelihoods initiatives. Uganda is one of these countries, and serves as the basis for this study.

One reason for the heightened emphasis on livelihoods lies in refugees' involvement in the global trend of urbanisation. Currently, approximately half of the global refugee population now live and pursue their livelihoods in non-camp settings, a number set to increase.<sup>4</sup> However, the lack of material assistance, such as food and shelter, offered in urban areas requires refugees to be self-reliant, either through finding work or becoming entrepreneurs. To promote refugee employment, UNHCR's implementing and operational partners offer livelihoods training in lieu of material assistance in cities around the world. However, little critical analysis of the role and outcomes of these trainings currently exists.

This study focuses on the livelihoods assistance offered to urban refugees since 2009, when the *UNHCR policy on refugee protection and solutions in urban areas* granted refugees the right to reside in urban areas and advocated for their protection in these spaces. As a result of this policy, many organisations began livelihoods operations in urban settings, offering business training as well as specific skills training such as tailoring or arts and crafts. Notably, organisations offering trainings include not just INGOs or national organisations serving refugees but organisations created and led by refugees (hereafter *refugee-run organisations*).

Through a review of UNHCR policies and documents relating to livelihoods and urban refugees since 2009, and through three months of fieldwork on urban refugee livelihoods in Kampala, Uganda, I investigated the role of livelihoods trainings – a main method of introducing refugees into the market – offered to refugees. Here, I present the current stage of refugee livelihood programming and policies, and the state and results of livelihoods trainings on the ground in Kampala. I overview the content and main details of these trainings, as well as highlight their contradictions: the results they offer as opposed to what they are promised to provide. I then examine the challenges surrounding these trainings, which stem both from the local context as well as the institutional structure of livelihoods assistance. I conclude with recommendations for practitioners and policymakers.

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<sup>1</sup> UNHCR (2015a) UNHCR Planning Figures for Uganda. Geneva: UNHCR. Available at: <http://www.unhcr.org/pages/49e483c06.html>.

<sup>2</sup> UNHCR (2014) *UNHCR Policy on alternatives to camps*. Geneva: UNHCR. P. 7.

<sup>3</sup> UNHCR (2005) *Handbook for Implementing and Planning: Development Assistance for Refugees (DAR) Programmes*. Geneva: UNHCR. Available at: <http://www.unhcr.org/44c484902.pdf>. P. vii.

<sup>4</sup> UNHCR (2015b) *Global Trends: Forced Displacement in 2014*. Geneva: UNHCR. Pp. 42-43.

## Refugees in Uganda

Uganda is often heralded as a 'refugee oasis' due to the Government of Uganda's Refugee Asylum Policy and Refugee Settlement Model. The 2006 Refugee Act and 2010 Refugee Regulations provide the legal and regulatory framework enabling refugees with the Right to Work and Freedom of Movement, while the Refugee Settlement Model enables refugees to live in settlements, not camps, and provides refugees with access to agriculture land for food production. The rights now available to refugees in Uganda have created an open environment for livelihoods creation, which has enabled UNHCR and other organisations to focus on fostering self-reliance in a more substantive way than previous legal restrictions allowed.<sup>5</sup> This has allowed for livelihoods programming in the country, including programmes in urban as well as rural areas since 2009.

There is currently no literature focusing specifically on the role of livelihoods trainings in the lives of refugees in Kampala, although literature on urban refugees in Kampala exists.<sup>6</sup> One reason for this is that most literature on refugee livelihoods in Uganda was written before 2009,<sup>7</sup> at a time when very few livelihoods trainings were implemented outside of refugee settlements. Powerful analysis of prior self-reliance and livelihoods programmes in Uganda, known as the Uganda Self-Reliance Strategy (SRS) and Development Assistance for Refugees (DAR), is found in the work of Sarah Meyers (2006), Tania Kaiser (2006), and Lucy Hovil (2007).<sup>8</sup> However, this literature was written too early to reflect upon or examine the results of the 2009 urban refugee policy on urban refugee livelihoods.<sup>9</sup> The majority of UNHCR's urban implementing and operational partners in Uganda began offering livelihoods trainings in 2010 and have now engaged in this work for five years. An examination of the role of livelihoods trainings for refugees in urban areas is therefore timely, particularly as Uganda is in the midst of finalizing a new national self-reliance strategy for refugees, which includes the promotion of urban livelihoods trainings.<sup>10</sup>

## United Nations-World Bank ReHoPE Strategic Framework

The 2016-2020 Refugee and Host Population Empowerment (ReHoPE) Strategic Framework formulated by UNHCR on behalf of the United Nations Country Team and World Bank is one of the most progressive strategies in recent years involving refugees, host communities, and development. It is focused on finding developmental 'solutions' to refugees and is a serious attempt to integrate refugees into existing institutional structures, as well as capitalize on their inclusion in the 2015/2016-2019/2020 National Development Plan II. ReHoPE will provide funding for existing government programmes in various areas to enable better support for both

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<sup>5</sup> See, for example: Bernstein, J., & Okello, M. C. (2007). To be or not to be: Urban refugees in Kampala. *Refuge: Canada's Journal on Refugees*, 24(1).

<sup>6</sup> See, for example: WRC (2011) *The living ain't easy: Urban refugees in Kampala*. New York: WRC.

<sup>7</sup> Much of this literature was written between 2006 and 2007, and provides critiques of restrictions on refugees' Right to Freedom of Movement. See: Meyer, S (2006) *The 'Refugee Aid and Development' Approach in Uganda: Empowerment and Self-reliance of Refugees in Practice*. UNHCR Evaluation and Policy Analysis Unit, UNHCR New Issues in Refugee Research Working Paper Series, No. 131.

<sup>8</sup> See footnote 6 and 53 for references.

<sup>9</sup> Two recent pieces and exceptions to this are the Women's Refugee Commission's 2011 report, which discusses livelihoods, and Omata's (2012) Refugee Studies Centre working paper, which focuses on the role of the private sector in refugee livelihoods. However, these pieces do not specifically address the role of livelihoods trainings in the lives of refugees.

<sup>10</sup> UNHCR (2015c) Webpage: UNHCR country operations profile – Uganda. Geneva: UNHCR.

refugees and Ugandan nationals. ReHoPE aims to support local economic development and integrated service delivery through the local governments in Uganda's nine refugee-hosting districts.

The existence of ReHoPE is made possible by the country's progressive legal environment, which provides the Right to Work and Freedom of Movement, and refugee settlement policy, which provides access to land – a major productive asset for refugees. ReHoPE is an important pilot for the durable solution of local integration in host countries where refugees are provided with basic rights. ReHoPE also epitomises the development approach that UNHCR has increasingly taken in recent years, and is an effort to close the longstanding 'relief-development gap'.<sup>11</sup> Refugees' integration into national services has the potential to affect refugees' lives in a variety of areas, from providing access to loan services, more comprehensive healthcare, and government-sponsored livelihoods trainings. Their advent into the Uganda National Development Plan II represents more serious consideration of refugees' needs and capabilities, as well as a further commitment by the Government of Uganda to address long-term refugees in the country.

## Research Methodology

This study is based on fieldwork completed in Kampala, Uganda, over three months between April and June 2015. It is mainly qualitative and includes interviews with 119 refugees and 12 staff members from 8 different organisations serving refugees in Kampala. This study employed a mixed-methods approach consisting of semi-structured in-depth interviews, focus group discussions (FGDs), basic demographics interviews, and participant observation. Livelihoods trainings at four organisations were observed, and individual refugees were also 'followed' in the process of their livelihoods creation, from participating in trainings to opening their own businesses. A snowballing sampling method was employed, whereby refugees were asked for contacts with particular livelihoods or contacts who had taken part in specific livelihoods trainings. Methods included:

- FGDs comprised of members of specific livelihoods trainings (such as tailors), as well as FGDs with refugees with differing livelihoods (e.g. FGDs included tailors, artists, and hairdressers). The former facilitated in-depth discussions of unique challenges and opportunities within different sectors, while the latter provided the opportunity to corroborate common elements of trainings and livelihoods challenges and successes across different sectors.
- Semi-structured interviews with INGOs, NGOs, and refugee-run organisations offering livelihoods trainings, to learn of similarities and differences potentially attributable to an organisation's size, structure, and composition.
- Participant observation of livelihoods trainings and small enterprises at the Bondeko Refugee Livelihoods Center (Bondeko Center), Hope of Children and Women Victims of Violence (HOCW), Jesuit Refugee Services (JRS), and Finnish Refugee Council (FRC) in order to compare and contrast the structure and content of similar trainings offered by refugee-run organisations and INGOs.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Crisp J. (2001) Mind the gap! UNHCR, humanitarian assistance and the development process. *International Migration Review*, 35(1): 168-191.

<sup>12</sup> See Appendix 1 for a full list of organisations interviewed and observed.

### *Research scope and limitations*

A main limitation of this research is that of representativeness, as the majority of refugees interviewed (84%) for this study were Congolese. The highest population of refugees in Uganda by nationality is Congolese (approximately 42%),<sup>13</sup> yet it is potentially problematic to draw broader generalizations outside the Congolese refugee community. Due to the lack of records on participants kept by institutions, it was often not possible to gain accurate numbers of trainees or break them down by demographic. Limitations therefore occurred due to the necessary sampling method employed and the focus on livelihoods arising after trainings undertaken at specific institutions. Corresponding to this, refugees interviewed were not evenly spread out across Kampala's neighborhoods but instead mainly situated in the areas of Najjanankumbi, Nsambya, and Ndejje. Lastly, the qualitative nature of this study precludes the opportunity for detailed quantitative findings that a longer period of data collection and a primarily quantitative focus might have led to.

### **Section I: Urban Refugee Livelihoods and UNHCR Since 2009**

Since 2009, UNHCR has published a variety of documents related to livelihoods and self-reliance, including some focused directly on urban refugees, ranging from policy documents to field manuals for practitioners. During this time, livelihoods programmes have dramatically increased in prevalence and funding<sup>14</sup>, with primary investment in 'vocational and skills training, promoting entrepreneurship, supporting agriculture, livestock and fisheries, and strengthening access to financial services or microfinance.'<sup>15</sup> From 2010 to 2012, for instance, UNHCR's budget for Livelihood Programming increased by 66 percent.<sup>16</sup>

This section reviews available literature focusing on livelihoods and self-reliance as they relate to urban refugees. In some instances, urban refugees are only a subset of the targeted people of concern, while other documents target urban refugee livelihoods specifically. This section documents and analyses the programmes advocated, the prevalence of focus on urban refugee livelihoods, and UNHCR's strategies for encouraging refugee livelihoods and self-reliance.

