

# Situating Adult Learning and Education in Refugee Livelihood Adaptation and Progression Toward Self-Reliance: The Case of Refugees in the Kyaka II Settlement in Southwestern Uganda

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## Abstract

Livelihood adaptation in refugee camps is often fragile and inherently problematic owing to their physical characteristics and policy restrictions. The Uganda refugee policy applauded as progressive exhibits internal contradictions which influence livelihoods. The purpose of this study is to explore the significant role of adult education in livelihood adaptation. The study used qualitative research methods of interviews and focus group discussions. Purposive sampling technique was used in selecting 70 participants from eight Common Interest Groups, of both refugees and Ugandan nationals. The findings indicate that access to agriculture extension education and financial literacy facilitates the acquisition of relevant skillsets for adaptation. The study concludes that adult education provides immediate, relevant skillsets for adaptation.

## Keywords

refugees, livelihood adaptation, self-reliance, adult learning and education, refugee policies

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## Introduction

The refugee crisis management in Uganda has adopted various policy frameworks. The most significant for this study is the social–economic strategies focusing on education, livelihoods, and self-reliance for postconflict recovery and integration. This article, based on the study of livelihood sustainability in the Kyaka II settlement, examines the intersection between educational and livelihood programs in encampment.

The Uganda refugee policy is commended for being the most progressive in the region, owing to its orientation toward the social–economic protection of refugees. However, empirical evidence from the study of livelihood sustainability of refugees in the Kyaka II settlement highlights internal contradictions within the policy; mainly at the implementation levels, which hinders refugee livelihoods. This finding is consistent with several studies on refugee livelihoods which suggest inherent complexities and fragility due to the physical characteristics of most camps and settlements, but notably, the relevant studies were set in the context of restrictive policy environments. Against this background and assumptions, the article explores the livelihood adaptation of refugees in a gazetted settlement and the significant role of adult education programs in navigating these inherent complexities.

In this article, the authors explore the relative sustainability of refugee livelihoods in the context of encampment by examining the role of adult education programs. The Kyaka II settlement was considered an interesting case in understanding refugee livelihood sustainability because unlike other gazetted settlements, it benefits from a less restrictive refugee policy and access to adult education programs by refugees.

Livelihood adaptation refers to strategies refugees espouse on a day-to-day basis to stabilize their livelihood. It is the social–economic coping mechanisms people adopt. Self-reliance refers to the capacity of refugees to support themselves with limited or no humanitarian assistance. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees defines self-reliance as follows: The ability of an individual, household, or community to meet their essential needs sustainably (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, n.d.-a).

### *The Context of the Study*

Since the refugee crisis became a defining feature of the 21st-century social landscape, the conversation on refugee livelihood, as a protection issue has become equally important. The refugee situation in Uganda and indeed in the Great Lakes region is protracted.<sup>1</sup> Given the protracted nature of conflicts in the Great Lakes region, the debate on sustainable livelihood for refugees in the region is particularly important for two reasons: (a) refugee management in the region is heavily donor funded, raising questions of sustainability and (b) refugee host countries are predominantly developing economies that can barely provide for their citizens effectively. These factors compound the challenges of refugee livelihood management and sustainability at a macro level.

According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, by 2015, nearly 65.3 million people had become forced migrants, out of whom 2.5 million are found in East and Central Africa: 1.23 million are in Uganda (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, n.d.-b). Governments in the Great Lakes region struggle to deliver social services to their citizens and to refugees. According to Barbelet and Wake (2017), refugees often experience livelihood difficulties because of: Position of loss of assets, health and social capital, heightened uncertainty about fundamental aspects of their lives, feelings of being stuck, living in limbo and temporariness with limited choices, the semilegal nature of their livelihoods and, the skills and reality mismatch characteristic of their environments. This study was premised on the assumption that sustainable livelihoods and self-reliance in displacement is problematic and hard to achieve.<sup>2</sup>

The Kyaka II settlement exhibits the same physical difficulties as most camps; it is located in rural remote communities in Southwestern Uganda, with very limited access to social services. Studies on refugee livelihoods (Barbelet & Wake, 2017; Fiddian-Qasmiyeh et al., 2014; Norris, 2013) suggests that livelihood adaptation for refugees in camps has remained elusive, largely due to the physical characteristics of refugee settlements and camps and the restrictive policies in most hosting countries. In the case of Uganda, it is an equally a mixed report, however, education and relevant skills sets were found to “contribute to refugee livelihood success” (Barbelet & Wake, 2017, p. 23). The Kyaka II case study was selected for this reason. This article proposes that access to adult learning and education improved livelihood adaptation and potential for self-reliance for refugees, as a consequence of improved knowledge and functional skills. According to Dryden-Peterson (2017), refugees conceptualized education as “creating certainty and mending the disjunctures of their trajectories” (p. 14).

