

**ENVIROMENTAL IMPLICATIONS OF REFUGEE INFLUX ON HOST
COMMUNITIES IN UGANDA: A CASE OF BIDIBIDI REFUGEE SETTLEMENT
YUMBE DISTRICT**

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DECLARATION

I, NALUBANGA PHIONA affirm that this is my authentic creation and it has not been previously presented to any educational institution for any academic recognition.

Signature  Date ¹⁶¹ 13/09/2024

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APPROVAL

This dissertation, titled “Environmental Implication of Refugee Influx On HOST Communities in Uganda; A Case of Bidibidi Refugees Settlement, Yumbe District has been completed under the guidance and is now ready for submission.



Sign.....

Date^{12/09/2024}

AMANIYO MERCY

SUPERVISOR

DEDICATION

This report is dedicated to my mother for their unwavering patience, substantial contribution, and unwavering support they offered to me during my academic journey. I owe my success to their unwavering affection and assistance.

May the omnipotent Father in heaven perpetually bestow plentiful blessings upon them!

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I pray that I should be most grateful to Almighty God, who heard my prayers and gave me strength, energy, power, and ability to accomplish this work successfully. Jeremiah 33:3 gave me the strength during trials and ups-and-downs in my studies. This word from the Lord says, "Call to Me and I will respond, and I will reveal to you remarkable and incomprehensible knowledge that you are unaware of."

I would not forget to thank my mother, Mrs. NABWIRE JENIFER, my sisters, NAKASANGO MARIAM and NAMUWAYA SANDRA, for the tremendous support, love, care, and words of encouragement throughout the course. Thank you always in Jesus' name.

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"To God be the Glory.

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ABSTRACT

The study assessed the influence of refugees on the natural environment of the host communities using the Bidibidi Refugee Settlement in Yumbe District, Uganda. In fact, since the inception of the refugees in 2017, there have been rapid land use changes and increased utilization of natural resources in Bidibidi because of the large number of refugees entering the area. This has resulted in massive clearing for settlement and farmland, increased deforestation for energy sources, among others, which have become great contributors to climate change. It aimed to understand the environmental challenges, including congestion, sanitation, and non-sustainable living practices that such settlements impose on the environment, with implications for public health and ecosystem sustainability. A desk review from various sources of literature was done, including UNHCR reports, peer-reviewed articles, and regional studies. From these, the imperatives for resource management strategies were identified as dire. The results indicated that the refugee crisis was a global issue, but Africa shared a big proportion of the burden. As a result, countries such as Uganda, Kenya, and Ethiopia faced extreme environmental strains from these great increases in refugee populations. This study has contributed to the academic knowledge of environmental impacts associated with refugee settlements and provided associated policy recommendations for mitigating such impacts. It underlined the need for harmonization of humanitarian needs with environmental sustainability as a contribution toward improvement in the livelihoods of both refugees and their host communities.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.0 Introduction

This study will assess the impact of Environmental Implications of Refugee Influx to Host Communities; A Case Study of Bidibidi Refugee Settlement, Yumbe District. This chapter shall outline the background of the study, statement of problem, purpose of the study, research objectives, questions the significance, justification, scope of the study, conceptual framework.

1.1 Background of the Study

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees has defined a refugee as an individual who had been forced to move away from his home and sought refuge in places other than his home UNHCR/IUCN, 2005. In the term were also included displaced persons whether due to war, fear of persecution, or forced migrations within their home countries Hyndman & Nylund, 1998. Forced displacement worldwide as a result of persecution, conflict, violence, or human rights violations stood at 68.5 million people by the end of 2017-compared to an increase of roughly 2.9 million in the preceding year-25 million refugees, 40 million internally displaced people, and 3.1 million asylum seekers. For example, by the end of 2019, the number of displaced persons had reached 79.5 million levels, (Maystadt et al., 2020; UNHCR, 2020). This being the case, the situation prompted the refugee crisis, as various countries had witnessed unrest which distanced people from their homelands.

In Africa, over 99 percent of refugees were from South Sudan, Burundi, DRC, Somalia, Eritrea, and Sudan. These refugees were hosted in various camps marked by limited services and prospects and remained highly dependent on humanitarian aid. By 2013 alone, approximately 1 million men, women, and children had fled their homes in desperation to seek refuge in mosques and churches, and in neighboring countries, primarily Cameroon, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Chad, and the Republic of the Congo.

As of 2017, Ethiopia was hosting 883,546 refugees with a major share from neighbouring countries and became the second largest refugee-hosting country in Africa. Othow et al., 2017; Gebre & Andualem, 2018; UNHCR, 2019. Kenya also hosted a sizeable indigenous Somali Kenyan population, the majority of whom were concentrated in the North Eastern region. Lindley, 2007. Located in the Horn of Africa, Somalia had a population of around 9 million people, the overwhelming majority of whom were ethnic Somalis. UN Statistics Division, 2010 Since only years

after it gained independence, the country had been wracked by conflict and disorder. Since the fall of President Siad Barre in 1991 and subsequent lawlessness, Somalis have relocated very rapidly from within Somalia and settled in various conducive places within close proximity to East Africa. Kenya was the largest recipient of Somali refugees in Africa, with an influx of thousands more each month for roughly the last twenty years (Meyer et al., 2019). Officially, refugees were confined to designated camps; however, it was common for Somalis to migrate into Nairobi. The Government of Kenya had largely taken a passive approach to refugee assistance, placing the burden on intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations. Most significantly, the UNHCR had taken the lead in mitigating the problems posed by refugees in Kenya.

It has also received over a million refugees within the past two years, therefore making the country the third-largest refugee-hosting country after Turkey and Pakistan. According to Ahimbisibwe, 2019; Komaketch et al., 2019; Schiltz et al., 2019, a count estimated that there were approximately

1.4 million refugees by 2020, many of whom originated from South Sudan, Burundi, and the DRC. Increased wars, violence, and persecution in the Great Lakes region and the Horn of Africa had seen Uganda emerge as the largest asylum country in the region and among the largest globally. Renewed conflict, which began in 2016 in South Sudan, had then resulted in an influx of refugees that nearly doubled the population in all receiving centers in Northern Uganda. It was for this reason that the West Nile sub-region bordering South Sudan, however, received the greatest number of refugees and asylum seekers from Sudan, at an estimated 717,779 people (Mogga, 2017; UNHCR, 2019). This was expected to get worse, considering the persistent political tension and insecurity coupled with social instability in South Sudan (Lyytinen, 2017).