### *UNHCR Policies on Urban Refugees*

In 2009, UNHCR revised its policy on urban refugees. The 1997 *UNHCR Policy Statement on Urban Refugees* promoted programming in camps, not urban areas, and stated, 'By itself, life in urban areas does not constitute an answer to a refugee's problems and may well be significantly more difficult than in a rural settlement, where appropriate community support can more easily be generated and where UNHCR often has programmes.'<sup>17</sup> This position was reversed in the 2009 policy, which conceded that the 1997 document was 'based on the assumption that such refugees were more the exception and less the norm, as is now increasingly the case.'<sup>18</sup> The new policy, called the *UNHCR policy on refugee protection and*

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<sup>13</sup> UNHCR (2015a) UNHCR Planning Figures for Uganda. Geneva: UNHCR.

<sup>14</sup> The 2012 Livelihoods budget covered 79 countries and increased from 120 to 200 million (UNHCR 2012a: 14).

<sup>15</sup> UNHCR (2014b) Global Strategy for Livelihoods. Geneva: UNHCR. P. 14.

<sup>16</sup> UNHCR (2012a) Livelihood Programming in UNHCR: Operational Guidelines. Geneva: UNHCR. P. 14.

<sup>17</sup> UNHCR (1997) *UNHCR Policy Statement on Urban Refugees*. Geneva: UNHCR. P. 2.

<sup>18</sup> UNHCR (2009) UNHCR policy on refugee protection and solutions in urban areas. Geneva: UNHCR.

*solutions in urban areas* (the ‘urban refugee policy’), acknowledged that urban areas are a legitimate space for refugees and stated the importance of maximizing the ‘protection space’ available to urban refugees, as well as the organisations supporting them.<sup>19</sup>

A section of the policy focusing exclusively on ‘Promoting livelihoods and self-reliance’ offers strategies that include the implementation of ‘vocational training, skills development and language programmes’ to support refugees in the creation of livelihoods and self-reliance.<sup>20</sup> Such strategies were not new, even in urban areas.<sup>21</sup> However, UNHCR had traditionally focused on programming in camps and settlements, and the importance of this new stance cannot be understated.

The policy also discusses challenges regarding upholding the rights of refugees. ‘One of the most difficult questions confronting UNHCR in urban contexts,’ it states, ‘is whether to promote refugee livelihoods and self-reliance in countries where they are denied the right to gain an income under national law and practice.’<sup>22</sup> This statement highlights the tension UNHCR continues to face in promoting a policy of refugee self-reliance, as well as the paramount role that host government policies play in refugees’ ability to become self-reliant. However, to promote livelihoods, the policy also discusses engaging with a variety of actors, including microfinance organisations, banks, and the private sector.<sup>23</sup>

A 2011 UNHCR document, *Encouraging Self-Reliance*, frames livelihoods for refugees less as a right than as a protection tool with the ability to reduce child labour and the exploitation of vulnerable people.<sup>24</sup> This dual-use definition demonstrates how even within the same organisation concepts such as livelihoods can be used and perceived differently. In this case, refugee livelihoods within various documents are perceived as both a right and a tool to prevent the derogation of other rights. Livelihoods are also discussed as a means for refugees to enact agency while simultaneously relieving the ‘burden of poor countries of asylum’.<sup>25</sup> This focus on protection extends into later documents, which detail the benefits of providing avenues for refugees to earn livelihoods – for refugees and the host countries they reside within.

In 2011, UNHCR also produced *Promoting Livelihoods and Self-reliance: Operational Guidance on Refugee Protection and Solutions*, which provided concrete tips and support for fostering refugee livelihoods. The operational guidance largely focuses on the Right to Work as a universal right that should be granted to refugees. Livelihoods promotion is portrayed as a means to facilitate easier and more successful repatriation, which is presumably emphasised to alleviate fears by host countries that refugees with skills and jobs may be tempted to stay in exile.

The document also highlights the importance of supporting refugees who ‘possess assets that are more effectively utilized in urban settings than in camps or rural areas.’<sup>26</sup> In this way, recognizing the agency and skills of refugees – and thus the possibility of their self-reliance – is

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<sup>19</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>20</sup> *ibid.* P. 16.

<sup>21</sup> For information on urban support to Greek refugees in the 1920s, see Skran, C. (1995) *Refugees in inter-war Europe: the emergence of a regime*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

<sup>22</sup> *ibid.* P. 17

<sup>23</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>24</sup> UNHCR (2011a) *Encouraging Self-Reliance*. Geneva: UNHCR. P. 55.

<sup>25</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>26</sup> UNHCR (2011b) *Promoting Livelihoods and Self-reliance: Operational Guidance on Refugee Protection and Solutions*. Geneva: UNHCR. P. 3.



cited as an important strategy for combating poverty. The document advises practitioners to analyze the informal sector as the main site of employment, as it often holds more job opportunities for refugees.<sup>27</sup> Significantly, although the term ‘refugee’ is used, the guidelines refer to all of UNHCR’s urban people of concern, including refugees, asylum seekers, internally displaced persons (IDP), stateless persons and returnees, reflecting UNHCR’s gradual broadening of its target population.

The 2011 operational guidance’s objective is ‘[t]o provide guidance for UNHCR country programmes to advocate for and facilitate access to (and when necessary provide and/or support) quality livelihood services for refugees *equivalent to those available to the national population*.’<sup>28</sup> [emphasis added] This is important, as it represents a longstanding challenge of supporting refugees in or near areas where local host populations need similar basic services as refugees. The question, of course, is whether the livelihood services available to national populations are sufficient – and whether viable livelihoods can be fostered without access to adequate services.

The guidance recommends an integrated approach to livelihoods promotion that avoids the creation of parallel services and instead supports local services also available to refugees. One focus is on refugee entrepreneurs and the importance of offering business and computer skills training to enhance integration.<sup>29</sup> Although the document does not explicate why skills such as computer literacy will particularly increase integration, the emphasis on entrepreneurship demonstrates that livelihoods creation is seen as an important facet of urban integration.

Corresponding to this focus and in line with the UNHCR global strategic goal of community empowerment and self-reliance, in 2011 multiple UNHCR livelihoods field operations were implemented across the globe. These included providing vocational training through the Community Technology Access (CTA) project, which aims to increase ‘access to livelihood, vocational training and educational opportunities via new technologies for school children, youth out of school and adults from refugee, IDP and host communities.’<sup>30</sup> However, UNHCR Kampala has criticized the CTA for its high startup and operation cost and low number of beneficiaries, all of which call into question its utility as a high-impact livelihoods project.

In 2011, UNHCR also published *Investing in Solutions: A Practical Guide for the Use of Microfinance in UNHCR Operations*. The document strongly advocates the use of microfinance in a variety of settings, including in urban areas. Initial assessments distinguish the setting for microfinance (urban, peri-urban, and rural) and guide the appropriate lending based on location and client skills and assets. Financial empowerment is a key theme and the guidance states that, ‘Socio-economic empowerment recasts refugees as agents of their own long-term development.’<sup>31</sup>

The document also cites the potential benefits of micro-finance, including increasing disposable income, promoting women’s empowerment, contributing economically to host countries, and contributing to ‘human rights, peaceful coexistence, and durable solutions.’<sup>32</sup> The focus on peaceful coexistence is particularly relevant for urban refugees, who often live in slums

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<sup>27</sup> *ibid.* P. 7.

<sup>28</sup> *ibid.* P. 5.

<sup>29</sup> *ibid.* P. 10.

<sup>30</sup> UNHCR (2011a) Encouraging Self-Reliance. Geneva: UNHCR. P.59.

<sup>31</sup> UNHCR (2011c) Investing in Solutions: A Practical Guide for the Use of Micro-finance in UNHCR Operations. Geneva: UNHCR. P. 5.

<sup>32</sup> *ibid.* P. 17.

alongside nationals. However, the emphasis on peace and integration also signifies UNHCR's overall conceptualization of microfinance as a tool that can contribute to more than just economic self-reliance.

In the document UNHCR makes clear that its role lies in supporting actors such as governments and development agents in implementing a business-enabling environment, including micro-finance, vocational training and other supportive services. Such programmes are envisioned as vehicles for refugees to identify and build businesses through a bottom-up, community-driven development model rather than institutionalized top-down livelihoods programming. To this end, the limits to UNHCR's direct involvement in development activities are asserted; instead, the agency has a 'central role in the planning, financing and monitoring of the projects implemented by an appropriate microfinance partner...'<sup>33</sup>

In lieu of guidance on direct implementation, the document provides a variety of assessment and monitoring mechanisms, including social performance measurements, financial performance measurements, and market assessment guidelines, which examine the legal and regulatory environment of the host country and the demand for micro-finance from the target population.<sup>34</sup> This restricted role arose in part due to past experience with funding unsustainable financing programmes created in short periods of time without the necessary expertise.<sup>35</sup>

The 2011 operational guidance, 2011 microfinance guide and 2012 *Livelihoods Programming in UNHCR: Operational Guidelines* all share the same livelihoods programming objectives, which are divided into three main strategies focusing on achievable outcomes in different periods of time.

*Livelihood provisioning interventions* exist in the emergency phase and include micro-finance grants, and access to basic services and subsidized housing, and therefore have a direct, immediate effect on refugees' quality of life.

*Livelihood protection interventions* offer medium-term direct support for refugees' socioeconomic wellbeing, and occur after the emergency phase. These interventions include micro-finance loans and grants for businesses, vocational and skills training, and job placement.

In contrast, *Livelihood promotion interventions* are indirect and aim to have medium to long-term effects on socioeconomic wellbeing through advocacy, capacity building, and helping refugees access formal microfinance institutions and business services.<sup>36</sup> These interventions are best seen as development strategies in the case of protracted refugee situations. Taken together, these interventions aim to comprehensively address livelihoods at different stages and scopes of displacement.

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<sup>33</sup> *ibid.* P. 11.

<sup>34</sup> UNHCR (2011c) Investing in Solutions: A Practical Guide for the Use of Micro-finance in UNHCR Operations. Geneva: UNHCR. Pp. 59-60.

