

**SOCIAL CHANGE INITIATIVE IN NAKIVALE REFUGEE SETTLEMENT AREA. PEACEFUL COEXISTENCE AMONG REFUGEES AND HOST COMMUNITY**

**LOCATION:** NAKIVALE REFUGEE SETTLEMENT, ISINGIRO, UGANDA.

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**LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS**

OPM Office of Prime Minister

UNHCR United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

UNICEF United Nations Children's Fund

RWC Refugee Welfare Council

DRC Democratic Republic of Congo

LC Local Council

NGOs Non-Governmental Organization

# ABSTRACT

**Introduction:** Uganda continues to be one of Africa’s largest refugees hosting country with over 1.5 million refugees from South Sudan, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Somalia, Rwanda, Burundi and other countries. About 94 percent of refugees live in settlements alongside host communities. The arrival of refugees in an area creates conflicts and disagreements between the refugees and the host communities. If unattended to, this can spark tensions and physical confrontations between the two parties with social, cultural and economic impacts.

**Objectives:** This study aimed to find out causes of tensions and conflicts between refugees and host community in Nakivale Refugee settlement camp and how they can be mitigated to foster peaceful co-existence.

**Methods:** The research adopted a mixed-method design consisting of a representative survey with 200 refugee respondents from the camp; 51 in-depth interviews with persons living in the villages of Rubondo, Juru, Basecamp, Kashoijwa, Mugenyi and 07 meetings with Key stakeholders. Awareness campaigns on the causes and solutions to refugee-host conflicts were conducted for all study participants and other community members. These were delivered through community events such as burials, parties, church services and sports events. The community leaders were also informed of the key findings and were educated on the interventions to ensure sustainability of peace initiatives.

**Results:** From the interviews conducted, the major causes of conflicts between host and refugee communities as reported by participants were; competition for resources, cultural and social differences, economic tensons and social concerns. Suggestions to mitigate these conflicts are rooted in the social change initiative and include equitable access to resources for both communities, economic empowerment initiatives, cultural exchange programs and community dialogues, strengthening of security measures and dispelling myths about crime associated with refugees.

**Concussions:** The social change initiative through its unfreeze, change and refreeze stages is a powerful model for ensuring peaceful coexistence refugee settlement areas.

# CHAPTER ONE

## 1.0 Introduction

According to the UNHCR (2023) Global Trends Report, the global refugee population reached 36.4 million at mid-2023, an increase of 3 per cent (+1.1 million) from the end of 2022, third world countries host over eighty percent (80%) of the total world refugee population an increment of ten percent (10%) compared to a decade ago. Uganda continues to be one of Africa’s largest refugees hosting country with over 1.5 million refugees from South Sudan, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Somalia, Rwanda, Burundi and other countries, located across thirteen districts. About 94 percent of refugees live in settlements alongside host communities. Uganda has long been a global leader in its approach to peaceful co-existence and local settlement of refugees with the host communities.

Nakivale is one of the host refugee settlements with over 150,000 refugees who come from a wide range of backgrounds, and have passed through number of traumatic events. The arrival of refugees in an area creates conflicts and disagreements between the refugees and the host communities. The nature of conflicts can be categorized into two ways: Refugee Versus Host community and Refugees Versus Refugees. If unattended to, this can spark tensions and physical confrontations between the two parties. It is not uncommon to find tensions building between host and refugee communities in instances where the former feel neglected in provision of social services such as safe water, improved sanitation, and Livelihood programs with such conflicts, there is always tension between refugees and the host community and peace in local communities is jeopardized.

Despite the work done by the Uganda police to ensure peace in these communities, and interventions sensitizing communities about peace, sustainable peace has not been attained; and so, therefore, peaceful co-existence between refugees and the host community remains unattained. For this, Co-Exist Initiative will work with local Co-Existence Ambassadors to educate refugee and host communities about peace and promote peaceful co-existence between refugees and the host communities. The Ambassadors will be selected from within the refugee and host communities and these will be trained to disseminate peace messages, participate in local community conflict resolution activities and document community peace good practices with in the refugee settlement.