### *Objectives of the Study*

The objective(s) of the study were to explore:

1. Refugee livelihood strategies in the Kyaka II settlement.
2. Factors influencing livelihood of refugees in Kyaka II and,
3. The livelihood adaptability strategies of refugees in the Kyaka II refugee settlement.

### *The Purpose of the Study*

The purpose of this study, therefore, was to explore the significant role of adult education in refugee livelihood adaptation and progression toward self-reliance. The researcher is engaged in adult education provision in refugee settlements in Uganda. The study was significant to document a Ugandan perspective on refugee livelihoods and the role of adult learning and education in emergency and postemergency context. It was also significant in generating empirical evidence for possible refugee policy improvement in Uganda. The existing refugee policy influences education in emergencies guidelines and

minimum standards in humanitarian response. Understanding this nexus could facilitate livelihood recovery and contribute to the narrative on mainstreaming development of refugee communities in Ugandan settlement.

## **Review of Literature**

Studies on livelihoods and social integration in protracted conflict situations indicate struggles by refugees due to the destruction of livelihoods, serious poverty, failure of food security, and other social–economic vulnerabilities (Overseas Development Institute, n.d.). The protracted nature of the displacement in the region has seen millions of people from mainly South Sudan, Democratic Republic of Congo and other countries in the region being uprooted from their social–economic networks and comfort zones and, forced into exile for long periods, under temporary arrangements (Jacobsen, 2002; United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, n.d.-c). It is associated with impossibilities in continuing life as they knew it due to accompanying breakdown in social–economic structures and networks. Impossibilities to continue life as before is perhaps the most underestimated threat to sustainable livelihoods and adaptability for most refugees.

Displacement increases levels of poverty, functional illiteracy, and possibilities of self-reliance. A study of African refugees in Israel highlighted low adult literacy rates in 10 out of 25 countries in conflict situations (Furst-Nichols & Jacobsen, 2011, pp. 55-56). Adult education was recommended to provide displaced persons with skills to navigate this transitional time and in preparation for rebuilding lives (Furst-Nichols & Jacobsen, 2011). Adult education programs help refugees identify their needs and work toward fixing them through a process of knowledge acquisition, reflection, and reconstruction (Bork, 1991; Dirx, 1998).

Adult literacy education plays several roles; facilitating immigrants to reposition themselves into active community participants (Drobner, 2001). Drobner notes that adult literacy: facilitated immigrants to “thrive” and “be connected” to their society; “opened minds” [perspective transformation] to look at things differently; “gives choices for change” and more power [empowerment] (Drobner, 2001, p. 10). It also helps immigrants navigate their new life in a new country, enhancing their capacity to “undergo different stages of transition” (Vaynshtok, 2001, p. 26). The social–economic potential of adult learning and education in displacement, integration, and resettlement suggested by Drobner (2001) and Vaynshtok (2001) are important for livelihood adaptation.

Adult education is conceived as a tool for perspective transformation. Learning is a process of personal transformation, involving the disruption of “old patterns of meaning and constructing new ways of seeing the self and the world” (Dirx, 1998). The learners are active participants in the learning processes, engaging in critical reflection and perspective transformation as they adapt and rely on new relevant skillsets and knowledge important for their livelihood reconstruction and social integration.

Livelihood adaptability is an indicator of household resilience, often reflected in household strategies—the way different households make use of their livelihood assets (both tangible and intangible) and capabilities to meet their livelihood goals. These

strategies are highly influenced by the social, economic, and political context of a community. The livelihood strategy adopted by vulnerable persons and communities depends on how they can strategically utilize their livelihood assets to respond to vulnerabilities they face (Women's Refugee Commission, 2009).