Given Uganda's liberal refugee policy, more refugees are expected to troop into the country from various directions. Increased refugees resulted in increased humanitarian crises and irreversible environmental damage in case there were no appropriate mitigations provided. Increased influx of refugees meant more pressure on natural resources, particularly vegetation at the receiving centers, as vegetation became the most sought-after resource for building materials and fuelwood for daily cooking and heating needs. Also, expanses of land with vegetation cover were cleared for shelter unit establishments, support infrastructure, and farming. Other common activities carried out by refugees include the sale of non-wood forest products for income generation. This therefore, means that many land use and cover changes were witnessed upon refugee settlement.

This was further exacerbated by the fact that refugees were accorded access and use rights to land, but not ownership. In other areas, refugees simply started using land that was quite productive for their farming activities, while fuelwood selling became a quick option for livelihood. All these factors implied that irresponsible use of environmental resources was likely to emerge. With limited physical planning in refugee settlements due to general absence of technical expertise, as identified by UNHCR 2018, it suggests that there is a lack of due diligence for environmental protection in refugee settlements. The consequences of refugee settlement inevitably meant environmental degradation, reduced groundwater recharge and supply, food and nutrition security at variance, and increased conflict over resources between refugees and their host communities. This necessitated studies to establish the exact impact of refugee settlements in specific areas so that appropriate measures could be tailored for specific settlements.

1.2 Problem statement

Since 2017, there has been a great change in land use and natural resources with the establishment of the Bidi Bidi Refugee Settlement. Increased population was the major reason for this huge change when the refugees were settled there. A large number of refugees in the Bidi Bidi settlement contributes to extended land-clearing activities for settlements and gardens, increased energy usage, and more trees being cut down. These might be considered some of the most common contributing factors to climatic change. As such, there were changes in the environment that presented many challenges to the natural resource sustainability of the settlement and the wellbeing of both refugees and host communities.

The environmental challenges were overpopulation, inadequate sanitation facilities in some parts of the settlement, and relying on unsustainable practices. Such conditions could pose serious risks to public health and ecosystem sustainability. Because the settlement was in a rural context, these challenges impinged on refugees and host communities alike. The proximity of the settlement to active malaria transmission areas raises several concerns about disease prevalence and health risk in the population. Thus, it was established that there is a dire need for immediate interventions in unsustainable resources management practices and in the environmental consequences of the inflow of refugees so as to ensure the wellbeing of both refugees and host communities. Therefore, this may include strategies that mitigate environmental sustainability, access to essential services, and peaceful coexistence of refugees with host populations to reduce the

impact brought about by the massive influx of refugees both in Bidi Bidi and other settlements in Uganda.

This means that dealing with environmental challenges in host communities within Uganda, particularly in Bidi Bidi Refugee Settlement, will help bring about sustainable development, protection of natural resources, and increased resilience among refugees and host communities across the region.

1.3 Purpose of study

The purpose of this study will be to evaluate the specific environmental challenges resulting from the increasing number of refugees in Bidi Bidi settlement camp in Yumbe district.

1.4 Research Objectives

- i) To establish the Drivers of environmental degradation in Bidi Bidi camp and in the host communities in Yumbe District.
- i) To assess the overall perception of the host communities on refugee settlement in Bidi Bidi camp and in the host communities in Yumbe District ii) To find out the Implications of refugees on land Use in the host communities in Bidi Bidi camp and in the host communities in Yumbe District.

1.5 Research questions

- i) What are the Drivers of environmental degradation in Bidi Bidi camp and in the host communities in Yumbe District?
- ii) What is the overall perception of the host communities on refugee settlement in Bidi Bidi camp and in the host communities in Yumbe District? iii) What are the Implications of refugees on land Use in the host communities in Bidi Bidi camp and in the host communities in Yumbe District?

1.6 Significance of the study

The study availed empirical evidence and information that informed local, national, and international policymakers in devising and implementing sustainable strategies for managing refugee settlements. The findings were fundamental to the OPM in Uganda, the UNHCR, and other stakeholders involved in refugee management.

Understanding the environmental impacts of Bidi Bidi Refugee Settlement developed more sustainable resource management practices in areas such as water resources management, land

use and deforestation, and waste management practices important for long-term sustainability in both refugee and host communities.

This research contributed to the growing pool of academic writings on the environmental impact of refugee settlements. Such aspects were not very well documented in the past. It adds a case study that, in the future, can be drawn upon as and when discussions of this particular subject were aired academically. This gave rise to an overall better comprehension.

1.7 Justification of the Study

Effective policy-making and planning required valid data in sufficient detail. The study would give empirical evidence that would guide the local and national governments, together with international agencies, in making informed policies that balanced humanitarian needs with environmental sustainability.

Although various studies have indeed been carried out to assess the social and economic impacts of these refugee settlements, in-depth studies focused on their environmental impacts were relatively rare. It is, therefore, through this paper that an attempt has been made to bridge this knowledge gap with an all-rounded understanding of the implications of refugee settlements on local ecosystems.

The research targeted the global Sustainable Development Goals, especially SDG 13, or Climate Action; SDG 15, Life on Land; and SDG 6, Clean Water and Sanitation. By dealing with environmental issues related to refugee settlements, this research joined the larger pursuit of reaching those pressing goals.

1.7.1 Scope of Study

This scope of the study was divided into three parts, as shall be discussed below: time scope, content scope, and geographical scope.

1.7.2 Content Scope

This study assessed the environmental impacts of refugee influx, drivers of environmental degradation, implications of refugee influx on communities, and vegetation cover in Bidi Bidi Camp, Yumbe District.

1.7.3 Time Scope

The study focused on data from 2016 to 2023 because within this period, the latest information on the study variables was contained. This also gave the researcher an opportunity to compile sufficient literature to be used in the study, inclusive of literature from different periods, which was useful in the study.