<sup>35</sup> *ibid.* P. 18; de Vriese (2006) Refugee Livelihoods: A Review of the Evidence. UNHCR Evaluation and Policy Analysis Unit. Geneva: UNHCR.

<sup>36</sup> UNHCR (2011b) *Promoting Livelihoods and Self-reliance: Operational Guidance on Refugee Protection and Solutions*. Geneva: UNHCR.; UNHCR (2011c) Investing in Solutions: A Practical Guide for the Use of Micro-finance in UNHCR Operations. Geneva: UNHCR.; UNHCR (2012a) *Livelihood Programming in UNHCR: Operational Guidelines*. Geneva: UNHCR.

Building on these strategies, in 2014 UNHCR published its *2014-2018 Global Strategy for Livelihoods*, one of four five-year global strategies targeting different areas of UNHCR's work. The Global Strategy for Livelihoods affirmed UNHCR's objective of promoting the Right to Work as well as Right to Development and supporting and furthering UNHCR's people of concerns' own economic self-reliance strategies.

The global strategy has three main aims: 1) to define UNHCR's aim for implementing livelihoods programming, 2) to provide a global overview of UNHCR's implementation of livelihoods programming, and 3) to guide national and local livelihoods strategies.<sup>37</sup> The guidelines consolidate many of the principles from the 2012 *UNHCR Livelihood Programming Operational Guidelines*, such as advocating for refugee rights and assisting refugees in accessing the services and tools needed for self-reliance. Building self-reliance at all stages of displacement is cited as key for helping people live with dignity; fostering livelihoods is presented as a central strategy in achieving this.

Whereas the 2012 guidelines focus on refining data collection, livelihoods assessments, and programming frameworks, the global strategy draws on global best practices and lessons learned in addition to strategies outlined in previous guidance. Many of the results striven for in the global livelihoods strategy echo the 2011 document, including advocating for the Right to Work and investing in and partnering with local and national institutions to provide services to refugees. In contrast to previous guidelines, the strategy places a heightened emphasis on expanding populations reached through the Age, Gender, and Diversity (AGD) approach, which was introduced to UNHCR in 2004. This approach seeks to assist particularly vulnerable populations such as women, the elderly, and LGBTI individuals, and guides implementing partners in delivering appropriate assistance.

Reflected in the 2011 operational and later guidelines, UNHCR documents have increasingly emphasised diversifying partnerships and actors involved in refugee response. However, similar to the 2011 operation guidance, refugees and refugee organisations in the 2014 Global Strategy are cited as having 'a role to play'<sup>38</sup> but not as potential partners in fostering livelihoods. The 2014 global strategy, for example, discusses 'Forg[ing] new partnerships with national entities, research institutions, the private sector and specialised NGOs'.<sup>39</sup> In contrast, refugees' 'participation' is cited as an important strategy for success. The focus on refugee participation is important but stands in stark contrast to the heightened emphasis that documents place on creating partnerships with actors such as the private sector.

A refined focus of the 2014 global strategy is on linking refugees to markets as well as 'scal[ing] up livelihoods programming'.<sup>40</sup> The related section on 'Generating Employment' identifies strategies that often are more suitable to refugees in a rural or emergency setting than in urban areas, and thus has limited applicability to urban refugees. One important part of the section, however, is on 'Identify[ing] new markets, value chains and potential employers for skilled refugees, including artisans, education or health care workers, technicians and other professionals'.<sup>41</sup> This includes job information platforms and job counselling services. It is notable in the attention it gives to refugees *after* skills training, as well as those seeking to utilise skills from previous livelihoods. The strategy also states that a related and important step in

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<sup>37</sup> UNHCR (2014a) *Global Strategy for Livelihoods*. Geneva: UNHCR. P. 8.

<sup>38</sup> UNHCR (2014a) *Global Strategy for Livelihoods*. Geneva: UNHCR. P. 5.

<sup>39</sup> *ibid.* P. 5.

<sup>40</sup> *ibid.* P. 8.

<sup>41</sup> *ibid.* P. 28.

fostering livelihoods is identifying and providing access to micro-finance and other financial services to refugees, thereby reinforcing the 2011 microfinance guidance.

The *UNHCR Policy on alternatives to camps*, a policy that focuses on the benefits of skilled and self-reliant refugees and relates to the urban refugee policy, was published in 2014. This document has solidified camps as the normative exception to the rule of refugee settlement, based in large part on refugees' limited ability to develop and maintain livelihoods within camps. This heightened role of livelihoods in contributing to self-reliance, protection, and dignity is apparent:

'Refugees who have maintained their independence, retained their skills and developed sustainable livelihoods will be more resilient and better able to overcome future challenges than if they had spent years dependent on humanitarian assistance, whatever solutions are eventually available to them.'<sup>42</sup>

The *UNHCR Policy on alternatives to camps* emphasises reducing 'aid dependency' and fostering intra-camp self-reliance. In this way it employs the 2009 urban refugee policy as a model for promoting not only the self-reliance but the dignity and inherent rights of all refugees, regardless of location. The creation of livelihoods remains a main tool to achieve this.

The most recent UNHCR document related to livelihoods is the *UNHCR Operational Guidelines on the Minimum Criteria for Livelihoods Programming*, published in 2015. The guidelines demonstrate UNHCR's emphasis on refining livelihoods programming, and seek to establish criteria when planning, implementing, and monitoring livelihoods programmes. This includes the establishment of baseline and market assessments, and a 3-5 year context-specific livelihoods strategic plan.<sup>43</sup> The need for establishing these guidelines became apparent after an internal review, and arose in an effort to more successfully identify the impacts of livelihoods programming. The guidelines are therefore an advocacy tool for livelihoods programming as well as a mechanism that allows UNHCR to review and adjust funding for programmes that fail to meet the minimum criteria. Through this document, livelihoods creation is further solidified as a main aim and integral tool of UNHCR, based now off years of experience and with the intention of continuing to promote livelihoods in the future.

## Conclusion

A variety of documents support UNHCR livelihoods interventions, including in urban areas. While some documents directly target urban refugee livelihoods, others are general and can be adapted to suit the needs and experiences of refugees in urban areas. As the increasing specificity of existing documents demonstrates, UNHCR has gained experience in supporting livelihoods since 2008 and particularly in urban areas since 2009. The agency has as a result become steadily more refined in its livelihoods approaches, as well as expanded its budget. Over the years, refugees' Right to Work has been solidified as a protection strategy to avoid 'negative coping skills', thereby becoming a discursive advocacy tool for promoting livelihoods.

Coinciding with rights promotion, refugees and affected communities are also mentioned in UNHCR documents as important actors in implementing livelihoods interventions. UNHCR

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<sup>42</sup> UNHCR (2014b) *UNHCR Policy on alternatives to camps*. Geneva: UNHCR. P. 5.

<sup>43</sup> UNHCR (2015d) *UNHCR Operational Guidelines on the Minimum Criteria for Livelihoods Programming*. Geneva: UNHCR. P. 4.

partnerships with ‘non-traditional’ actors such as the private sector have been promoted since 2012, yet there remains a lack of recognition for other actors – notably, refugee themselves – who provide livelihoods training and support through refugee-run organisations and individual training sessions. Instead, it is refugees’ ‘participation’ rather than true partnerships with refugee organisations and associations that remains emphasised.

A more tangible effort towards refugee self-reliance has been the recognition of baseline economic and market assessments as practical tools for implementing successful interventions. The recognition of the dynamism of markets and variable livelihood possibilities according to region and population has led to a growing trend to develop country-specific strategies, which include context-specific livelihoods interventions. The second criteria in the 2015 *UNHCR Guidelines on the Minimum Criteria for Livelihoods Programming*, for example, states, ‘Specialized partners or experts must conduct a market assessment to assess the potential for growth, profitability, and employment in local economic sectors.’<sup>44</sup> This demonstrates a recognition of the need for local market assessments to inform livelihoods programmes and increase knowledge of specific economic contexts refugees are operating within. Since 2009 UNHCR has increased its focus on refugee livelihoods, including in urban areas, and developed more specific protocols and criteria for livelihoods programmes. The creation of national as well as context-specific livelihoods strategies is a welcome endeavour, particularly regarding the regional singularity of markets. Livelihoods trainings as well as micro-finance loans have been incorporated into interventions targeting different stages of displacement. In many instances, urban refugees constitute a particular vulnerable group, and the creation of specific livelihoods interventions, including skills trainings according to market availability, is a necessary and worthwhile strategy.

The following section reviews the role of trainings in Uganda, one of UNHCR’s priority countries for livelihoods. It is specifically focused on urban refugees and the role of trainings in Kampala.

## **Section II. Livelihoods Trainings**

### *Context*

Uganda has traditionally had generous asylum policies, although in practice rights for refugees have not always been upheld. Uganda is party to the 1951 Refugee Convention, 1967 Protocol, 1969 Organisation of African Unity (OAU) Convention, 2006 Refugee Act, the 2010 Refugee Regulations, and the 2015 Refugee Policy, still in development. Current refugee policy in Uganda exists against the backdrop of Uganda’s Self-Reliance Strategy (SRS), a joint strategy by the Government of Uganda and UNHCR launched in 1999, and the 2003 Development Assistance for Refugees (DAR), part of the ‘way forward’ for the SRS. The strategy aimed to ‘empower’ refugees as well as nationals in refugee-hosting regions to support themselves, and ‘establish mechanisms...[to] ensure integration of services for the refugees with those of the nationals.’<sup>45</sup>

However, critiques of the SRS and DAR demonstrated that while UNHCR promoted ‘empowerment’ and ‘self-reliance’ through livelihoods and economic activities, these were impossible to attain without the Right to Work and Right to Freedom of Movement, which were

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<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.* P. 4.

<sup>45</sup> Government of Uganda (GoU) & UNHCR (2004) *Self-Reliance Strategy for Refugee Hosting Areas of Moyo, Adjumani and Arua Districts of Northern Uganda (SRS)*. Geneva: UNHCR.

not granted to refugees at the time. Research also found that policies to promote self-reliance, such as reductions in food rations, were detrimental to refugee beneficiaries.<sup>46</sup> Uganda's legal context changed with the 2006 Refugee Act, which recognised human rights conventions and broadened refugees' rights, providing the ability to work and move freely between camps and urban areas.