## Methodology

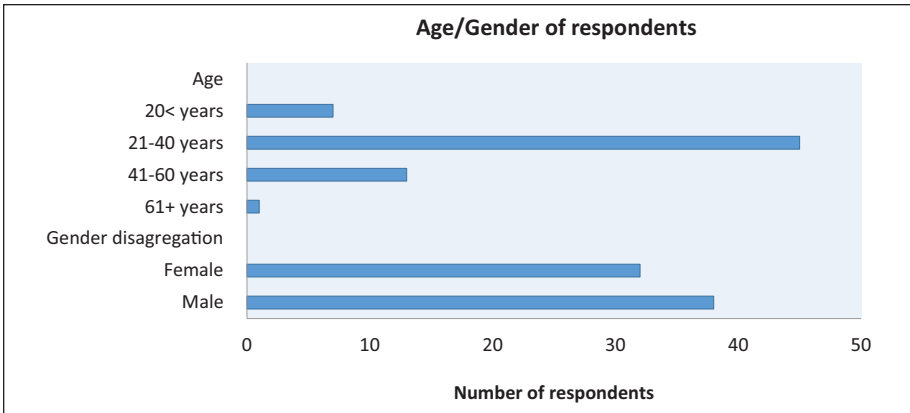
The case study of the Kyaka II refugee settlement in Uganda was carried out among adult learners in Common Interest Groups (CIGs)<sup>3</sup> engaged in various community development programs. As an empirical inquiry, case studies “investigates a phenomenon within its real-life context” (Yin, 2003, p. 19), allowing the researcher to zero in, and understand the livelihood adaptation of refugees in the Kyaka II settlement. The case study approach was used because it allows the researcher multiple perspective analysis of voice and perception of participants. This case was interesting because of the presence of common interest learning groups, with access to adult learning and other livelihood education programs in a gazetted settlement.

Participants of the study were members of the CIGs and group facilitators. Two categories of CIGs were selected purposively. Category A comprised “successful” livelihood groups and Category B comprised groups that were struggling with their livelihood projects. A total sample of 70 participants took part in individual interviews and in four focus group discussions (FGDs). The FGD approach enabled the researcher to consider the investigation from the perspective of the interviewees (King, 2004). All individual interviews and FGDs were recorded on cassette recorders as well as reflective notes that were taken throughout the interviews and discussions. The interview and discussion questions focused on livelihood and adaptation strategies. Secondary data were collected using documentation review of key documents including refugee policy documents, CIG project documents, and other related project documents.

Signed consent was sought from all the study participants. Pseudo names are used in the report to protect the identity of my participants. The researcher also sought ethical clearance from the University of South Africa by fulfilling all ethical requirements before commencing the study.

The data analysis process involved pattern matching: identifying themes, patterns, and their relationship to look for common grounds and trends in responses, and developing logical explanations to give meaning. Pattern matching serves to “externalise implicit mental modes” allowing the “reader to retrace the thought processes of the researcher” (Sinkovics, 2018, p. 468). It also involved a comparison of “a predicted theoretical pattern with an observed empirical pattern” (Sinkovics, 2018, p. 468), linking this study to other relevant studies, literature, and theories.

The study participant recruitment was significantly representative of the context and case under investigation to guarantee the validity of the data and data collection processes. In addition to verbatim quotes from the participants, the researcher makes cross references to related literature to validate the empirical findings throughout the discussions. The other control measure was in the use of multiple data collection tools for the same themes and questions for the triangulation of results.



**Figure 1.** Demographic profile of participants.

### *Limitation of the Study*

This study was limited to exploring the sustainability of livelihood of refugees in the Kyaka II refugee settlement in southwestern Uganda, focusing on the CIGs engaged in livelihood and adult learning programs between 2013 and 2017. The exploration and findings are therefore limited to the set study focus and context.

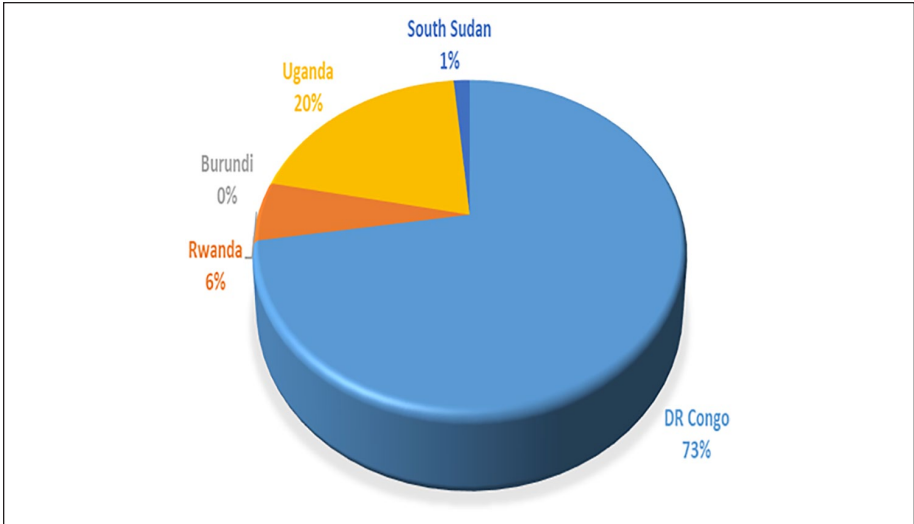
Methodologically, the findings were generated from a limited sample of 70 participants, the extent of representativeness of the opinion and overall finding is thus limited.