1.7.4 Geographical Scope

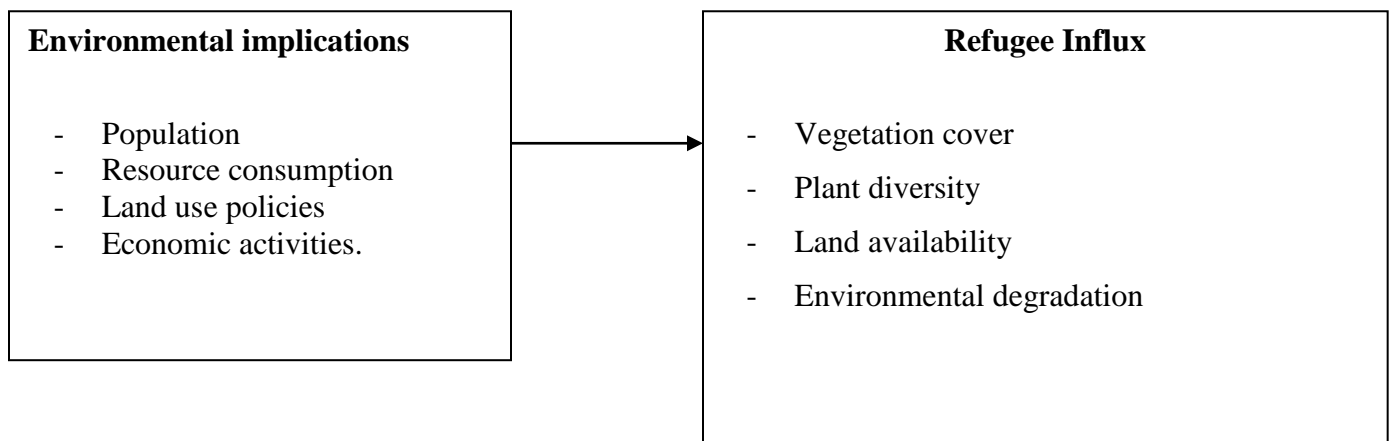
The settlement camp of Bidi Bidi was located within the West Nile sub-region in Yumbe District.

The district bordered the Democratic Republic of Congo to the south and west, the Republic of South Sudan to the north, and the Albert Nile to the east. People from these neighboring countries constituted the refugee population in the settlement. Bidi Bidi Camp itself was subdivided into five settlement zones, each under a zone leader.

1.9 Conceptual Framework

Independent variable

Dependent variables



Population impacts include vegetation cover, plant diversity, land availability, and environmental degradation, with an increase in demand for resources and land. Increased population should translate into increased environmental pressure and hence changes in land use. Resource

consumption affects vegetation cover and plant diversity directly due to how the natural resources become depleted, often leading to areas of deforestation. This also affects land availability and environmental degradation through overuse and depletion of the resources. Land-use policies shape how the land is used and managed, thereby influencing vegetation cover and plant diversity through their conservational or exploitative tendencies. Effective policies reduce environmental degradation and increase land availability. Other economic activities pertaining to agriculture and logging will have varying influences on vegetation cover and plant diversity through land conversion and resource extraction. These activities are also responsible for Environmental Degradation, and alter the Availability of land through changes in land use.

1.10 Operational definitions

Environment: The surroundings or conditions in which a person, animal, or plant lives or operates. The physical and biological elements that constitute the natural world, or the built or human-made surroundings. The environment is composed of elements such as atmosphere or air, hydrosphere or water, lithosphere or land, and biosphere or living beings. It would also involve other elements such as climate, weather, ecosystems, biodiversity, natural resources, and all human activities. Environmental science focuses on how these components interact and how they are affected by human acts that, in addition, attempt to understand and try to moderate various challenges the environment is facing, including pollution, climate change, habitat destruction, and resource depletion.

Environmental Implication: The effects or consequences, whether direct or indirect, of human activities or natural phenomena on the state of the natural environment. In its broad sense, it concerns impacts on ecosystems, biodiversity, natural resources, and ecological processes as a whole. It could emanate from the sources like industrial activities, urbanization, agricultural practices, deforestation, pollution, climate change, and human population growth.

Refugee influx refers to a situation where there is a sudden rapid increase in the number of refugees entering a particular region or country. It usually presupposes situations where huge numbers of people or groups, due to conflict persecution or even natural disasters amongst other catastrophes occurring in their homelands, flood another place in search of refuge. These influxes often lead to strain on resources and infrastructures of the receiving country and most times

require humanitarian assistance and support from the international community to meet the needs of these refugees.

A refugee is a person who had been driven out to flee his home country due to persecution, war, or violence. They are unable or unwilling to return to their country because of a well-founded fear of persecution for reasons of their race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion. Refugees often flee to another country in pursuit of safety and protection and try to rebuild their lives there without the dangers that have led them to leave their homelands. Refugees fall under the protection of international law, and their rights, as well as the responsibilities of the country that accepts them, are outlined in the 1951 Refugee Convention and its 1967 Protocol.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

The paper presented an extensive review of the literature covering the environmental impact of refugee influxes into host communities, focusing on the case study of Bidi Bidi Refugee Settlement in Yumbe District. The literature review was structured according to the objectives and research questions: recognition of the impacts of refugee influx on the environment in Bidi Bidi Camp, and discovery of possible means for mitigating negative environmental impacts.

Literature review materials were employed for developing a theoretical framework that constitutes foundational knowledge in environmental studies, refugee impacts, and community dynamics. The findings used peer-reviewed journal articles presenting current research and case studies on the environmental implications of refugee settlements, with emphases on empirical evidence and scholarly analysis. The current situation at Bidi Bidi and similar refugee settlements, policy recommendations, and environmental assessment were provided by the reports of international organizations, NGOs, and government bodies. Academic theses or dissertations always provided substantial research and relevant case studies to the thesis topic, sometimes providing detailed fieldwork and localized study results. Papers presented at academic and professional conferences were included in the search to capture state-of-the-art research and discussion among experts. Official government publications, including environmental impact assessments and policy documents, were reviewed in order to contextualize the regulatory and policy context surrounding refugee settlements in Uganda. Using online databases, a wide search of relevant literature was done to ensure comprehensiveness and currency of the subject matter.

2.1 The Drivers of Environmental Degradation

The environmental degradation at Bidi Bidi camp and in the host communities within Yumbe District results from several drivers. Hassan et al. (2018) identified one of the most predominant driving forces for environmental destruction to be the rapid conversion of land into refugee camps and spontaneous settlements. It leads to the destruction caused by deforestation, degradation of the soil, dwindling availability of water, waste generation, and environmental degradation in general. Various studies have also shown that overgrazing, as well as bush encroachment in the rural areas, contribute to land degradation conditions. Activities such as clearance of vegetation, cultivation,

grazing, application of pesticides, and herbicides result in the loss of biodiversity within agricultural ecosystems. Besides, fuelwood and medicinal plants are being extracted from areas near refugee camps like Bidi Bidi, mostly for economic and health purposes amid the COVID-19 pandemic, as indicated by Kuuwill et al., 2022.