ReHoPE is an important recent development in UNHCR strategy in Uganda, which aims to increase resilience and integration within areas where refugees live. It is a multi-sector programme striving to provide economic development and service delivery programming that is integrated and complementary with government programmes. However, while Uganda has completed a socio-economic baseline assessment, it has not completed a market assessment.<sup>47</sup> This means that no clear evidence exists on potential or existing market opportunities for refugees, and thus impedes fully informed livelihoods interventions for both refugees and nationals.

As of June 2015, there were an estimated 428,397 refugees residing in Uganda, with the majority of new arrivals coming from nearby South Sudan and Burundi.<sup>48</sup> The largest population is Congolese, followed by South Sudanese and Somalis.<sup>49</sup> Despite the possibility of tilling land in settlements, refugees in Uganda have increasingly self-dispersed and moved into urban areas. However, as Uganda is an impoverished country providing very few resources to citizens let alone refugees, economic self-sufficiency is imperative for urban refugees. As previously noted, this is particularly important since material support is not offered by UNHCR in urban areas.

Researching the livelihoods support such as trainings offered within this context presents the possibility to examine how livelihoods may or may not be actualised within a legal environment that permits work, as well as explore the livelihoods resources needed for urban refugees in other similarly impoverished regions. Focusing on refugee livelihoods in Kampala provides an opportunity to examine which public services would most help refugees become self-reliant, and, in light of the upcoming implementation of ReHoPE, advocate for their availability to refugees.

### *Refugees in Kampala*

Kampala hosts an estimated 74,000 refugees, one of the largest populations of refugees in Uganda.<sup>50</sup> Refugees arrive in Kampala directly from other countries as well as from settlements, and either settle or continue a circular migration between settlements and the city. Similar to Uganda's youth bulge, which has an estimated 70% of its population under the age of 30, 70% of refugees in Kampala are registered as youth.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> Meyer, S. (2006) *The 'Refugee Aid and Development' Approach in Uganda: Empowerment and Self-reliance of Refugees in Practice*. UNHCR Evaluation and Policy Analysis Unit, UNHCR New Issues in Refugee Research Working Paper Series, No. 131.

<sup>47</sup> UNHCR (2014c) *UNHCR Global Strategy Implementation Report*. Geneva: UNHCR.

<sup>48</sup> UNHCR (2015c) Webpage: UNHCR country operations profile – Uganda. Geneva: UNHCR.

<sup>49</sup> UNHCR (2015e) 'People of Concern' in: UNHCR (2015) UNHCR country operations profile – Uganda.

<sup>50</sup> UNHCR (2012b) Uganda statistics by settlements, Kampala; the figure for refugees in Kampala was provided by UNHCR Kampala in June 2015.

<sup>51</sup> Interview, UNHCR, 18/6/2015. The African Youth Charter defines 'youth' as between the ages of 15 and 35 (UNESCO 2015).

Although refugees have the Right to Work, local laws constrain the ability of refugees to enjoy this right. In 2011, the Kampala City Council Authority (KCCA) created a law that prohibits the selling of goods in public spaces without a business license or petty trading (hawker) permit. The KCCA law is applied equally to refugees and nationals. More stringently enforced in the last year,<sup>52</sup> KCCA officials now move through Kampala in plainclothes, stopping street sellers and at best confiscating their goods or fining them, or at worst imprisoning them. This formerly took place only in the city centre, but has increasingly occurred in all areas of Kampala.<sup>53</sup> As will be further discussed, this law has had dramatic and negative effects on both refugee and national entrepreneurs.

A large amount of literature on refugee livelihoods in Kampala exists, although the majority of it was written before the implementation of the 2009 urban refugee policy, meaning that livelihoods are discussed in a different legal context than exists today.<sup>54</sup> Useful recent examinations of different facets of refugee livelihoods, including relations to the private sector<sup>55</sup> and urban refugee livelihoods strategies,<sup>56</sup> provide information on refugee livelihoods in Kampala in a more relevant context. Omata's 2012 study, for example, found that the majority of refugees in Kampala are self-employed, and a 2011 report by the Women's Refugee Commission found that Kampalan refugees have diverse livelihoods primarily within the informal sector, findings which this study corroborated.

Although livelihoods trainings are mentioned in the existing literature on urban refugees in Kampala, no research focuses on the role of these trainings in detail. The following section reviews this aspect of urban refugee livelihoods, highlighting the aims, content, and outcomes of livelihoods trainings offered by a variety of formal and informal institutions.

## Livelihoods Trainings in Kampala

This section presents research findings on livelihoods trainings in Kampala undertaken through two of UNHCR's operational partners, the Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS) and Finnish Refugee Council (FRC), and UNHCR's only implementing partner in Kampala, InterAid. Findings from the livelihoods trainings of three refugee-run organisations, the Bondeko Refugee Livelihoods

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<sup>52</sup> Interview, JRS, 15/6/2015.

<sup>53</sup> Interview, FRC, 10/6/2015.

<sup>54</sup> See: Dryden-Peterson, S. & Hovil, L. (2003) *Local integration as a durable solution: refugees, host populations and education in Uganda*. UNHCR Evaluation and Policy Analysis Unit, UNHCR New Issues in Refugee Research Working Paper Series, No. 93.; Hovil, L. (2007) Self-settled refugees in Uganda: An alternative approach to displacement?. *Journal of Refugee Studies*, 20(4), 599-620.; Kaiser, T. (2006) Between a camp and a hard place: rights, livelihood and experiences of the local settlement system for long-term refugees in Uganda. *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, 44(4): 597-621.; Macchiavello, M. (2003) 'Forced migrants as an under-utilized asset: Refugee skills, livelihoods, and achievements in Kampala, Uganda'. UNHCR Evaluation and Policy Analysis Unit, UNHCR New Issues in Refugee Research Working Paper Series, No. 95.; Macchiavello, M. (2004) 'Livelihoods Strategies of Urban Refugees in Kampala'. *Forced Migration Review*, 20: 26-27.; Meyer, S. (2006) *The "refugee Aid and Development" Approach in Uganda: Empowerment and Self-reliance of Refugees in Practice*. UNHCR Evaluation and Policy Analysis Unit, UNHCR New Issues in Refugee Research Working Paper Series, No. 131.

<sup>55</sup> Omata, N. (2012) *Refugee livelihoods and the private sector: Ugandan case study*. Refugee Studies Centre, University of Oxford.

<sup>56</sup> WRC (2011) *The living Ain't easy: Urban refugees in Kampala*. New York: WRC.

Centre, Young African Refugees for Integral Development (YARID), and Hope of Children and Women Victims of Violence (HOCW) are also presented. Data was collected through semi-structured interviews, FGDs, and participant observations of trainings over three months. This research sought to identify the role of trainings according to providers and beneficiaries, the basic demographics of participants, and ‘what happened next’ to refugees who successfully completed trainings. In an effort to be concise, general results from various trainings are presented under relevant headings.

### *Overview*

Different types of livelihoods trainings target different skills for achieving refugee self-reliance. These include basic business skills, literacy, and vocational training. Common livelihoods trainings in Kampala include arts and crafts, business skills, computer trainings, and tailoring. Additionally, more specific trainings such as mushroom-growing, catering, and baking have emerged. The livelihoods trainings observed were in business, tailoring, arts and crafts, and hairdressing. Micro-savings groups were also observed, and members interviewed, although the aim of this was to learn of members’ livelihoods and not to analyse the savings groups themselves. Information on other trainings offered by organisations was obtained through interviews with trainers and participants. Table 1 presents an overview of training types and the organisations that offered them.

### **Livelihoods Trainings for Refugees in Kampala**

<b>Training Types</b>	<b>Organisations Offering Trainings</b>
Arts & Crafts	4 (HOCW, JRS, InterAid, YARID)
Baking	1 (Bondeko Center – initiated through FRC)
Business	4 (Bondeko Center, FRC, HOCW – initiated through FRC, YARID)
Carpentry	1 (JRS)
Catering	1 (JRS)
Cobbling	2 (Bondeko Center, InterAid)
Computer Skills	4 (FRC, HOCW InterAid, YARID)
Hairdressing	4 (FRC, HOCW, InterAid, JRS)
Mushroom Growing	2 (FRC, HOCW – initiated through International Rescue Committee)
Pedicure/Manicure	1 (InterAid)
Tailoring/Fashion & Design	4 (Bondeko Center, HOCW, JRS, YARID)
+ Micro-savings/loans group	4 (Bondeko Center, HOCW, InterAid, JRS)

### *Genesis of Training*

Notably, both institutional and refugee-run organisations cited the genesis of trainings as driven by refugees’ desire to work. JRS, InterAid, and FRC had conducted needs assessments and identified livelihood skills as a major need of refugees, while refugee-run organisations created trainings based on anecdotal evidence. JRS offers three months of emergency assistance for food and rent to eligible refugees, but recognised that refugees needed more sustainable



assistance after this time. As the JRS livelihoods coordinator stated, 'Refugees asked to fish for themselves, instead of being handed the fish.'<sup>57</sup> Several initiatives led by refugee-run organisations began with support and training from the International Rescue Committee (IRC) and FRC. Mushroom-growing and business trainings were initiated by IRC at HOCW, while FRC helped start mushroom-growing, business trainings, and baking at Bondeko Centre. The organisation African Centre for Treatment and Rehabilitation of Torture Victims (ACTV) also provided four sewing machines to the tailoring group at Bondeko Centre, although this was to strengthen and not start the existing training.

### *Role of Training*

Both refugee participants and organisations had similar conceptualisations of trainings as a key step to self-reliance. Participants perceived trainings as a way to learn new skills to help them survive in Kampala; as one refugee explained, 'The livelihoods training is to give us knowledge on how to become self-reliant. Knowledge on how to create an income generating activity.'<sup>58</sup> For the refugee-run organisation HOCW, the main aim of trainings is to empower women and help them learn skills; this initiative began after women expressed the need to diversify their skillsets, as the majority could only find work washing clothes. Participants from all areas sought training to gain or improve their livelihoods, and cited paying for food, rent, and school fees as predominant reasons for earning money.

### *Participants*

The number of refugees trained every year per organisation varies. At any given time, JRS is training 120 refugees in its five livelihoods areas, while FRC trains 600 refugees per year in two cycles of business classes, and smaller numbers of refugees in other sectors. Refugee-run organisations train between 30 and 300 refugees per year.