## **Findings and Discussion**

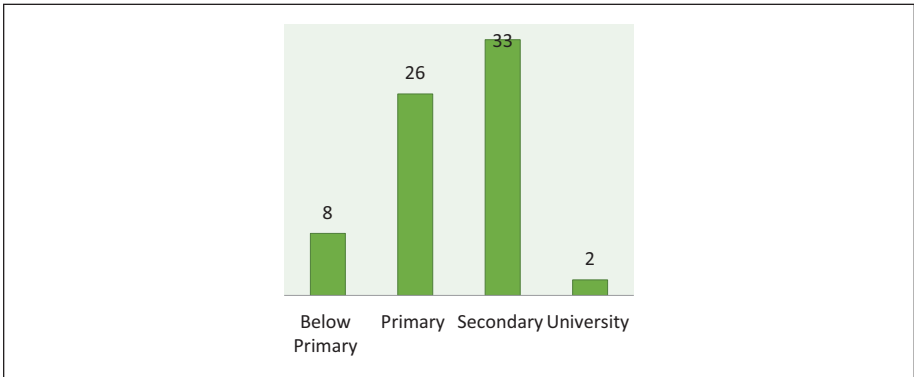
This section presents the biographical information of participants as an antecedent to the analysis of data. The results of the investigation were presented and analysed within three main themes: activities refugees engage in to subsist; skillsets acquired and their significance to livelihood adaptation and, factors limiting livelihood actions in gazetted settlements.

### *Biographical Information of Participants*

Although the biographical information was not the main focus of the study, it is important to the analysis of data; providing important background information. The age of the majority of participants range from 20 to 40 years. Although male participants dominated, the participation of females in livelihood groups was significant. It also indicated that majority of the participants were from the Democratic Republic of Congo, and that up to 34 participants had primary and below primary education achievements (Figures 1 to 3).



**Figure 2.** Countries of origin of participants.



**Figure 3.** Levels of education of participants.

The above information has implication for livelihood adaptation and potential for self-reliance. The age of the participants which is linked to their social and family roles in society could be the motivation for participation in livelihood activities. However, 20- to 40-year olds are more likely to seek learning opportunities to better their future and chances for a better life and livelihoods. The significant number of women (32 women) in livelihood groups highlights the changing trends in household and livelihood leadership in the context of forced displacement, violent conflicts, and civil wars that leave families fatherless. Due to design limitations, the study did not focus on

understanding any relationship, whatsoever between refugee women leadership in livelihood and adult education. However, studies (Tiruaynet, 2015) on women's participation in livelihood led literacy programs suggest factors relating to changing roles of women in society.

The location of the settlement in southwestern Uganda predisposes this settlement to refugees from the Democratic Republic of Congo and Rwanda. In the recent past, Rwanda and Burundi have been relatively stable, allowing most of its refugees who had settled in the Kyaka II camp to return home, while Democratic Republic of Congo refugee situation remains protracted. Protracted conflict situation interferes with access to education and may perhaps explain the low levels of education of participants, a factor that may also hinder livelihood adaptation.

The Refugee and Host population Empowerment (ReHopE) framework provides for a 30:70% ratio of shared benefits between the host population and refugees in Uganda (World Bank Group, 2016, 2019). This principle accounts for the wide disparity between nationals and refugees' access to development and education programs at the settlement.

Additionally, the study participants were primary and lower secondary education learners, a significantly low standard for any professional qualification. This limitation is compounded by the scarcity of formal employment opportunities and the challenges with translating academic documents received from home countries to Uganda's equivalent for the few refugees with university and other tertiary education achievements. Remarkably, all 70 participants had acquired some form of adult education through their participation in the study groups.

A study by the World Bank Group (2016) identified limited access to secondary and tertiary education by refugees in Uganda. The report is consistent with this study's empirical evidence. The report underscores the significance of basic and nonformal education opportunities to livelihood adaptation and self-reliance perhaps due to their skill-based nature and possibility for on-the-go application. Hartog and Zorlu (2009, 224–227) also reported the absence of returns on higher education for immigrants whose priority is social and economic integration, while Informal (Webb, 2015) and nonformal learning (Morrice, 2012) played important roles in career adaptation and benefits to individual immigrants, leading to growth and development, respectively.