**1.1 Operational Context / Background**

Nakivale refugee settlement was established in 1958 and officially recognized as a refugee settlement in 1960 through the Uganda Gazette General Notice No. 19. Currently the majority of refugees in the settlement (49.8%) are Congolese. The settlement is divided into 79 villages with an average of 800 to 1,000 people per village.

There is also an estimated population of 35,000 nationals surrounding the Refugee Settlement who directly benefit from water, education, health and nutrition programmes in the settlement. UNHCR monitors the implementation of sub projects in all protection, community services, education, health, nutrition, WASH, livelihoods, and environmental activities and interfaces with operational partners involved in providing food, adult education and tracing and reunification.

**1.2 Problem Statement**

Peaceful co-existence among the refugees and local citizens of Nakivale Refugee Settlement is very important for the development of refugees and citizens, (UNICEF, 2015, UNCHR 2014). However, the arrival and occupation of refugees in an area ushers in conflicts as the lifestyle and livelihoods of the host community can never be the same again. The consequent influences of this can never be ignored as it is usually significant and of great magnitude, that it often defines the relationship between the local community and the refugees. The refugees are assumed by the host community that they are often treated with lots of care and special goods and services are well allocated to them whilst neglecting the locals who face similar or even more awful situations. This has caused several conflicts such as competition, deep-seated cultural values, land issues, ethnic rivalry, and idleness among the refugees. Despite the many studies by the UNHCR, OPM and other partners in the last few years have focused on the causes and Notably, little has been achieved on factors leading to the persistent conflicts between the nationals and refugees in Uganda and particularly Nakivale Refugee settlement. Based on this background Co-exist Initiative will aim at refugees' adaptability on peaceful coexistence with the local citizens in Nakivale Refugee settlement camp in Uganda.

**1.3** **Goal and Objectives**

The main goal of this proposal is to find out causes of tensions and conflicts between refugees and host community in Nakivale Refugee settlement camp and how they can be mitigated to foster peaceful co-existence.

## 1.3 Peaceful coexistence challenges among refugees and host communities and their mitigation strategies.

The challenges to peaceful coexistence between refugees and host communities can be complex and multifaceted. These normally arise due to resource competition, cultural differences, social integration issues, and security concerns. Host communities may feel that refugees are receiving too much aid, while they themselves face limited resources and may view refugees as outsiders, making cultural and religious integration more difficult. Also, the competition for jobs between hosts and refugees may lead to tensions as refugees might be willing to accept lower wages, creating a perception that they are driving wages down or taking jobs from locals. Other challenges faced by these communities that can escalate tensions include local infrastructure and public services such as schools, hospitals and security tensions due to the influx of refugees. These and other challenges can strain relationships between refugees and host communities, leading to conflicts.

The measures for mitigating the causes of conflict between refugees and host communities include engagement talks between local community leaders, government officials and partners so as to use local leaders as connectors of peace to build relationships between the host communities and refugees. There should be more capacity building for RWCs and local committees to hold local courts for matters between hosts and refugees in terms of alternative dispute mechanisms and legal. However, there is also a need for awareness campaigns to ensure that the local courts avoid adjudicating beyond their jurisdiction. Also, the implementing partners should use the “Do No Harm” conflict-sensitive approach, which focuses on reducing the negative effects of aid on war and conflict so as to minimize the drivers of conflict and focus on connectors of peace.

# CHAPTER TWO

## 2.1 Literature Review

Conflicts within refugee settlements and host communities are still a big issue over the recent past years. Majorly, programming for conflict management has emphasized short term solutions to address long term needs. This is evidenced by most partners’ activities that have projects ranging from 3 years or even less without clear exit strategies. Secondly the vulnerabilities have not changed and finally critical issues such as land conflicts do not have many players other than OPM. Jacobsen (2002:6) supported the argument by Crisp (2003) that when refugees arrived in new communities there were likely risks of security problems of different nature both between refugees and with the host community. Such conflicts varied over a broad spectrum including local crime and violence, clashes between refugees and the local community, organized crime, drug smuggling, human trafficking amongst others (Jacobsen 2002:8-9).