The number of training participants in training sessions ranges from six to thirty, depending on the amount of space and available materials. For example, the tailoring training at the Bondeko Centre is held by three volunteer teachers (fellow refugees). During the time observed, 12 refugees (nine women, three men) were taking part in a six-month training. Due to the limited number of sewing machines, the trainees were split into three groups and four participants undertook training for three hours twice per week.

The nationality of participants is most diverse in trainings led by INGOs. JRS trainings have a mixture of Congolese, Rwandan, Burundian, and South Sudanese refugees. FRC also support these nationalities but generally holds trainings that are de facto separated by nationality, as trainings take place in areas of Kampala with high concentrations of particular nationalities. The same is true of the refugee-run organisations interviewed, which mainly serve Congolese refugees. An exception, however, is HOCW, which aims its activities towards the community the organisation is based in, and estimates that 30% of training participants are local Ugandans.

The majority of participants in trainings have no prior experience in the skills they are acquiring. Refugees' past professions range from lawyers to farmers to health workers. In some cases, it can be inferred based on the region and past jobs of participants that their former livelihoods

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<sup>57</sup> Interview, JRS, 15/6/2015.

<sup>58</sup> Interview, Bondeko Centre, 1/6/2015.

were minimally lucrative; however, other refugees mentioned being large landowners or previously running and owning successful shops in their country of origin.

The lack of participants' prior experience in the livelihood training they are enrolled in is partly due to many refugees' interest in gaining new skills, as well as in organisational approaches to recruiting participants. JRS and InterAid actively screen potential participants for past livelihoods experience in training areas, preferring to support people in learning entirely new skills. They explained this as an effort to support vulnerable people, such as those without any experience in viable livelihoods, as well as a way to keep their trainings cohesive and streamlined. The refugee-run organisations YARID and Bondeko Centre lead trainings similarly although less stringently pick participants. HOCW individually adjusts training durations based on participant's existing skillsets.

It was not possible to accurately break down participants by gender, as organisations had varying levels of documentation on participants. However, 80% of the participants in the trainings observed were women. The exception was business trainings, where participants' genders were more evenly divided. The high number of female participants in livelihoods trainings was noted as a problem by several organisations, which discussed male refugees' complaints about the minimal training available in 'male' professions. To address this, JRS began a carpentry program in June 2015, and InterAid plans to offer trainings in mechanics, electric installation, and plumbing beginning in 2016.<sup>59</sup>

### *Trainers*

Trainers in INGOs are mainly Ugandan, while trainer nationalities are mixed in refugee-run organisations. In the case of JRS, only one refugee trainer is on staff while the others are Ugandans qualified in specific sectors. FRC has both refugee and Ugandan trainers, and noted that it was helpful when refugees led courses as they usually had more initiative to teach on a volunteer basis. As InterAid matches refugees with established national training organisations, the trainers are mainly Ugandan. In refugee-run organisations, such as Bondeko Centre and YARID, trainers are refugees who either taught independently or had been trained by an outside organisation. In the latter case, trainings are based on formal curricula and are implemented through refugee communities as opposed to grassroots lessons individually created by teachers. An interesting observation in the case of independent refugee trainers, such as sewing teachers at Bondeko and YARID, is a seemingly natural transition from learning to teaching. In instances after they themselves had been trained, refugees became volunteer trainers. They described sharing their skills with fellow refugees as a challenging but fulfilling way to give back to their communities and help improve other refugees' lives.

### *Training Content and Duration*

The content of trainings depends on the trainer's background and affiliated organisation. Trainings offered through FRC, IRC, and InterAid are based on separate, formal curricula, and teachers largely work through set modules with accompanying manuals and workbooks. Refugees who work independently at refugee-run organisations, as well as trainers at JRS, self-design trainings and generate content based on their own experience and knowledge.

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<sup>59</sup> Interview, JRS, 11/6/2015; Interview, InterAid, 17/6/2015.

The duration of trainings vary, but are generally three to six months, with classes held three to five times a week. Some, such as hairdressing and tailoring, are twelve-month programmes, although participants with existing skills are trained for shorter amounts of time. Additionally, some trainings such as the business trainings offered by FRC were shortened from six to four months, due to participants needing to 'work to survive' and not having enough time to attend long trainings.<sup>60</sup> HOCW has adapted to participants' need to work by offering 2-hour long trainings only a few times a week. However, many trainings at YARID, JRS, and those offered through InterAid are at least five hours long for five days a week.

### *Employment After Training*

Organisations were only able to offer general figures on participants' ability to become employed or self-employed after training. This represented a major barrier in the research, and was openly discussed by organisations such as JRS as being an important and currently missing component of demonstrating training 'impact'. JRS recently started a database of training participants, but is just beginning the tracking process. Refugee-run organisations also have only anecdotal evidence of employment success. However, all organisations cited hairdressing and tailoring as having a high employment success rate, as well as mushroom-growing from organisations that offer it. One explanation for this success is the practical applicability of hairdressing and tailoring, and the relatively untapped market for mushroom selling. As the JRS training coordinator explained of hairdressing, 'After training you don't need capital, because the capital is your hands.' Arts and crafts, in contrast, was cited by both organisations and training participants as a difficult sector to find markets for. Overall, it is apparent that completing a skills training does not directly lead refugees into employment.

### *Challenges Faced After Training*

The most common challenges faced in creating a viable livelihood after a skills training are a lack of access to capital and a lack of access to markets. These challenges were noted by 90% of refugee participants, and 100% of organisations, and have been echoed in other studies examining urban refugee livelihoods in Kampala.<sup>61</sup> 100% of unlicensed refugees seeking to sell goods in Kampala proper discussed arrest or the confiscation of goods by the Kampala City Council Authority (KCCA) as a further challenge intertwined with accessing markets. Nationals are also severely impacted by these laws, although refugees may be statistically more impacted due to having less access to formal employment than nationals.

Other challenges highlighted were discrimination by Ugandan buyers and sellers, who either preferred to buy from fellow Ugandans or viewed refugees as competitors and sought to disrupt their business operations. Problems stemming from a lack of prior business knowledge or experience in particular livelihoods were also noted. As an InterAid Livelihoods Officer explained, 'Refugees have a limitation to assets (production assets), lack of knowledge – some used to have huge chunks of land, used to rear goats and cows. Now they are engaged in small businesses and have no experience in this.'<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> Interview, FRC, 10/6/2015.

<sup>61</sup> WRC (2011) *The living Ain't easy: Urban refugees in Kampala*. New York: WRC.; Omata, N. (2012) *Refugee livelihoods and the private sector: Ugandan case study*. Refugee Studies Centre, University of Oxford.

<sup>62</sup> Interview, InterAid, 17/6/2015.

The following section discusses further research findings, including a more detailed account of the challenges refugees face and how these are dealt with by both refugee entrepreneurs and organisations serving refugees.

### **Section III. Findings and Recommendations: Challenges and Opportunities**

As noted in the previous section, various challenges exist for refugee entrepreneurs in Kampala. The most prominent challenges, however, are the ability to access capital to start or expand a business, and access markets to sustain their businesses. These struggles are familiar in many impoverished parts of the world, but several factors distinguish this experience for refugees. First, refugees often face additional barriers to markets, such as xenophobia, lack of English skills, and social networks when first arriving in a new city. Many also enter sectors that they have not previously engaged in, meaning that they may be at a greater disadvantage than local counterparts with particular business experience. The following sections overview the main challenges and opportunities present for refugee livelihoods in Kampala in relation to livelihoods trainings, and presents related recommendations.

#### *Livelihoods Trainings*

The existence of livelihoods trainings demonstrates an important step by organisations towards fostering refugee self-reliance. Skills accrued through livelihoods trainings provide a foundation for self-reliance, onto which micro-finance programmes and job placement can potentially be linked. These organisational efforts to create refugee self-reliance are also responses to needs cited by refugees, and attempts to utilize refugees' agency. Explaining the aims of livelihoods training, the UNHCR Senior Protection Officer stated that it is to, 'Let them [gain the skills to] compete fairly in the market.' Although this statement is laudable, it is also crucial that the skills refugees gain are *desired* and *demand*ed by the markets they are situated within.

An important finding of this research is that the majority of refugees interviewed entered certain sectors *due to the trainings that organisations offered*. This finding highlights the responsibility that organisations have when offering livelihoods trainings, for these trainings drive refugees into sectors that may or may not lead to viable incomes. As will be further discussed, very little market research on Kampala exists, which leads to the creation of trainings uninformed by demand. However, the 2015 UNHCR guidelines on livelihoods programming clearly state the necessity of market assessments, and will hopefully lead to market assessments in Kampala and further research in this area.

Another main research finding is that livelihoods trainings alone rarely lead directly to employment. Lack of employment after training was cited by 78% of refugee informants, with a slightly more optimistic view presented by organisations. However, little comprehensive data exists on the impact of training on refugee livelihoods. An exception was estimates from a FRC monitoring study on post-training livelihoods success, which provided fairly positive figures. The study showed that 69% of livelihoods groups formed through FRC are viable, while 20% break even, and 11% collapse.<sup>63</sup> It was therefore estimated that 70% of refugees use the skills gained to start businesses after finishing trainings. However, this figure is not necessarily as positive as it sounds. The majority of refugee informants who create their own (informal) business struggle

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<sup>63</sup> Interview, FRC, 10/6/2015; FRC Internal Monitoring Report.

to make regular profits, as a result of lack of capital to expand, and struggle to access markets, due in part to enforcements from KCCA.

One reason that partially explains post-training lack of employment is the relatively informal nature of many sectors for which trainings are offered. As little formalised, large-scale work in arts and crafts is available, for example, refugees must start their own businesses instead of seeking outside employment. However, refugees may have no experience in entrepreneurship, and often face disadvantages as foreigners in the labour market. The relative success of employment after hairdressing trainings furthers the hypothesis of the challenges entrepreneurship poses; hairdressing is one sector where formal businesses exist, and salons regularly hire hairdressers.

However, separate from the direct applicability of trainings, refugees and organisations cited the importance of the certificates awarded upon completion of a livelihoods training. These certificates are useful documents for demonstrating skills and are often one of the only forms of documentation that refugees have after flight. A FRC employee mentioned, for example, several refugees who had returned to the organisation to personally thank her, stating that attaching copies of training certificates to CVs had helped them secure jobs. This demonstrates the value of helping refugees gain 'institutional' recognition of any kind, and can be an important means to help them enter the formal sector.