Environmental degradation indeed has been associated with the behavior of the communities on the coasts to reduced social welfare, as shown by Pinto, 2016. Among the problems faced in refugee settlements include high youth crime rates, congestion of youth unemployment, and overstraining of the environment. Other port activities have shown to have impacts on negative environmental and human health effects. These have increased their vulnerability to sexual and gender-based violence through gendered responsibilities of fetching water and firewood, which was further exacerbated by deforestation. Logie et al., 2021

The huge influx into the camp resulted in an unprecedented degradation of land through overuse of the land for agriculture and an increase in settlements. According to the UNDP, "The influx of refugees in Yumbe District has worsened land degradation, with refugees and their host communities opening up sizeable areas for cultivation, most of the time on marginal lands, leading to soil erosion and reduced soil fertility" (UNDP, 2023, p. 22). Overutilization of land brought about not only degradation but also reduction in its productivity, thus affecting both refugees and locals.

Deforestation has now been reported as one of the major causes of environmental deterioration in Bidi Bidi camp and its surrounding areas. Increasing demand for firewood and construction materials forced this situation to become worse day by day due to large-scale tree cutting. As has been reported by a UNHCR report, "The large influx of refugees has led to increased pressure on local forests, resulting in significant deforestation as trees are cut down for firewood and shelter construction" (UNHCR, 2023, p. 12). This resulted in unsustainable wood harvesting, which drastically reduced the cover of forests and encouraged soil erosion, thus contributing to the loss of habitat.

The stress on regional water resources began to rise as demands from refugees added to demands from host communities. Over-extraction of groundwater and contamination of surface water sources started to reach alarming proportions. A World Bank report identified that "Overextraction of groundwater resources in Bidi Bidi and environs has caused water tables to drop, while inappropriate waste management practices have contaminated surface water supplies" (World Bank, 2023, p. 15). This depletion and pollution of the water resources greatly hampered sustainability in this area.

Waste management was one big issue; there were a few good ways of disposing of this waste, hence pollution. According to UNHCR, "The failure of decent waste management systems in Bidi Bidi camp has led to the generation of solid wastes, including plastics, which degrade the environment as well as affect the health conditions of refugees and host communities" (UNHCR, 2023, p. 19). Besides that, inadequate sanitation facilities resulted in open defecation contributing to the pollution of the environment and the sources of water.

2.2 The general trend-perception of the host communities in view of refugee settlement

The host communities' perception towards refugee settlement is seen as a multifaceted question based on economic, social, cultural, political, and security factors. Most of the times, however, the attitude of hosts towards refugees varies widely according to the local conditions, scale of refugee influx, and capacity of the host country in handling refugee integrations. This section will take a critical view of such dynamics by reviewing the prevailing sentiments in host communities about refugee settlement.

2.2.1 Economic Considerations

It is for this reason that one of the key variables which would impact the perception of a host community is the economic consequence brought about by refugee settlement. Most host communities in the initial stages may complain of competition for resources such as jobs, housing, health care, and education. Refugees at times are seen to put undue pressure on already overstretched public services, especially in economically vulnerable regions. Yet, other research also mentions that the refugees can bring benefits to the local economy by filling in the labor gaps, as well as by developing new entities and increasing demand in certain circumstances (Betts et al., 2017). Such economic roles may also facilitate altering negative perceptions into

more positive ones in due course, when host governments and international organizations support both refugees and members of the host population.

2.2.2 Social and Cultural Integration

The perception differs a lot according to the refugees' level of social and cultural integration into the host community. Host communities with previous traditions and experiences of immigration and diversity are more accepting of refugees, while more homogeneous communities that have lived in isolation express more concerns over cultural erosion and social cohesion. The misunderstanding and stereotyping regarding refugees' religious or cultural practices are a source of social friction, contributing to the perception of refugees as "outsiders" who do not share values with the host community. Nevertheless, effective integration policies, including language acquisition programs, intercultural exchanges, and community projects involving joint activities, have been very instrumental in mitigating these tensions and fostering a sense of shared community between refugees and host populations.

The security concerns often emanate within host communities due to refugee settlements, emanating from perceived increased crime or even radicalization. Such a perception has often been exacerbated by the framing of refugees in security terms within media and political discourses. Such concerns are particularly heightened within areas of high levels of poverty or existing social instability. However, refugees have little evidence of posing a severe security threat to the host communities, as empirical findings from a number of studies have indicated. Where there are clearly transparent policies from national governments and local authorities on the vetting and settlement of refugees, these security concerns can be minimized, thus making the attitude of the host populations more accepting.

2.2.4 Humanitarian and Ethical Considerations

Humanitarian sentiment constitutes another critical driver of perceptions towards refugee settlements. In large measures, host communities-which tend to be politicized and socially conscious of the causes of forced displacement-have strong moral imperatives to assist refugees who have been displaced because of war, persecution, and natural disasters. Humanitarian organizations and advocacy groups often attempt to sustain this sentiment by drawing awareness to the situation of the refugees and the commitment undertaken in forms of international law by the countries hosting them, such as the 1951 Refugee Convention. This moral standpoint can

foster a more hospitable atmosphere, especially when conveyed with clear messages on behalf of governments and NGOs about what refugees can bring to host societies.

2.2.5 Political and Media Influence

The political climate and media portrayals of refugees affect host community perceptions. Indeed, in regions where refugee media portrayals have been generally positive, or in cases where political leaders adopt rhetoric that is more inclusive and sympathetic, public attitudes tend to be more positive toward immigrants and refugees (McLaren 2017). Conversely, if political leaders stress anti-immigrant rhetoric or the media focuses on some negative aspects of refugee settlement, such as perceived economic burdens or security threats, public opinion may move to become hostile. This is according to Esses et al. (2017). Thus, the contribution of local leadership towards shaping the discourse and creating a positive perception of refugee integration can be highly important.

This identifies the following:

2.2.6 Long-Term Integration and Changes in Perception

Notions about refugee settlements are not fixed and, in many ways, do change with time. Initial apprehensions relating to economic competition, social tension, or security risks may be diffused as refugees integrate themselves into the host community and contribute to the local economy and culture. Indeed, longer-term research shows that successful integration of refugees leads to more positive attitudes from a host community as mutual understanding and experiences build social cohesion. In contrast, if policies fail or refugees are perceived to remain segregated from the larger community, negative perceptions may persist or even worsen.

These perceptions about refugee settlement are generated through an interaction of economic, social, cultural, political, and security dimensions within host communities. Although the initial reactions may include apprehension and concern, these perceptions change with time-in contexts where economic scarcity or cultural homogeneity, for instance, is experienced. Strong support systems, favorable political and media participation, in addition to effective integration strategies, can have host communities change from skepticism to acceptance, even appreciation for the contribution that refugees make within their societies. Understanding and addressing the root of the host community's misgivings are key in encouraging good interpersonal relations between people and succeeding with refugee integration.