### *Livelihood Strategies for Subsistence*

**Agriculture.** Agriculture is the means of subsistence for rural communities including refugees. The interviews and group discussions with participants underscored farming of crops and livestock as the most relied on means of livelihood. Out of 70 participants, 55 were directly engaged in agriculture and the rest were engaged in agricultural produce and other businesses. The literature reviewed (World Bank Group, 2016) also reported that 78% of refugees in rural settlements and 5% of urban refugees rely on agriculture to subsist. The data also indicates that participants are members of CIGs, a thematic cooperative that promotes different forms of agriculture for food and income. The range of thematic CIGs include the following: fish farmers, vegetable growers,



apiary, grain-farming, goat and piggery projects, and poultry farmers among others. Unlike other rural community farmers in the same settlement, CIGs practice agriculture as a business and do benefit from agriculture extension education that embed technical agriculture and financial literacy skills.

[ . . . ] We rear and sell goats from which we buy land in instalments; we make compost manure for our garden from goat droppings [ . . . ]. (Caphas)

The above voice of a participant demonstrates the interconnections between livelihood practices, survival, critical skills learned and its application for adaptation. The proceeds from livelihood actions in CIGs are used to buy land within the community, in preparation for the future and as a means to secure a better livelihood. This forethought speaks of perspective transformation that happens as a result of learnings and reflection at personal and group levels. A couple of participants in the FGD revealed that under the current land use policy, refugees are expected to give up part of the previously allocated land to be reallocated to new-arriving refugees. This strategy allows the government to free-up land to accommodate new refugee caseloads but threatens progression toward self-reliance for long-term refugees. However, advances in technical agriculture skills by adult learners in the Kyaka II settlement is equipping members of CIGs to become resilient to subsist on much smaller pieces of land using extension education skills.

Agriculture extension education supports participants to use the small allocated plots maximally, through practices like: “the use of bottle irrigation technology, organic pesticides, and compost manure” to increase the chances of food production in backyard gardens. The practice was reported by 21 study participants from individual interviews as contributing to a “reduction in reliance on food ration from the World Food Program,” a revelation which suggests progression toward self-reliance. The benefit of extension education is in “fostering change as a form of adaptation” (Dirkx, 1998) through providing new information and skills which adult learners seek.

Around the world, immigrants rely on small pieces of land for agriculture, using modern farming technics, acquired through nonformal education. There are reports of home gardening projects in Nepal–Baldangi camp; agriculture vouchers in Malawi to promote farming as a means of livelihood and recovery; vegetable growing in Kakuma camp in Kenya and Burundian resettled refugees growing crops in Seattle, Washington (Cavaglieri, 2005; Deena, 2011; United Nations Development Program, 2016). The dependency of immigrant communities on agriculture is widely reported and undisputed, but the common denominator in all these case stories is hardly explicit. The learning embedded in these practices, with empowering effects on social and economic adaptation.

*Village Saving and Loans Association.* The village saving and loans association (VSLA) accounts for 20% of the livelihood strategies adopted by participants. A tally of livelihood strategies of participants from the interviews and dissuasions placed VSLA in second position after agriculture. The study sampled eight CIG, but the FGD was held

with four CIGs. All the four CIG's had VSLA component. More than 90% of participants had benefited from micro-credit from their VSLA and more than 60% had taken credit, more than once, since becoming a member of the VSLA. All the members who took loans either invested it in household-level income-generation or in the procurement of social services like "school fees, feeding, medical bills and other basic needs." Related literature shows that micro-financing is considered "an oxygen infusion" Kvernrod (2004) owing to the life-giving contribution to the rural community economy and other social enterprises.

Participants reported during a group discussion that the loan from VSLA was used to "do things" [meaning they used it to start-up income-generating activities]. The VSLA membership was also reported by participants to have created a "sense of belonging" and "social networks and support," besides "access to fast and affordable credit." The CIG and VSLA provide training opportunities that "expand thinking" and helped participants "see opportunities and act on them." The VSLA training covers basic literacy and numeracy on: "calculating profit and losses, calculating and tracking share values, filling in the passbooks, enterprise selection, and principles of financial management, bookkeeping, and investment feasibility assessment."

Micro-financing has gained a lot of popularity amongst poor communities in Uganda and in Africa. It is a strategy for financial inclusion for women (Innovations for Poverty Action, 2018) and other vulnerable persons like refugees. VSLAs led to "increased savings and credit access, improved microenterprise outcomes, and increased women's empowerment" (Innovations for Poverty Action, 2018). In the case of Kyaka II, it helps contributors' pool resources to meet livelihood goals more easily. Besides economic benefits, participant noted that VSLA also "improved my (our) self-esteem" and "earned [women] respect from their spouse and family." These empowering outcomes of VSLA's are related to both their economic empowerment, in terms of financial benefits to members and the functional adult literacy components.