The unintended consequences of livelihoods trainings are also important to examine. Even when refugees are unable to develop viable livelihoods directly after trainings, all participants cited the positive effects of trainings on their lives. Trainings provided refugees with a structure for their day, a chance to make friends and form networks, and a way to feel supported in starting a new life in a foreign place. Theories on integration and social interactions emphasise 'processes of social connection within and between groups',<sup>64</sup> which livelihoods trainings provide through creating spaces for refugees to meet each other. In this way, although trainings are mainly centred on refugees and not interactions between refugees and the host population, they still contribute to integration, defined as comprising various networks and linkages between an individual and members of the same group, a state and institutions, and the surrounding society.<sup>65</sup> The social and psychosocial effects of livelihoods training, although hard to quantify, therefore cannot be underestimated.

#### *Recommendation: Livelihoods Trainings*

There are several avenues to pursue when taking steps to help livelihoods trainings lead more directly to refugee employment. One way to make livelihoods trainings more effective is for organisations to offer trainings based on a fully investigated market demand (expanded on below). This coincides with ReHoPE's focus on fostering local economic development as opposed to solely supporting populations such as refugees. Instead of one-off, limited scale

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<sup>64</sup> Ager, A. and Strang, A. (2008) 'Understanding Integration: A Conceptual Framework', *Journal of Refugee Studies*, 21(2), pp. 166-191.; see also: Putnam (2002) *Democracies in Flux: The Evolution of Social Capital in Contemporary Society*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. P 5.

<sup>65</sup> Ager, A. and Strang, A. (2010) 'Refugee Integration: Emerging Trends and Remaining Agendas', *Journal of Refugee Studies*, 23(4): 589-607.; Putnam, R.D. (2000) *Bowling Alone: the Collapse and Revival of American Community*. New York: Simon and Schuster.; Putnam, R.D. (2002) *Democracies in Flux: The Evolution of Social Capital in Contemporary Society*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

activities to specific households and groups, ReHoPE will strive to stimulate local development through an area-based approach. Such work is important, and, when combined with market research, can lead to the creation of targeted business development services in particular regions and sectors.

Livelihoods trainings should also be concretely 'linked' to job opportunities. This could include short-term 'internships' such as those organised at local salons by the JRS hairdressing trainer, or agreements with business owners open to expanding their businesses through hiring refugees. Given the prevalence of xenophobia, as well as practical barriers such as language, contacting successful refugee business owners as well as local Ugandans to further explore this possibility would be prudent.

Corresponding to this, refugees should be followed after trainings in order to elucidate their (un)employment experiences and the value that trainings offer. Almost no comprehensive data in this area exists, which greatly constrains the ability of organisations to prove 'impact' as well as make changes to training programmes or foci. Similarly, without this data, possibilities to connect skilled refugees to expand or create businesses are reduced.

### *Access to Markets*

Each organisation interviewed had conducted needs assessments of refugees that reflected refugees' desire for skills training and micro-finance loans. These findings led to the specific livelihoods training and small-scale loan programmes detailed above. However, it is clear that the trainings refugees advocated do not always reflect a market demand. Indeed, neither the Government of Uganda, UNHCR, nor any of the organisations interviewed have conducted a market assessment of Kampala. This precludes knowledge of viable sectors for refugees to become skilled in, and therefore calls the impact of trainings into question. This lack of knowledge is reflected in refugee informants' livelihoods struggles, which often centre around finding markets to sell their goods and services in. This problem stems from a variety of factors, including an oversaturated informal sector with few opportunities in the formal sector and, more recently, barriers that the specific legal context of Kampala poses. The high unemployment rate and high level of poverty are compounding factors that reflect the need for creative solutions in identifying and accessing markets.

The struggle for refugees to access markets across sectors is exemplified by refugees engaged in arts and crafts. The challenges for refugees in this sector are elevated, as many organisations and refugee informants cited this business area as 'non-essential' and dominated by Ugandans. The lack of craft skills' practical applicability was explained by one Sudanese refugee, who stated, 'These goods are the extras, but here people do not have money for extras, for beautiful things.'<sup>66</sup> An UNHCR Livelihoods Officer was similarly critical, writing, 'I would also be critical of organisations and projects that pursue handicrafts. Unless the project is a major tourism destination, which Uganda is not, we are merely "trinketif[ying]" an entire workforce and providing occupational therapy to people.'<sup>67</sup> Despite this, arts and crafts trainings were offered by all organisations interviewed, and are very popular for female refugees in particular.

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<sup>66</sup> Interview, Refugee Informant, 4/20/2015.

<sup>67</sup> Written comment, UNHCR Livelihoods Officer Kampala, 10/08/2015.

Arts and crafts trainings occur three to five times a week for three to six months, depending on the program, and include learning how to make paper bead jewellery, purses, shoes, sisal earrings, and cloth bangles. The knowledge that refugees gain in these trainings is vast, yet the majority of refugees post-training – even three years later – are unable to make a livelihood from this. Many are discouraged and frustrated. Barriers are faced at different stages, depending on the amount of capital they start with. Some struggle to buy enough material to make even one handbag, and have formed groups to combat this lack of capital. However, once made, profits must be shared amongst group members, which also proves challenging. Other refugees are able to buy material and make products, but struggle to sell them. This is due to various factors, such as lack of English skills, an exclusion from trade shows and exhibitions due to xenophobia, and not having a registered business with a storefront.

Registering businesses in permanent locations is a multifaceted and important factor in job success and livelihoods creations in Kampala. Refugees from all sectors believe that they could sell more products and market themselves better if they were able to rent a small stall or container, simply because their business would then have a 'face'. Despite their desires, this is impossible for most, as they lack the capital to pay three months of rent upfront. However, several refugees who had been selling jewellery and crafts in Kampala for years stated that they formerly made a living by going door-to-door to sell products or by hawking in town. The recent laws of the KCCA now prevent this and have impeded their ability to earn a living. With a constrained ability to informally sell wares and not enough money to register a business and rent a selling space, refugee entrepreneurs are increasingly restricted in accessing markets. The new legal context that KCCA laws have created represents a challenge faced by Kampalan refugees in all sectors, and is discussed in more depth below.

#### *Recommendation: Access to Markets*

Following the 2014-2018 UNHCR Global Strategy for Livelihoods, Uganda should undertake a comprehensive market assessment in order to develop targeted livelihoods interventions, including appropriate livelihoods skills training. Although this assessment has the potential to be very useful, market dynamism means that demands for goods and services can quickly change. Steps to build the resilience of refugees engaged in small businesses should continue to feature in livelihoods trainings (e.g. emphasising and teaching savings strategies), and particular skills trainings should be strategically located so as to avoid the risk of market oversaturation.

International markets targeting fair-trade goods produced by refugees should also be explored. This might take the form of both international and national partnerships, such as with the Uganda Small Scale Industry Association, which supports small-scale industries in Uganda and is involved in national and international trade fairs and exhibitions.<sup>68</sup> Larger organisations offering skills training could sell goods produced by former students online or in local shops, such as the Mikono shop run by JRS in Nairobi<sup>69</sup>, thus providing an avenue to livelihoods creation after training. Other non-profit organisations, such as the Ugandan organisation Beads for Life, provide social business models that could be adapted to target refugees, as well. However, this runs the risk of creating businesses dependent on charity instead of consumer's true demands, and may not be sustainable. Domestic markets should therefore be as fully exploited as possible before export markets are tapped.

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<sup>68</sup> For more information, see: <http://www.ussia.or.ug/>.

<sup>69</sup> JRS (2015) Website: Mikono Crafts Shop. Available at: <http://www.jrsea.org/mikono>. Accessed: July 1, 2015.

The private sector also represents a significant opportunity for job placements and partnerships, and should continue to be targeted for partnerships involving job placements locally, nationally, and internationally. UNHCR Kampala has begun to explore this by linking to an IOM initiative focusing on nationals, labour, and markets. Through this initiative, 1,000 refugees were recently provided contract jobs with Nile Breweries, a local Ugandan brewery. The potential for distance job placements over the internet continues to be explored by UNHCR in camps as well as urban areas, furthered by Community Technology Access (CTA) projects, which provide computer and technology trainings. However, the value for money of these projects should be examined in terms of operational costs and beneficiaries reached; supporting refugees' own initiatives such as internet cafes and other enterprises should be more seriously considered.

### *The Prohibitive Role of KCCA*

Informal street vending and stalls are now illegal in Kampala and reinforced by the Kampala City Council Authority (KCCA). This has heavily impacted both refugees and nationals. However, the majority of refugees survive through the informal sector and still attempt to sell their products on the street, because they feel they have no other option. Many echoed the sentiment of one informant, who stated, 'I still go to sell, but I am fearing. KCCA comes...they take all from you, they beat you...sometimes you go to prison.'<sup>70</sup> Indeed, the behaviour of KCCA has become violent enough that a local organisation, African Centre for Treatment and Rehabilitation of Torture Victims (ACTV), held an one-day awareness training in 2015 with 30 KCCA law-enforcement officials on the concept of torture and the anti-torture law.<sup>71</sup>

The challenge that KCCA poses also extends to organisations helping refugees. As one FRC employee stated, 'KCCA is one of our biggest problems we face in our livelihoods section.'<sup>72</sup> To exemplify this, she explained that half of the businesses run by women belonging to a FRC-sponsored savings group were demolished in December 2014. This was demoralising, traumatic, and severely reduced their ability to pay back loans. InterAid also reported that 25 refugees were arrested and detained in 2015 for hawking in the city center.

The issue has grown pressing enough that the Refugee Law Project (RLP) has held a series of stakeholder meetings with KCCA, in an attempt to negotiate and highlight the challenges this law posed to refugee informal business owners. KCCA had not previously been aware that refugees counted among the business owners in Kampala. However, while sympathetic, KCCA insisted that any exceptions were impossible. Instead, certain days where it is 'legal' to sell on the streets have been declared, but these average only a few days a month at most and therefore offer very few the chance to make a livelihood solely in this way. These meetings also discussed creating gazetted areas where people including refugees could legally sell goods. However, the promised construction of six modern markets to provide legal selling space to vendors across Kampala<sup>73</sup> has yet to materialise. Although refugees had different reactions to the idea of selling in markets, many worried that it wouldn't be viable, due either to competition or a lack of customers.

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<sup>70</sup> Interview, Refugee Informant, 6/6/2015.