2.2.7 Increased Competition for Land due to Refugee Influx in Yumbe District

The coming in of many refugees in Yumbe District, as mentioned earlier, significantly raised competition for the limited land resources. It had several implications for such groups as refugees and host communities on land use and relations among the different groups. The following section dwells on how increased competition affected land use and relations among different groups.

Increased Pressure on Limited Land Resources

This demand for land was heightened by the influx of refugees in Yumbe District. Host communities, who had hitherto depended on this very piece of land for agriculture and grazing among other livelihood activities, found themselves struggling for these limited resources with refugees. According to IRRI, "The presence of a large refugee population in Yumbe District has exacerbated land competition, leading to disputes between refugees and host communities" (IRRI, 2023, p. 15). This competition was due to the fact that available pieces of land were already being put to use by host communities, and the sudden increase in population placed an insupportable pressure on agricultural and settlement land.

Land Use Conflicts and Disputes

This situation increased competition for land resources and was the root of most of the conflicts between refugees and their host communities over the use, ownership, and access to land by both groups, who were trying to look out for their livelihoods. According to FAO, "Conflicts over land use have become more frequent, with tensions between refugees and local residents over who has the right to use and manage the land" (FAO, 2023, p. 13). These conflicts sometimes resulted in violent clashes, which had the effect of inhibiting social cohesion and stability within the region.

Impact on Local Agriculture and Livelihood

Competition for land directly influenced the local agriculture and livelihoods of the host communities. As more and more land was allocated to accommodate refugees, local farmers began to face problems with regard to finding sufficient land for their agricultural purposes. The World Bank did, however state, "Land allocation to refugees has reduced the farming land area for host communities, which in turn has contributed to lowered agricultural productivity and strapped many local farmers economically" (World Bank, 2023, p.17).

Scarcity of the land potentially affected the host communities' capacity to continue with traditional livelihoods, hence compromising food security.

Changes in land ownership and tenure systems

The refugee influx brought about changes in land ownership and tenure systems. This is because new land allocations were made to accommodate refugees against the traditional land tenure arrangements, thus affecting the way land was managed and owned within the host communities. As the UNDP indicated, "The influx of refugees brought about a change in land tenure systems as the formerly traditional patterns of land ownership were challenged by the urge to accommodate the newcomers by allocating them land" (UNDP 2023, p.19). This disrupted land rights, with consequences of disputes over the ownership and management of land.

Strain on Relationships within the Community

Competition for land placed stress on relationships between refugees and host communities. Also, with increased land use and ownership conflicts, this tended to alienate the two groups. In this regard, the International Organization for Migration reacted, "The competition for land has led to strained relations between refugees and host communities, with increasing hostility and mistrust developing as a result of land disputes" (IOM, 2023, p. 21). This further strained the relations in the community and added to problems of managing land resources and social amity.

2.3 Implications of refugees on land Use in the host communities

Vegetation cover in the host communities specially around the Bidi Bidi camp has been the most hit due to the influx of refugees in Yumbe District. Indeed, as a result of this, some of the implications include deforestation, loss of biodiversity, degradation of natural habitats, and changes in land use patterns.

Indeed, the arrival of refugees in host communities within the Yumbe District has had major implications for vegetation cover. In every instance, it has been recorded that such massive influx of refugees results in the rapid conversion of land to settling purposes, which largely contributes to the degradation of vegetation cover around it. In this respect, the expansion of refugee settlements has been developed in Cox's Bazar District of Bangladesh at the cost of forestland, with a significant reduction seen in vegetation cover (Rahman et al., 2019). Equally, there are changes in the physical and social landscape, as evidenced by an influx of Rohingya refugees in

Ukhiya of Bangladesh, where vegetation cover has been assessed through NDVI analysis (Quader et al., 2020).

On the other hand, vegetation cover has been found to decline due to the Rohingya refugee influx with the help of remote sensing analyses. Karim & Zhang (2021) measured significant losses around major refugee camps. Indeed, the construction of shelter by refugees resulted in a loss of vegetation cover from hills and forests, thus increasing the environmental vulnerability more significantly. Also, satellite-based monitoring has been able to verify that refugee camps and local environmental areas are grossly experiencing massive loss of vegetative cover. Equally, the extent of vegetation degradation is presented. Satellite-based monitoring has been able to show extraordinary loss of vegetative cover in refugee camps and surrounding areas, hence indicating the level at which vegetation degradation is taking place (Karim & Zhang, 2021).

While refugees have ecological effects on forest resources, the remote sensing analyses have been able to show variations in vegetation cover across all regions affected by refugee inflow (Imtiaz, 2018). Indeed, the expansion of refugee settlements has led to low vegetation cover within surrounding forests, which is an indicator that refugee settlement has indeed had impacts on the environment. In this respect, refugees' effects on the dynamics of vegetation cover have been considered, and there are significant changes in vegetation features, as well as changes in land use, within areas hosting refugee populations. The presence of refugees in host communities across Yumbe District has brought significant alteration to vegetation cover. Some studies have even stated how vegetation degradation around refugee settlements has been massive. Remote sensing analyses have therefore provided important information in detailing the level of vegetation cover loss and what the actual environmental impact of refugee influx has been on the region.

Deforestation

It also means that large-scale refugee arrivals bring an increased demand for firewood and building materials, leading to large-scale deforestation. They require fuel for cooking and construction, as do the refugees and the local host communities, hence the tree and shrub removal. This has been revealed in a recent report by the United Nations Environment Programme, "The rapid increase in population has put immense pressure on local forests leading to widespread deforestation as refugees and host communities cut down trees for fuel and shelter"

UNEP, 2023, p. 9. This deforestation reduced vegetation cover and contributed to soil erosion and loss of biodiversity.

Loss of Biodiversity

Habitat loss and reduction in the area's biodiversity were primarily brought about by the removal of vegetation cover due to deforestation and land use changes. It disrupted natural habitats, hence affecting plant and animal species depending on these ecosystems. In the report, WWF observed that "loss of vegetation cover in Yumbe District has contributed to loss of biodiversity, and a lot of species have lost their home because of intense pressure for land use" (WWF, 2023, p. 11). It had a long-term consequence on ecosystem health and resilience.

Natural Habitats Degradation

With the reduction in vegetation cover, natural habitats were degraded. The previously forested and grassland areas were changed into fields and settlements. According to the United Nations Development Programme, "The conversion of land for agriculture and settlement purposes has resulted in degradation of natural habitats and deterioration of ecological balance, thereby reducing the overall quality of the environment" (UNDP 2023, p. 14). This kind of habitat degradation affected wildlife and further altered the local ecology.