**Drivers of conflicts hindering the peaceful coexistence of refugees and host communities.**

The Source of these conflicts cannot be evaluated in an isolated vacuum. Usually they are combinations of several impacts that create situations of conflicts between host populations and settled refugees as discussed below;

**The Limited Resources factors** in this study include important factors such as land, water, forest and forest. The influx of refugees in larger numbers increases the populace of a given area and this can generate problems to the host community in terms of placing more pressure on already scarce resources. In addition, due to scarcity of resources in areas that refugees placed to live, the refugees and the host communities often are in conflicts as they continue to exert pressure on those resources and which in the long run may end up draining them. These limited resources are found to be the major source of tensions and conflicts with high magnitude within and outside Nakivale refugee camp.

**Social welfare factors** are things such as traditional communal movement that approves plea in social relationships and this study focused on health, education, sports and transport facilities. The social services provision to the refugee in Nakivale camp has not been an easy task since continuous influx of refugees is still witnessed and this escalates competition for the limited resources. The Host community does not have these facilities and are forced to go and share with the refugees which in most cases results to tension and conflicts. The inequities existing between refugees and host community normally leads to the increase of social tensions (Betts, 2009).

Unequal distribution of social services to refugees and host communities: The host communities complain that social service delivery by NGOs and OPM is preferential, unequal and unfair, whereby refugees are given better services and handouts living out host communities.

**Socio-cultural factors** is the effect of refugees on the host community that is brought as result of refugees‟ presence in a host country. The refugees come with their culture, traditions and believe which when mixed with the host community one it may cause a conflict. Sanjugta (2002) said that many hosting communities often face forms of socio-cultural change, including an unclear sense of identity and the amplified discernibility of ethnic, religious, racial, linguistic or ideological conflicts between refugees and host community.

## 2.2 Theoretical underpinnings

The social change initiative for peaceful coexistence among refugees and host community can be explained by 5 theoretical models including social identity theory, conflict theory, human needs theory and theory of acculturation.

**Social Identity Theory (SIT):** This theory explains how individuals categorize themselves and others into social groups, leading to in-group (host communities) and out-group (refugees) distinctions. Individuals tend to favor their in-group and may view out-groups with suspicion or hostility, which can lead to prejudice and discrimination. In refugee-host relations, host communities may develop a sense of superiority or perceive refugees as a threat to their identity, exacerbating tensions and conflicts.

**Conflict theory:** As explained by Karl Marx, conflict theory asserts that social and economic inequalities lead to tension and competition between groups, often resulting in conflict. Refugees and host communities may compete over limited resources such as jobs, land, and public services, leading to social conflict. Thus addressing these inequalities and ensuring equitable resource distribution can be used to mitigate these tensions.

**Human needs theory: A**ccording to this theory, the host-refuge conflict arises when fundamental human needs (e.g., security, identity, recognition, and participation) are unmet for either communities. Addressing the psychological and social needs of both groups through policies that ensure security, inclusion, and recognition can help mitigate these conflicts.

**Theory of acculturation:** Developed by John Berry, acculturation theory examines how individuals and groups adjust when they come into contact with different cultures. Acculturation strategies such as assimilation, integration, separation, or marginalization can be used to create peaceful coexistence of refuges and host communities. However, only those that favor integration have to be promoted and ignore those that foster division.

## 2.3 Change theory and how it was applied

Change theory is a framework for understanding and managing transitions within organizations, communities, or systems, focusing on how and why change happens and how it can be facilitated. There are several models within change theory, but one prominent approach is Kurt Lewin’s Change Management Model, which consists of three stages: Unfreeze, Change and Refreeze. The unfreeze stage is a preparation stage where old behaviors, processes, or norms are questioned, and the necessity for change is recognized. At this stage, the practices and behaviors of both communities were questioned through open dialogue, and those that acted as the cause of conflicts, communities were encouraged to discard them. At the change (transition stage), communities were supported to shit to new practices, systems, or ways that don’t escalate tensions. These changes were then solidified and integrated into the community’s culture in a refreezing stage.

## 2.4 Research methodology

The research adopted a mixed-method design consisting of a representative survey with 200 refugee respondents from the camp; 51 interviews with persons living in the villages of Rubondo, Juru, Basecamp, Kashojwa, Mugenyi and 07 meetings with Key stakeholders.