The potential for self-transformation within the Transformative theory of adult education advocates for the grounding of "content and processes of learning concretely within the lives and social-cultural context in which those lives are embedded" (Dirkx, 1998), thus the Self-Transformation and Transformative learning for members of the CIGs are logically grounded in their livelihood strategies which define their daily lives and struggles. The need for financial literacy to participate in VSLA activities provides good and meaningful learning ground with far reaching impact on livelihood adaptation.

### *Skillsets Acquired and Their Significance to Livelihood Adaptation*

Adult learning and education is a tool for social-economic transformation. It provides the opportunity for learners to develop the ability to analyse their situations, question those situations, and "take action on the social, political, cultural, and economic contexts, which influence and shape their lives" (Bork, 1991; Dirkx, 1998). Transformative

learning involves critical reflection on the existing frames of reference, which could be the past and current experiences and/or ways of living, allowing learners to examine their assumptions and beliefs to determine their cogency, in light of the new evidence. Experiences of forced displacement, refugee status, and the refugee policy regulatory environment present disorienting dilemmas to off-set critical reflection processes and meaningful learning, as reported below:

[ . . . ] I go to the garden sometimes. I am a medical doctor trained from Congo but here in Uganda, they can't allow me to practice. (Israel)

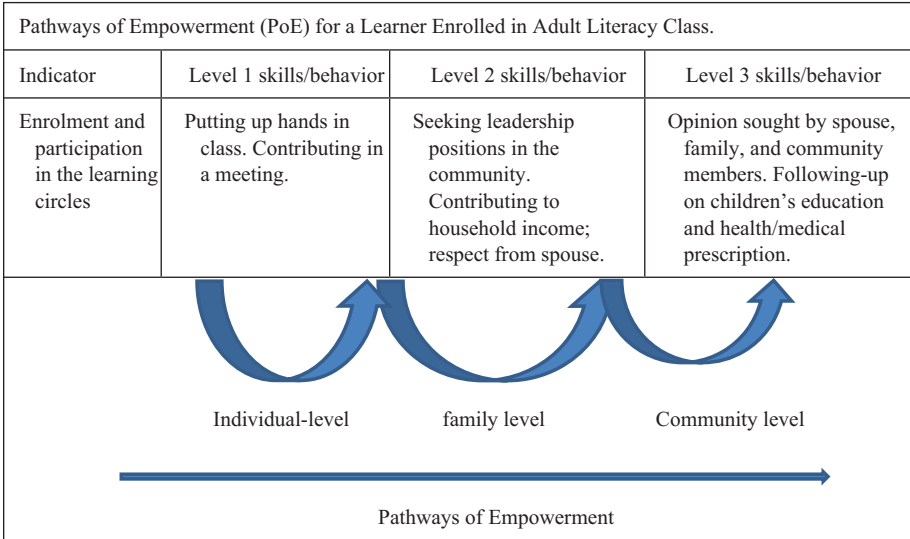
Career dilemmas like the one above, experienced by refugees and indeed immigrant communities offset the need for learning new, more relevant skillsets to adapt. Education and relevant skillsets were found to “contribute to refugee livelihood success” (Barbelet & Wake, 2017). The participants reported learning various new skills and or falling back on previously acquired sets of skills to adapt. The range of skills mentioned through the individual interview results and FGD include the following: modern farming methods such as “backyard vegetable growing, bottle irrigation, use of organic pesticides, crop spacing techniques, post-harvest handling and storage, and marketing of agriculture produce.” Other skills set in business and financial literacy include “business records keeping, basic numeracy to compute share values, profits and loss and enterprise selection among others.”

Enterprise selection was closely linked to social–economic and market opportunities, as expected. It was strategic to maximise available livelihood resources and opportunities which reduce vulnerability. My view is that the capability to match one’s environment, circumstances, and resources to needs [solve social problems] while earning a living, reflects a complex web of learning, involving understanding the situation, reflecting on it, identifying the problems and working out appropriate solutions. According to Dirkx (1998), “knowledge arises from within the learners’ social acts of trying to make sense of the novel experience in their everyday lives.” Such informal and nonformal learning that refugees demonstrate through their livelihood struggles is important for their adaptation and achievement of livelihood goals.

Although Functional Adult Literacy (FAL) and English For Adult (EFA) learning programs did not feature highly compared with agriculture, VSLA, and Business, are the starting points for all adult education programs, as per the secondary data generated. Most of the study participants, who took the business course, first enrolled for the FAL program, and progressed to EFA, before starting the business course. The FAL program is therefore a foundational course for adults in need of basic literacy skills. The FAL and English learning programs present both direct and indirect benefits to the individual, family, and community. The benefits highlighted above are direct benefits. Indirect benefits being the empowering processes these opportunities present.