Land use pattern changes: Increased needs to accommodate refugees and host communities led to the conversion of more land from natural vegetation into agriculture or residential use. This change in land use decreased the overall vegetation cover in this region. According to the Food and Agriculture Organization, "The expansion of both the areas of agricultural activities and the settlement has actually led to a high reduction of vegetation cover hence altering the landscape and reducing the ability of the land to support natural ecosystems" b. The given land-use change contributed to a decline in the overall ecological health of a region.

Soil Erosion Increases taughter

In instances where deforestation and land conversion have considerably reduced the vegetation cover, increased soil erosion is likely to occur. The soil is very much susceptible to erosion through wind and water since it lacks protection from the vegetation cover. According to the World Bank, "The loss of vegetation cover has resulted in increased soil erosion, as the protective layer of plants that once prevented soil loss has been removed" (World Bank, 2023, p.16). This erosion further contributed to land degradation and affected its agricultural productivity.

2.4 Conclusion

The literature review has pointed out that refugee influxes have significant environmental implications, hence the case in Bidi Bidi refugee settlement in Yumbe District. The massive influx of refugees places high demand on the environment leading to deforestation, soil degradation, water pollution, and loss of biodiversity. The challenges are further heightened by limited resources, inadequate infrastructure, and increased demand to satisfy basic needs.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.0 INTRODUCTION

This chapter presented the methods used in the study. It included the research approach, research design, study population, sampling techniques and sample size, methods of data collection, specific procedures to be followed, instruments that would be used in data collection, challenges that could be expected, as well as ethical considerations.

3.1 Research Design

According to Cooper and Schindler (2006), the study design was a manifestation of how data collection and measurement methods were developed to analyze it with the determination of specific research objectives. Generally, the nature of a research design depended on the purpose of the research, the nature or type of data needed, the source of data, and the related cost considerations.

To this end, this study employed a descriptive research design. The key purpose of a descriptive research design was describing the state as it exists. According to Creswell and Creswell (2017), data collection in a descriptive research design is done towards testing hypotheses or answering questions concerning the present status of subjects within any given study. In this respect, the main objective of descriptive research was finding and reporting how things were done or the state of affairs as they existed. This was the systematic gathering and analysis of data to obtain a clear representation of the studied phenomena.

Descriptive studies were therefore used to obtain data related to the status of the phenomena at a given time, describing what was present in terms of variables or conditions in a situation. Both the survey, describing the status, and the regression studies that analyzed variables and their relationship were covered under this category. Descriptive statistics mainly aimed at describing information or data numerically, which would sometimes be referred to as "pictures" of the data. Descriptive statistics are the nature of groups of numbers that show information or data Smith, 2016. Descriptive research is a way used in research, which describes phenomena which comprises of behaviors, attitudes, values, and characteristics Creswell and Creswell, 2017.

3.2 Area of Study

The Bidi Bidi Refugee Settlement is located in Yumbe District within the West Nile sub-region, Northern Uganda. The district borders South Sudan to the north, Arua District to the west, Moyo District to the east, and Koboko District to the south.

The Bidi Bidi refugee settlement was one of the largest area settlements in Yumbe District, with most of its ecological features including savannah, grasslands, forests, and wetlands. It hosted around 270,000 refugee populations, some of whom had fled due to violence and turmoil in South Sudan. In addition, the host community around the camp also contributed meaningfully to the overall population. Some of the United Nations agencies that are involved in Bidi Bidi include UNHCR, the World Food Programme, CARE, Save the Children, and UNICEF among others UNHCR, 2022. These organizations have thus joined hands for the welfare of both the refugee as well as the local population of the area.

3.3 Study Population

The target population of the study consisted of local leaders in the community, such as the Chief, Assistant Chief, and the area MP, together with the local community members staying around the Bidi Bidi refugee camp. Employees working with humanitarian agencies based in Bidi Bidi targeted, especially those from UNHCR, since it has been on the frontline protecting the environment in the refugee camps.

3.5 Sample Size and Sampling

3.5.1 Sample Size

The researcher has used a simple random sampling method to select 50 UNHCR officials, 10 local leaders, and 40 refugees. In this sampling, every member of the population has an equal and independent chance of being included in the sample. Therefore, 100 respondents comprised the sample size of this study.

Table 1: Sample Size Frame

Designation	Proportion	Cumulative Frequency
MP	1	1
Chief	2	3
Assistant Chief	4	7
Local Leaders	3	10
UNHCR Officials	40	50
Local Community Members	20	70
Refugees	30	100
Total	100	100

Source: Author (2024).

3.5.2 Sampling

The sampling design used in this research was simple random sampling. This method, appreciated for its ease and efficiency (Neetij Rai & Thapa, 2015), was preferred because every member of the population had an equal opportunity to get selected. This helped minimize bias and increased the generalisability of the results. Therefore, simple random sampling was considered to be appropriate for the purpose of drawing a representative sample from the heterogeneous groups comprising UNHCR officials, local leaders, and refugees. In this manner, it was envisioned that the researcher would be able to draw reasonably correct inferences with respect to the general population from the sample data that would be collected during the course of the study, as supported by Jawale (2012). This approach was considered suitable in consideration of the legal and social context within which the research was being conducted.

3.6 Methods of Data Collection

To that end, following are the tools that have been used to gather data.

3.6.1 Surveys and Interviews

Survey is one of the major measurement techniques adopted in the social research. According to the definition of Brehob, 2001, a survey can be termed as "a technique for gathering information

from a large number of respondents" (Kuter & Yilmaz, 2001). The survey is a highly structured form of data collection from the participants, using questionnaires generally, with the purpose of gathering data related to behaviour, opinion, or characteristics. This method befits quantitative studies, and thus the study had adopted it in actively involving a wider and more varied population sample, including refugees and members of the host community. Surveys have been an effective way of collating data from many participants within a short period with wide capture of experiences and perspectives. It ensures representativeness of the data for the bigger population and a complete view of the researched topic.

Interviews are a qualitative research method that utilizes open-ended questions to gain detailed information about the experiences, attitudes, beliefs, and opinions of participants. According to Kvale, an interview is "a conversation with a structure and a purpose" intended to obtain descriptions of the world from the subject's view. In this regard, this study used face-to-face interviews to gather deep and complex data. This approach turned out to be very helpful and useful for reaching respondents like refugees and members of the host community, as it allowed the researcher to probe into personal experiences and opinions of the respondents. The researcher was able to build rapport with the respondents, observe non-verbal body language, and seek clarification on their responses through face-to-face interviews with the respondents. This is especially important when investigating complex issues that might otherwise not be fully captured.