**Target population and data collection**

The study targeted local residents and the refugees (youths) living inside Nakivale refugee settlement**.** The refugee population in Nakivale refugee settlement is estimated to be over 150,000 both registered refugees and asylum-seekers (UNHCR, 2022). Data was collected through direct communication with the host community and the refugees through conducting interviews, focus groups, and observations. In this study collecting secondary information or data was essential especially in understanding what were the current measures put to reduce the tensions and conflicts around the camp. The sources of the secondary data were published journals, textbooks, thesis/dissertations, UNHCR websites, government of Uganda data base, and other online publications.

In-depth interviews were also conducted using a small number of respondents that could provide information concerning a specific idea, or situation. A total of 20 IDIs were conducted.

Also, focus group approach which employs semi-structured group interview were used in this study. The researcher conducted five focus groups discussions and out of the five focus groups, four of these were held with participants from surrounding host community villages (Rubondo, Juru, Kashoijwa, Mugenyi and surrounding villages), and one with refugees from Base camp.

Awareness campaigns on the causes and solutions to refugee-host conflicts were conduced for all study participants and other community members. These were delivered through community events such as burials, parties, church services and sports events. The community leaders were also informed of the key findings and were educated on the interventions to ensure sustainability of peace initiatives.

**Initiative team**: The team consisted of 01 team leader (Kaawa Benard),01 mobilizer,01 photographer and 5 research assistants (data enumerators).

**Project summary**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Category** | **Guidance to response** | **Response** |
| **Title of SCI** | Social Change Initiative | Peaceful Coexistence in Nakivale refugee settlement |
| **Objective of the SCI** | Project expected result | To find out causes of tensions and conflicts between refugees and host community.  To develop strategies for peaceful coexistence in the refugee settlement |
| **Location** | Country, District, state, city. | Uganda, Isingiro, Nakivale Refugee Settlement |
| **Urban/Peri-rban/Rural** | Select one option | Rural |
| **Target Population group** | Youths/Children/Women/PWDs/Refugees/IDPs/Elderly | Youths (Refugees/Host Communities) |
| **Direct Beneficiary** | Specify by number, gender, and age ranges | 100 Youths, 40 female and 60 male aged 18-34 |
| **Implementation Method** | Tools or techniques used: mediation, conflict analysis, awareness campaign, etc.) | Awareness campaign, Training and Sports activities |
| **Positive Peace Pillar Alignment** | Primary and secondary PP pillars overlap | Good relationship with Neighbors (refugees and host community) |
| **Rotary International Area of Focus Alignment** | Primary RI Area of Focus overlap | Promoting Peace |
| **Results/Impact’s sustainability** | How/if the project expected to sustain the achieved results | The initiative was undertaken in partnership with Refugee and host community leaders and partners who will sustain it through utilization of initiatives recommended to be good to sustain peaceful coexistence |

**Budget**

Total cost;1003.2 USD

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Item\*** | **Amount (USD)** | **Description** |
| **Travel/transportation** |  |  |
| Airfare | N/A | N/A |
| Ground transportation | 135 | Kampala to and from Nakivale  30 litres of petrol fuel at 45 dollars  Movements in the settlement, Basecamp, Rubondo and Juru 10 litres of petrol fuel at 15 dollars. The Activity will be done in three phases therefore,  45x3=135 dollars |
| Accommodations | 202.7 | 15 days throughout the social change initiative |
| Other. Meals | - | To cater for my self |
| **Direct project costs** |  |  |
| Materials/supplies | N/A | N/A |
| Stationary | 498.1 | 100 note books @ 250000, 2 boxes of pens 50000, 10 Flip charts 150000, 3 Boxes of Markers 45000. |
| Equipment | 81 | Hiring Projector for training for three days |
| Other Refreshments for Trainings | 45.9 | 05 crates @ 96000, 100 chapattis @ 50000 |
| **Other expenses** | 40.5 | Hiring Three Venues @150000 |
| 100 Seats | - | To engage partners top support me |
| Awards for football competitions | - | Given that I am a football fan, I will personally meet the costs |
|  |  |  |
| **Total (USD)** | 1003.2 |  |