Secondary data collected by reviewing the Pathway of Empowerment tools for monitoring and evaluation of the adult education program activities showed progression in

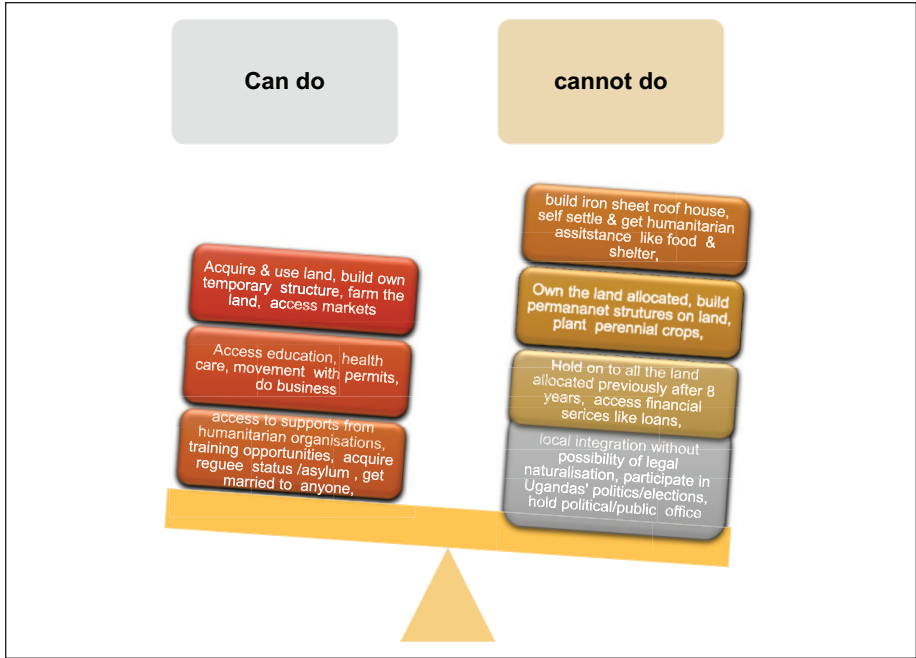
empowerment levels between newly enrolled adult literacy learners and advanced level learners. The tool assesses empowerment levels of a learner at entry, midway the adult literacy program, and at exit level, when the learner graduates after 11 months. The tool which is used quarterly, measures levels of empowerment using specific indicators through the learning cycle, for a selected learner. The Pathway of Empowerment tool this study considered identified indicators for Level 1 to Level 3.



The indicator was attributed to participation in the adult literacy program and important measures of the levels of empowerment on the learner at the individual, family, and community levels were identified and plotted. The example of skills/behavior at each level was developed by the learners and facilitators collaboratively, as a standard to measure progression. An analysis of this finding indicates deeper and more complex benefits of learning at level three, beyond the individual, suggesting that longer engagement in literacy programs widens the horizon of functionality and potential for the larger community transformation. The finding is consistent with the 2002 report on the benefits of literacy programs in Uganda and other sub-Saharan countries (Oxenham et al., 2002). There were significant, direct, and remote connections between adult education, learner empowerment, and self-reliance.

**Factors Affecting Livelihood Actions in Gazetted Settlements**

**Refugee Policies.** The Ugandan refugee policy and regulations had strengths and weaknesses which influence livelihood adaptation and the possibility for self-reliance. Below is an interpretation of the 2006 Refugee Act and the 2010 Refugee Regulations by refugees in Kyaka II:



The relationship between what refugees “can do” and what they “cannot do” as expressed by participants in the figure above demonstrates a paradoxical relationship between what the policy and regulations promises and what it delivers. Although the policy allows local integrations and use of allocated land for settlement and livelihood generation, there are internal contradictions reported by participants which perpetuate temporal settlement mind-sets.

[ . . . ] We are not permitted to build permanent structures [ . . . ]

[ . . . ] We are not allowed to plant long-term crops [plantations].

[ . . . ] Sometimes part of the allocated land is withdrawn without notice and or/ its size reduced without negotiation [ . . . ]

[ . . . ] After 8 years, the supply of food ration is withdrawn [ . . . ]

The policy limitations highlighted in the above verbatim reports by participants bring forth the livelihood adaptation dilemmas refugees contend with. The above verbatim report of participants suggests internal contradictions at the policy implementation level in Uganda. This finding is consistent with reports of refugee policy studies elsewhere.