<sup>71</sup> Tukei, M. (2015) Awareness on Torture Among KCCA Law Enforcement Officers. ACTV website, March 6.

<sup>72</sup> Interview, FRC, 10/6/2015.

<sup>73</sup> New Vision (2011) KCCA to start evicting vendors. September.



Organisational responses to the KCCA law vary. InterAid plans to address the barrier posed by KCCA through renting out several stalls for refugees in local markets and paying the first three months of rent. FRC has dealt with the challenge by paying for the licenses of three livelihoods groups for one year. Although helpful for some refugees, neither of these options is sustainable for these organisations on a wider scale, particularly given their current livelihoods funding. Part of the discussions with KCCA has included negotiating a reduced license fee for refugees; this seems helpful on a wider basis yet it is unclear if it will materialise. For the refugees of Kampala, KCCA represents one of the biggest barriers to creating sustainable small businesses – and, thus, to becoming self-reliant. Addressing this issue is critical, be it through increasing and delegating funding for business registration or coming to creative agreements with KCCA regarding the registration fees.

The result of KCCA enforcement is the constraint of selling space for refugees and vulnerable nationals in Kampala. InterAid estimates that 95% of refugee businesses are unregistered,<sup>74</sup> partially due to the burdensome and expensive process of business registration. In order to become a registered business, refugees must undergo an often lengthy process of paperwork, which averages around 225,000 Ugandan Shillings (about 75 US dollars). This registration fee is in addition to the costs of renting a selling space, for which paying three months of rent upfront is standard. The cost of rent generally ranges from 250,000 (70 USD) to 750,000 (200 USD) Ugandan shillings. However, it is impossible for many urban refugees to obtain their own space to sell from, as many struggle to earn even the public school fee of 10,000 UGX per term (approximately 3 USD).

KCCA's law also infringes on the protection space available to refugees in Kampala. This is especially relevant for female refugees, as hawking jewellery, fruit, and clothes are common livelihoods for women. One Congolese woman seeks to circumvent KCCA's law by selling the majority of her goods while walking through neighbourhoods at night. However, she was recently raped by two Ugandans while doing so. Despite this, she continues to sell jewellery and hairnets in the evening, as this is the only way she can support her four children and husband, who is unable to work due to being persecuted by Congolese government officials. As most female refugees in Kampala have multiple dependents, the ability for them to save enough capital to formally register businesses or rent stalls is even more limited than for men living alone in Kampala. The KCCA law therefore risks placing both male and female refugees, and vulnerable nationals, in unsafe situations, such as that described above. If refugees are unable to safely sell goods, there is also a heightened risk of them resorting to negative survival strategies that UNHCR's promotion of livelihoods tries so hard to prevent.

Although the restriction on unlicensed public selling spaces is clearly detrimental for refugee entrepreneurs and has negatively affected many in Kampala, the registration enforcement and concomitant tax payments also provide a chance for refugees to be acknowledged as contributing economically to their host country. As recent research on refugees in Uganda demonstrates, refugees in both settlements and camps already contribute to Uganda's economy as providers and consumers of services and goods.<sup>75</sup> Becoming tax-paying registered business owners operating out of stalls and stores provides a potential avenue for these economic contributions to be augmented and more publically acknowledged.

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<sup>74</sup> Interview, InterAid, 17/6/2015.

<sup>75</sup> Betts, A., Bloom, L., Kaplan, J., & Omata, N. (2014) *Refugee Economies: Rethinking Popular Assumptions*. *University of Oxford Refugee Studies Centre*. Oxford: RSC.

### *Recommendation: KCCA*

As a UNHCR official stated, ‘Without livelihoods you cannot speak of adequate protection.’ Uganda’s generous laws regarding refugees’ right to work are useless for the majority of refugees in Kampala if the informal sector is constrained, and feasible channels to the formal sector are not created. Furthermore, when organisations offer livelihoods trainings without further guidance or education on business registration, or support with next steps in fostering livelihoods, they effectively usher refugees into a now illegal informal sector. This is irresponsible as well as contrary to organisations’ aims of protecting and supporting refugees.

To address this at the ground level, workshops and trainings are needed to guide refugees through the process of business registration with KCCA. On the policy front, UNHCR and its implementing partners should continue to hold discussions with KCCA regarding ways to make the registration of refugee businesses more tenable, such as through reduced fees and increasing the number of legal spaces and stalls for selling goods. It is clear, however, that the financial barriers faced by refugees in registering businesses also exist for poor nationals. In light of this and particularly due to ReHoPE’s aims of increasing the quality of and access to national services, a larger advocacy initiative is necessary. This should include demands to reduce standard fees for all vulnerable populations and/or micro-business owners. KCCA and the Ugandan government must recognise the challenge that restricting the informal sector without widening the channels to access formal business registration poses for both poor nationals and non-nationals. However, even if business registration fees were to be reduced, many refugees would be unable to accrue the capital to rent a stall or kiosk without access to micro-finance loans.

### *Access to Capital*

One of the most basic and necessary tools for livelihoods acquisition is start-up capital. Access to micro-finance loans is stated as an aim within livelihood protection interventions in UNHCR’s operational guidance and guidelines<sup>76</sup> yet refugees’ access to micro-finance and bank loans in Uganda is largely prohibited or inaccessible. Practical factors such as refugee identity cards not being recognised by banks or MFIs play a role in this, which an InterAid Officer attributed to both ignorance and discrimination.<sup>77</sup>

Another barrier in accessing micro-finance is a lack of legal status, which often prohibits refugees from becoming MFI clients or opening bank accounts in host countries. This lack of legal status compounds lenders’ fear of refugees leaving the host country, which leads to increased uncertainty about loan repayments or sources of collateral. Refugees’ ineligibility to receive loans is also due to their common inability to provide recognised forms of collateral such as land ownership. Due to these barriers, parallel micro-finance structures have been created through organisations, yet these are only available on a small-scale and thus are unable to supply the demand for loans. Refugees are therefore largely forced to go without loans or must find alternative sources of funding.

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<sup>76</sup> UNHCR (2011b) *Promoting Livelihoods and Self-reliance: Operational Guidance on Refugee Protection and Solutions*. Geneva: UNHCR.; UNHCR (2012a) *Livelihoods Programming in UNHCR: Operational Guidelines*. Geneva: UNHCR.

<sup>77</sup> Interview, InterAid, 17/06/2015.

Prioritising refugees' ability to access capital through established MFIs and Ugandan banks is necessary, as this lack of access inhibits the creation of refugee livelihoods. The ReHoPE strategy paves the way for helping refugees access financial capital, due to its aims of integrating refugees into existing institutional structures in Uganda. However, this will likely involve significant negotiation with and sensitisation of Ugandan financial institutions. It is therefore also sensible to examine other avenues for helping refugees access micro-finance.

One means for this is through the expansion of micro-finance projects led by organisations serving refugees, a phenomenon that is not new yet has faced challenges in the past. Since 2000, UNHCR has implemented different forms of microfinance in 45% of its country operations, yet these have only recently occurred in urban areas.<sup>78</sup> Larger organisations have struggled with receiving loan repayments, often due to refugees perceiving loans as hand-outs. The Alchemy Project at Feinstein International Centre has therefore recommended that, 'Separate agencies, de-linked from relief, should manage and dispense loans to refugees.'<sup>79</sup>

Several refugee-serving organisations in Kampala, however, have recently started or restarted small loan programmes. These small-scale initiatives, such as those implemented by JRS and InterAid, are a way for refugees to access capital, but are not large enough to meet the demand for loans. JRS offered loans to 25 refugees in 2014 and will continue the programme in 2015, yet many refugees felt that the amount offered (500,000 UGX, equivalent to approximately 136 USD) was not enough to buy the materials needed to create sustainable businesses. InterAid hopes to offer 500 refugees loans in 2015, yet, as the Livelihoods Officer stated, 'Of the refugees coming in for services, more than half want loans. About 300 people come every week...the need is enormous.'<sup>80</sup> He confirmed that the biggest problem regarding livelihoods is refugees' inability to access micro-finance institutions and services. The revolving loan programme is InterAid's short-term solution to address this problem, but, in line with the ReHoPE Self-Reliance Strategy, the organisation plans on partnering with formal financial institutions to provide capital access to refugees in the future.

Without a means to formally access capital, urban refugee communities and organisation have created their own finance mechanisms, such as micro-savings and lending groups in their communities. These groups are primarily women-focused. In instances, initiatives have been provisioned with training, booklets, savings boxes, and occasional training to interested refugee communities by NGOs like FRC and IRC. In other cases, supplies and leadership are only offered by refugees themselves. The actual implementation of all groups, as well as the capital comprising loans, come solely from refugees. However, very little research focuses on this bottom-up innovation, and thus little is known of the potential for refugee communities to host more formalised micro-finance programmes.

Although organisations are beginning to offer small loan programmes in Kampala, the financial means to fund significant numbers of refugee entrepreneurs do not exist. Similarly, limited funding in organisations' programmes as well as refugees' micro-savings and lending groups means that refugees can only borrow a limited amount. ReHoPE provides a means to move towards linking refugees with institutional lenders, but few organisations are optimistic that this process will result in loans for refugees in the near future. Therefore, despite having completed

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<sup>78</sup> Azorbo, M. (2011) Microfinance and Refugees: Lessons Learned from UNHCR's Experience, UNHCR Policy Development and Evaluation Service, Research Paper No. 199. P. 11.

<sup>79</sup> Jacobsen, K. (2004) Microfinance in protracted refugee situations: Lessons from the Alchemy Project. Boston: Feinstein International Famine Center, Tufts University.

<sup>80</sup> Interview, InterAid, 17/6/2015.

livelihoods training and having drive and initiative, refugees largely find themselves restricted in starting businesses as soon as they have acquired the skills to do so.

### *Recommendation: Access to Capital*

Presenting options for Ugandan financial institutions to incorporate refugees into their clientele is an important way to increase refugees' access to microfinance. This could include identifying existing banking and micro-finance models that target vulnerable populations and strategies to engage with financially unstable populations, such as accepting community collateral instead of material assets. As an intermediary step for including refugees as a banked population (a population holding bank accounts), organisations serving refugees could act as financial guarantors for refugee entrepreneurs. Partnerships with Ugandan banks or MFIs could be formed and money pools that currently exist in organisations such as JRS and InterAid for loans used instead as a guarantee for loan repayment.