The data used in this study was sourced from primary sources. Data collection was through the self-administration of questionnaires containing closed and open-ended questions. The questionnaires comprised structured and unstructured questions that were distributed using a drop and-pick method. The closed-ended questions elicited quantitative responses, while the open-ended questions elicited qualitative insights.

3.8 Data Analysis

The completeness and clarity of the primary data collected were checked. Summary, coding, and tabulation of data were made. Descriptive statistics in the form of means, standard deviation, and frequency tables were generated which ensured clarity in the understanding of the information gathered. Data analysis was performed using SPSS, which had powerful facilities for processing and interpreting statistical information.

3.9 Ethical Considerations

A series of precautions had to be taken so that no harm resulted for the respondents, and data collection had to be treated as strictly confidential. Permission to access the local community was first obtained from concerned authorities before actually undertaking the research. In addition, the study made sure both refugees and hosts were fully informed about the objectives, risks, and benefits of the study. The participation was strictly voluntary, and informed consent sought that they understand and were willing to participate in the process.

3.10 Limitations to the Study

Some of the limitations to the study would include areas where proper analyses of environmental impacts may not be possible, issues relating to language, as well as other substantial financial and technical resources that are lacking in most host communities.

CHAPTER FOUR

PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF RESULTS.

4.0 Response Rate

From the study, out of the sample 100 respondents that were targeted, 100 respondents were obtained and interviewed. This represented a response rate of 100% and as Amin (2005) suggested, a response rate equivalent or more than 50% is acceptable.

4.1 Background Information on the Respondents

General characteristics of the respondents were explored as shown in tables 4.1. They include Gender, Age group, Marital Status and level of Education.

4.1.1 Demographics of Respondents in Bidibidi Host Community

Results from Table 4.1 show that 62.2% of the respondents were females while 37.8% were males. This could partly indicate that most of the households are female headed compared to the few male headed households. What should, however, be noted is that since some interviews were done while respondents were in their gardens, it could be possible that more females than men were reached. This could be true because, in the African setting, most of the agricultural activities are done by wives and their children, while business is left to the men.

Table 4 1: Showing Demographics of respondents (N=100)

Response	Percentages
Gender	
Male	37.8
Female	62.2
Age of respondents	
35 years and below	53.1
Between 36 and 55 years	17.3
56 years and above	29.6
Education Levels	
Never attended school	14.3
Attended Primary school	25.5
Attended at Secondary School	48
Attended University	12.2

Source: Data Analysis, 2024.

The age of the respondents was also taken into consideration in the study. From Table 4.1, the majority of the respondents were aged below 35 years, constituting 53.1% while the minority were those aged between 36 and 55 years at 17.3% and 29.6% aged 56 years and above. This therefore shows that the majority of the respondents fall in the youth age group; that is, 35 years and below. Therefore, the Bidibidi host community was mainly composed of the youth, and this is a characteristic of a fast-growing population. In addition, from Table 4.1, the majority (48%)

of the respondents had attended secondary education while (25.5%) had attained primary education.

A minority of 12.2% of the respondents had attained an undergraduate degree from a university, and a few respondents amounting to 14.3% never attained any education. A majority of the people within the Bidibidi host community had at least attained an education. This therefore means that this population could have benefited from education services that were put in place in order to educate the refugees. The educational level of the respondents was another important indication of knowledge on the study topic.

4.2 Presentation of Findings

This section portrayed the findings as per the objectives of the study. The findings were summarized into tables.

	Statement	Strongly Agree		Agree		Neutral		Disagree		Strongly disagree		%
		Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	
1	Environmental Degradation is caused by need for settlement.	50	50%	40	40%	10	10%	0	0%	0	0%	100
2	The land is degraded for economic production.	66	66%	28	28%	5	5%	1	1%	0	0%	100

3	Road construction leads to environmental degradation.	50	50%	30	30%	20	20%	0	0%	0	0%	100
4	Farming destroys the environment.	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	20	20%	80	80%	100
5	The need for fuel wood, like charcoal and firewood causes environmental degradation	60	60%	35	35%	3	3%	2	2%	0	0%	100

4.2.1 The Drivers of environmental degradation in Bidi Bidi camp in the host communities in Yumbe District.

Results in Table 4.2.1 show that prior to refugees' settlement in Bidibidi, most of the land was used for agricultural purposes. To this end, 50% of the respondents strongly agreed and 40% of the respondents agreed that settlement need was a cause of environmental degradation. The majority of Ugandans depend on subsistence agriculture for food and income; as such, it goes without saying that the biggest percentage of land where the refugees were resettled was put to agricultural use before they came in. However, results indicated that most of the land was owned by the government. It was established through interviews with the host local members of the community that the government land was demarcated from the natural equatorial rainforest vegetation of Kibale and Kitaka forests and rich natural grasslands. Similarly, it was established that each household possessed at least an average of 3.1 acres prior to the refugee's settlement.

This gave way to more land for the natives to have agricultural activity on. On land degradation because of economic production, which shows tension between the use of land and environmental sustainability, 66% strongly agreed with this. On the road construction contributing to environmental degradation, which in turn caused changes in land use, 50% strongly agreed with it while 30% agreed. Using the 60% of people who strongly agreed and 35% who agreed, it depicts that the need for fuelwood was a major factor that impacted on environmental degradation.

4.2.2 Overall perception of the host communities on refugee settlement in Bidi Bidi camp as well as in host communities in Yumbe District.

The overall perception of the host communities about the refugee settlement depicted both the negative and positive reactions and feelings.

		Strongly Agree		Agree		Neutral		Disagree		Strongly disagree		
	Statement	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Total %
6	The refugee settlement has had a generally positive impact on the host community.	40	40	35	35	10	10	15	15	0	0	100%
7	The host community has benefited from the presence of refugees in the area.	25	25	40	40	30	30	5	5	0	0	100%
8	The challenges brought by the refugee settlement outweigh the benefits to the host community.	50	50	28	28	20	20	2	2	0	0	100%

9	More support is needed from the government and NGOs to manage the impact of the refugee influx.	75	75	25	25	0	0	0	0	0	0	100%
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Source; Data analysis, 2024.

Table 4.2.2: Mixed feelings of negative and positive reactions on the settlement of refugees in Bidibidi settlement. Perception of host communities toward refugee settlement is one such complex and multi-dimensional question entwined with economic, social, cultural, political, and security aspects. These host communities' attitudes towards refugees highly differ according to local conditions, scale of refugee inflow, and the capacity of the host country to manage refugee integration. It also critically looks into these dynamics by reviewing the prevailing sentiments in host communities toward refugee settlement.