The reviewed literature suggests a positive correlation between less restrictive policies and refugee livelihoods. The World Bank report (World Bank Group, 2019), reported livelihood adaptation complications for refugees in Kakuma and Dadaab camps in Kenya. Kenya's refugee policy is considered restrictive; limiting refugees to camps and informal sectors. In contrast, Liberian refugees in Ghana were reported to have better livelihood options and improved chances of becoming self-reliant due to open access to employment, public education, and legal local integration (Dick, 2002).

*The Durable Solutions: Temporariness of Settlement Conditions.* While examining the biographical information of participants, the researcher found a correlation between the age of participants, their preferred durable solutions and livelihood adaptation. From the data, older participants locally integrated for longer periods, preferred local integration and or repatriation if their home countries attained peace. These had more successful and stable livelihood projects. In contrast, younger participants, locally integrated (including those born in Uganda) preferred resettlement to a third safe country. These categories had less stable; less enterprising livelihood projects, an indication of a direct positive relationship between age, type of residency, and durable solution options people have.

According to Barbelet and Wake (2017), "the semi-legal nature of refugee livelihoods" and settlements create feelings of temporariness, which is paradoxical to efforts toward sustainable livelihoods and self-reliance. This perspective is shared by Lombo (2012, p. 16), who believes that "People and places have a deep and lasting natural bond which defines their feelings and ways of living." This perspective speaks of the "emotional-spiritual dimensions of learning" (Boyd, cited in Dirx, 1998) which Dirx refers to as "Self-Knowledge"; a process of bringing the "unconscious part of self to the conscious, mediated through symbols or images."

Symbols of "social and emotional wellbeing" could be the temporariness of settlements, semilegal livelihoods and shack-housing which represent poor well-being and or identity and belonging issues. Emotional-spiritual dimensions of transformative learning addresses issues of identity and belonging, thus the goal of transformative learning is to identify the symbols and to establish an intrapersonal dialogue with them (Dirx, 1998).

## Conclusions

Learning is a positive process in livelihood development. However, nonformal and basic literacy education was more important for functionality including livelihood adaptation and subsistence compared to tertiary/University education. Nonformal adult and basic education provided immediate, relevant sets of skills for adaptation. Adult learning circles; VSLA, literacy classes, and other social cooperatives play a dual purpose. They are social and economic networks for socialization, counseling, and livelihood development.

Lastly, refugee livelihood choices and strategies intimately reflect the socio-economic context and living conditions of a community. This context also determines

the skillset which becomes relevant for livelihood adaptation. Livelihood adaptation by refugees is a complex web of learning and critical reflection processes, past and current experiences, dilemmas, and aspirations.

### **Recommendations**

- The participation of women in household livelihood development and leadership was significant in this study, in a context where household livelihood is historically and culturally a man's role. This study did not look into the factors for the significant participation of women in household livelihood leadership and the correlation with participation in adult basic education. A study of refugee women's participation in livelihood leadership and its relationship to their participation in adult education would provide a more comprehensive understanding of refugee livelihood adaptation and sustainability.
- This study focused on examining factors affecting refugee livelihood adaptation and potential for self-reliance, the factors were limited to refugee policies and the role of adult education programs. There was sufficient evidence in the study findings to suggest that psychological factors relating to emotions, sense of belonging, and identity of refugees affect their livelihood adaptation. A further study of this relationship for Kyaka II refugees would be significant.

### ***The Implication for Theory and Practice***

Livelihood choices and strategies reflect the social–economic context and living conditions of a community. A successful and meaningful adult learning and education program shall reflect the learning and social–economic context of the learners.

The Ugandan refugee policy progressiveness is incomplete without addressing questions of belonging and identity for refugees locally integrated without the possibility of naturalization, especially for those looking forward to local integration. Policies governing human interactions and their implementation processes and procedures do not happen in a vacuum. There are physical and psychological dimensions to human well-being which successful and progressive policies ought to address.

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## Notes

1. A protracted refugee situation is one in which 25,000 or more refugees from the same nationality have been in exile for 5 or more years in a given asylum country (Ruaudel & Morrison-Metois, 2017).
2. This article is based on an empirical study of factors influencing livelihood adaptability and sustainability of refugees in Kyaka II settlement. The study focused on the role of adult learning and education in facilitating refugees to navigate their livelihood reconstruction.
3. CIGs are community livelihood groups of both refugees and host community members engaged in thematic livelihood practices like agriculture, apiary, poultry, fish farming, tree nursery, bakery, briquette making, and so on, to earn an income. Tailored thematic adult learning programs are organized for learning groups. It is aimed at improving knowledge and skills in the selected enterprise.

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