Partnerships between organisations serving refugees and non-profit MFIs that traditionally serve nationals could also help refugees access loans by including refugees in an existing national client base. InterAid has partnered with BRAC Uganda for their micro-finance programme, but BRAC currently provides only the technical guidance and thus serves an ancillary role. Exploring whether micro-finance INGOs operating in Uganda, such as Kiva or the Grameen Bank<sup>81</sup> are viable sources of micro-finance for refugees in the country, and in Kampala in particular, is a worthwhile endeavour.<sup>82</sup>

More research on micro-finance and savings programme led by refugees themselves is needed. Understanding how these important grassroots efforts function could lead to augmenting and recognising them as micro-finance programmes, and additionally provide information on how best to structure refugee loan programmes offered by formal MFIs.

### *Refugee-Run Organisations*

In Kampala, multiple refugee-run organisations host activities aiming to foster refugee self-reliance through livelihoods training. With their focus on language and skills training, these organisations actively contribute to local integration and development efforts. Refugee-run organisations such as Hope of Children and Women Victims of Violence (HOCW), Young African Refugees for Integral Development (YARID), and Bondeko Refugee Livelihoods Centre (Bondeko Centre) are important sources of social and practical resources for refugees in Kampala. These organisations offer skills trainings in a variety of areas such as tailoring, arts and crafts, hairdressing, and computer literacy. Functional adult literacy and basic to advanced English lessons are also held. Organisations also offer community-based micro-savings and

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<sup>81</sup> In 2010 UNHCR and the Grameen Bank signed an agreement to provide micro-finance to forcibly displaced people in 14 countries; Uganda, however, was not among them. For more information on the agreement, see: Tens of thousands of refugees to benefit from new un--backed microfinance project. UN News Centre. Available from: <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story>.

<sup>82</sup> Micro-finance organisations operating in Uganda include: UGAFODE, HOFOKAM, BRAC Uganda, Micro credit for Development and Transformation, The Alliance for Artisan Enterprise at The Aspen Institute, Living Goods, Ensibuuko, WANA Solutions, Impact Carbon, UpEnergy, Youth Initiative for Community Empowerment, Grammen Foundation AppLab, Solar Sister, and Barefoot Power.

lending groups run by refugee leaders, which address refugees' abiding exclusion from formal micro-finance institutions.

Importantly, these organisations arose out of grassroots efforts by refugees to help each other but are now nationally-registered or community-based non-profit organisations with their own committees, boards of directors, websites, and logos. In short, despite on-going struggles to pay rent, fund livelihoods activities, and provide small stipends to teachers and staff, these organisations are professional, hardworking, and important to the material and social wellbeing of many refugees in Kampala. This demonstrates that refugee-run organisations are important actors in refugee assistance and development, with the potential to become implementing and operating partners in livelihoods programmes.

The potential of refugee-run organisations to contribute to local integration and development is enormous, and on a small-scale is already being actualised. However, these organisations are limited in reaching more refugees through their on-going struggle to meet the basic needs of running an organisation – paying rent, accruing funds and tools to implement livelihoods trainings, and providing stipends to volunteer teachers and staff. The dearth of literature on this subject occludes recognition of refugee-run organisations not only as stakeholders but as important partners in livelihoods interventions. It follows that the capacity for refugees to self-organise and provide community support is similarly unrecognised.

#### *Recommendation: Refugee-Run Organisations*

The significance of refugee-run organisations in the lives of refugees in Kampala as well as in the ability of international and national non-refugee organisations to implement local activities must be more widely recognised and utilised. There is a troubling lack of written documentation on refugee-run organisations and the capacity for refugee initiatives to educate and train other refugees. This, unintended or not, perpetuates the conceptualisation of refugees as beneficiaries, even in written guidance designed to utilise their agency.<sup>83</sup> A shift in current rhetoric and practice from seeking refugee participation in programmes to forming refugee *partnerships* to implement them would provide a platform for the expertise of refugee-run organisations to be better utilised.

Capacity-building programmes for refugee-run organisations such as those provided by FRC provide a positive model for engaging refugee communities in non-profit administration and monitoring activities. The development of similar programmes in other NGOs would increase access to skills that ultimately benefit entire communities connected to refugee-run organisations. Funding dedicated to sustaining and strengthening refugee-run organisations, such as through providing rent for organisations where activities take place, is an important way to support the self-reliance and self-help that such initiatives represent.

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<sup>83</sup> Examples of recent documents that emphasize refugee agency and self-reliance but do not mention refugee-run organisations as potential partners include the 2014 UNHCR Global Strategy for Livelihoods 2014-2018 and the 2015 UNHCR Operational Guidelines on the Minimum Criteria for Livelihoods Programming.

## Conclusion

'Refugees have been given everything they can be given,' stated an UNHCR official in regard to refugee rights in Uganda. However, despite Uganda's liberal laws towards refugees, this research shows that if refugee self-reliance with organisational livelihoods support is to be fostered in Kampala, opportunities beyond livelihoods trainings must be created. Both organisations and refugee informants described the two biggest barriers to refugee self-reliance as a lack of access to micro-finance loans, and a lack of access to markets. While livelihoods trainings represent a vital foundational step, this research found that trainings alone only very rarely enable refugees to create viable livelihoods. Once skilled, refugees are faced with an inability to accrue capital to start or expand small businesses, which impedes their livelihoods creation. Those who pursue economic activities they are trained in often face challenges in finding markets for their goods or services within Kampala. Addressing these barriers in addition to adapting livelihoods trainings based on the results of a comprehensive market survey of Kampala is vital for achieving successful refugee livelihoods in the city.

Although refugees in Uganda are granted the right to work, this does not mean that access to livelihood services or even work itself is accessible. This research has found that the ability for refugees to create livelihoods in Kampala is increasingly constrained by the laws of KCCA, which restricts work in the informal sector for both refugees and nationals. Some of the barriers refugees face are particular to their status as non-nationals, while others are relevant for all people in similar (impoverished) financial situations. UNHCR documents state the objective of ensuring refugees can access work and livelihood services in the same manner as local populations; the results of this study show the necessity of increased service provision, particularly regarding access to financial institutions, in order to reach this objective. Uganda's new ReHoPE strategy focuses specifically on integrating refugees into public services and programmes, and thus provides a potential programme to implement UNHCR rhetoric into practice.

The role that ReHoPE can play in development and livelihoods support, including through enabling refugee access to national MFIs, is apparent in an InterAid officer's statement on the importance of ReHoPE in the on-the-ground work of the organisation:

'The ReHoPE strategy is guiding us now, whatever we do, we reflect on it. We are now trained to shift from dependency to development. To do this, we see how closely we can work with local governments to make sure refugees are integrated into government programs. Eventually international emergency organisations will have little role, instead development organisations will do most work... we are [also] partnering with government organisations. There are so many government organisations that could help refugees become self-reliant.'<sup>84</sup>

As the evolution of UNHCR policy on refugee livelihoods and self-reliance demonstrates, there is increasing focus by the international community on the inherent rights and capabilities of refugees, and particularly on the benefits of the Right to Work for refugees and host state economies. Undoubtedly, Uganda provides refugees with rights that have allowed UNHCR and other organisations to take important steps towards promoting refugee livelihoods through skills trainings designed to foster their self-reliance. However, to assume that simply providing livelihoods trainings is enough to foster self-reliance is to ignore the significant – and increasing – barriers to employment that refugees in Kampala face. Despite the generous laws that Uganda affords refugees, livelihoods opportunities for refugees in Kampala are so constrained

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<sup>84</sup> Interview, InterAid, 17/6/2015.

that InterAid projects that refugees will begin leaving the city within one to two years. It was explained that, ‘...[L]ife in Kampala is growing more expensive. The cost of living is growing, and these new by-laws of KCCA are also pushing people away. We [InterAid] expect that soon many refugees may not be able to manage life in Kampala.’<sup>85</sup>

The increasingly restrictive legal context for refugee entrepreneurs and its effects on the ability to create sustainable livelihoods must be taken into account, particularly as UNHCR determines which areas of the ReHoPE strategy to address first. The constraints faced by refugees in creating livelihoods in Kampala are reminiscent of the legal environment that impeded refugee ‘empowerment’ and ‘self-reliance’ before the 2006 Refugee Act was passed. These restrictions serve as a reminder that refugee livelihoods and self-reliance depend on access to resources and networks, which institutions, laws, and policies inhibit or engender. Indeed, these challenges evoke Meyer’s 2006 critique of the SRS, which centred on an approach that ‘proposes refugee empowerment without taking into account the social, political and economic context.’<sup>86</sup>

Recognising and addressing these challenges provides the much-needed opportunity for creative engagement with individual refugees, refugee-run organisations, MFIs, and local business owners. UNHCR and NGO approaches towards fostering urban refugee livelihoods in Kampala must be re-evaluated in light of new local laws and the finding, five years on, that livelihoods trainings are just one step towards self-reliance – significant yet not effective alone.

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<sup>85</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>86</sup> Meyer, S. (2006) *The ‘Refugee Aid and Development’ Approach in Uganda: Empowerment and Self-reliance of Refugees in Practice*. UNHCR Evaluation and Policy Analysis Unit, UNHCR New Issues in Refugee Research Working Paper Series, No. 131.

## **Appendix 1: Overview of Organisations Interviewed**

### **Bondeko Refugee Livelihoods Centre (Bondeko Centre)**

Website: <http://www.bondekocenter.com/> [Refugee-run organisation]

### **Finnish Refugee Council (FRC) Uganda**

Website: [www.pakolaisapu.fi/en/the-finnish-refugee-council-abroad/uganda.html](http://www.pakolaisapu.fi/en/the-finnish-refugee-council-abroad/uganda.html) [INGO]

### **Hope of Children and Women Victims of Violence (HOCW)**

Website: <http://www.hocwug.net/> [Refugee-run organisation]

### **InterAid Uganda, Ltd.**

Website: <http://www.InterAiduganda.org/> [NGO]

### **Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS)**

Website: <http://www.irsea.org/> [INGO]

### **Refugee Law Project (RLP)**

Website: <http://www.refugeelawproject.org/> [NGO]

### **United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), Uganda Office**

<http://www.unhcr.org/>

### **Young African Refugees for Integral Development (YARID)**

<http://www.yarid.org/> [Refugee-run organisation]



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