# CHAPTER THREE

3.1 Interventions and activities

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Activity/Intervention carried out** | **Target/Objective** | **Baseline a reference point** | **Indicators to assess progress and success** | **Means of Verification** |
| Meeting with Government, UN & other stakeholders( Partners, Local council and Refugee welfare council) | To identify communities in conflict, causes & steps taken to address the situation | Conflicts in the settlement brought to Police | Number of stakeholders met | Meeting with Government, UN & other stakeholders( Partners, Local council and Refugee welfare council) |
| Selection of peace Ambassadors from Refugees and Host community in Base camp, Rubondo and Juru | To place people at the center of this initiative | Volunteers on ground to support peaceful coexistence activities | Number of Ambassadors selected to participate in the initiative | Meeting Notes |
| Training of peace Ambassadors | To draw plans of community engagements & dispute resolution of conflict parties | Partner strategies for peaceful coexistence | Strategies developed to mobilize communities to participate in the initiative | Meeting Notes |
| Organize a Football game between refugees & host communities | To create space of engagement between refugees & hosts | Peaceful Coexistence activities | Level of participation of mobilized communities | Report|Photos |
| Documentation | To share findings & recommendations from community engagements | Reports from Partners | Number of findings and recommendations for peaceful existence made and adopted by partners | Report|Photos |
| Dissemination of findings & Recommendation Reports | To share best practices measures to put in place for peaceful existence in the settlement | Partner reports on conflicts in the settlement | Social Change Initiative Report | Report Attendance lists Photos |

## 3.2 Key findings

From the quantitative interviews conducted, the major causes of conflicts between host and refugee communities as identified by participants were; competition for resources, cultural and social differences, economic tensons and social concerns.

**Figure 1: Common causes of conflicts between host and refugee communities**

**Solutions to the above problems**

Following engagement with community members and stake holders, the following solutions were fronted to ensure sustainability peace promoting interventions between host and refugee communities.

* Promotion of equitable access to resources and ensuring that both refugees and host communities benefit from aid and services.
* Economic empowerment initiatives, such as vocational training and business development for both communities, to ease economic tensions.
* Cultural exchange programs and community dialogues to foster mutual understanding and reduce cultural and social differences.
* Strengthening of security measures and dispelling myths about crime associated with refugees.
* Sustainable resource management programs and environmental education. Improving communication through information campaigns that provide accurate, transparent data about refugees’ situations and contributions so as to counter misinformation and reduce misunderstandings.

# CHAPTER FOUR

## 4.1 General Conclusion

It can be noted that conflicts between refugees and host communities are a common occurrence in Nakivale refugee settlement area mainly due to competition for resources, cultural and social differences, economic tensons and social concerns between hosts and the refugees. The social change initiative is a powerful model for ensuring peaceful coexistence in this area and other refugee settlement areas guided by its unfreeze, change and refreeze stages.

## 4.2 Recommendations / implications for policy

1. Authorities should ensure equitable distribution of resources such as water, healthcare, education, and housing to ensure that both refugees and host communities have fair access.
2. Governments and humanitarian agencies should implement inclusive economic development programs that target both refugees and host communities. This can include vocational training, small business support, and agricultural initiatives that benefit all parties.
3. Cultural exchange programs such as joint cultural events and language learning programs ot promote interaction and understanding between host communities and refugees should be regularly conducted to bridge cultural and social gaps.
4. Local governments should establish conflict resolution committees that include both refugees and host community members to address any social concerns, such as security and crime perceptions.
5. Policies should encourage dissemination of accurate information about refugees, their rights, and contributions to counteract myths and stereotypes in host communities.

## 4.3 Sustainability plan:

To ensure sustainability of this initiative;

1. We trained some community members, both refugees and hosts and equipped them with knowledge and skills of how to apply the social change initiative to ensure peaceful co-existence of the two communities.
2. We identified and empowered local leaders to take charge of this initiative and continue to drive it going forward.
3. We established the governance structures by setting up a governing committee to oversee any conflicts that may arise in future and engage key stake holders.
4. Also, this initiative was integrated into existing local leadership structures to ensure long-term institutional support.

# APPENDICES

## Pictorials

## Clearances/ Permission letters

## Participant testimonies

## Any other relevant document