These results showed that 40% strongly agreed, while 35% agreed that the refugee settlement had a generally positive impact on the host community with the 25% of the respondents who felt like the host community benefited from the refugees.

It was Table 4.2.2 again, showing that the majority, 50%, strongly agreed that refugee settlements present more challenges than benefits, thus indicating that the host communities are faced with concerns about resource allocation and social dynamics.

As shown in Table 4.2.2, this support of government and NGOs is crucial, as 75% of the respondents elaborated on the need to increase more support from the government and NGOs to handle the impacts effectively.

4.2.3 The Implications of refugees on land use in the host communities in Bidi Bidi camp and in the host communities in Yumbe District.

The implications of refugee influx influenced land use patterns in the host communities.

	Statement	Strongly Agree		Agree		Neutral		Disagree		Strongly disagree		Total %
		Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	
10	Most of the land in the host community was used for agriculture before the refugees settled.	86	86	14	14	0	0	0	0	0	0	100%
11	The refugee settlement has led to a significant loss of agricultural land in the host community.	65	65	30	30	5	5	0	0	0	0	100%
12	The refugee settlement has caused deforestation and loss of vegetation cover in the area.	70	70	28	28	2	2	0	0	0	0	100%
14	The influx of refugees has increased land	45	45	30	30	5	5	10	10	10	10	100

	conflicts between the host community and refugees.											
15	The government has compensated the community for the land allocated to refugees.	30	30	40	40	25	25	5	5	0	0	100%

From this section, Table 4.2.3 shows that 86% of the respondents revealed that most land was previously used for agriculture before refugees settled. Also 65% agreed that refugee settlements have led to a significant loss of agricultural land.

70% of the responses indicated that the settlement of the refugees into the host communities resulted in deforestation, hence a loss of vegetation cover leading to the loss of agricultural land within the host community.

Land conflicts in the host communities in Yumbe district increased due to the settlement of refugees; 30% strongly agreed to it, adding that 40% of the respondents agreed. This is where tension between the host communities and the refugees was due to land use rights that had increased.

About governmental compensation, there were mixed responses on whether compensation by the government had been done. A majority of those responding agreed that compensation had been provided, while 25% maintained neutrality.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The following conclusions and recommendations were derived from the results of the study.

5.1 Conclusion of the Study

The study has identified the major drivers of environmental degradation in Bidi Bidi settlement and the host communities in Yumbe District. Therefore, based on the findings below, the conclusions that were drawn are:

The study identified Bidibidi refugee settlement in Yumbe district as a planned rural settlement by the government of Uganda to accommodate refugees from the neighboring countries of Congo, South Sudan, and Burundi amongst others. Settlement needs, economic production, road construction, and fuelwood needs were identified as major drivers for environmental degradation. Host communities shared their expressions on the impacts of refugee settlement sharing both challenges and benefits.

This also strained the land use, which resulted in the loss of agricultural land, deforestation, and loss of vegetation cover, plus increased conflicts between the host communities and the refugees.

The main way in which refugees were settled into the Refugee settlement was through official assistance from the government of Uganda. It can, therefore, be concluded that pre-refugee settlements are characterized by planned rural settlements and official assistance from the hosting government.

The study established that refugee settlement in host communities improved earnings from business activities, employment opportunities increased, social amenities like health facilities

improved albeit inadequate to cater for the whole community. It was also established that the community is secure from external threat while refugees and host community members live in peace and harmony. Social relations improved, though environmental resources were being depleted. It, therefore, concluded that refugees' settlement has, to a great extent, contributed positively to the socioeconomic status of the host communities. The negative impacts of refugee settlement on the socio-economic status of the host communities should not, however, be overlooked. It also put in place that the host community played a major role in the settling of the refugees through the allocation of land for settlement and construction of shelters, coupled with the provision of relief aid and participation in the identification of refugee needs for humanitarian and relief agencies. It, therefore, concluded that the host community plays a significant role in the settlement of refugees.

5.2 Discussion of Findings

Table 4.2.1 has shown results which reveal that refugees settling in the Bidibidi area have had a profound impact on land use and the environment.

Pre-refugee settlement, the major use of land was agricultural purposes with 50% strongly agreeing to and 40% agreeing that environmental degradation was driven by accommodating the surge of refugees. This is a pointer to the high pressure on natural resources and the environment as consequences of large-scale resettlement. Since the greater part of the population in Uganda relies on subsistence agriculture for both food and income, it was expected that a larger portion of the land allocated to refugee resettlement had already been tilled for agriculture.

These findings indeed support this view, since it has shown that land on which refugees settled was mainly agricultural land prior to their arrival. Moreover, a majority of the land portions reportedly were government-owned amounting to 494.21 acres acquired from natural equatorial rainforest lands such as Kibale and Kitaka, among other rich grasslands. Interviews conducted amongst the local communities also showed that the average size of a landholding per household was 3.1 acres before the actual refugee settlement, which is an ingrained farming characteristic in the local economy. In itself, the resettlement of refugees highlighted a complex scenario.

On one hand, having more land available may turn out to be an opportunity for an expansion in farming activities in the native population. Yet, this came at a price. The results indicated that

66% strongly agreed to land degradation being driven by economic production activities; it underlined the inherent tension between land use for economic purposes and environmental sustainability. This underlines the challenges the host community had to face in finding a balance between agricultural production with environmental protection. Another factor that has contributed to environmental degradation pertains to the development of infrastructure, mainly in regard to road construction. In this respect, the results indicate that 50% of the total respondents strongly agreed, while 30% agreed that road construction resulted in significant land-use changes, thereby enhancing the environmental impact. This goes to postulate that infrastructure development, while important for improved access and interconnectivity, should be carefully managed in order to reduce its negative effects on the environment.

Fuelwood demand finally emerged as a significant cause for environmental degradation.

Results indicated that 60% of the respondents strongly agreed and 35% agreed that the need for fuelwood impacted the environment a lot. This was particularly cause for concern given the reliance upon fuelwood as a main energy source both for the refugees and the host community. Since fuelwood has been the main source of fuel for most of the refugees, this would have no doubt led to large-scale harvesting and hence deforestation and biodiversity loss, further stressing this fragile ecosystem. Conclusively, these findings underline the complexity of the environmental degradation processes in Bidibidi due to the result of refugee settling. The interrelationship between the different land uses in agriculture, infrastructural development, and the demand on fuelwood stand as serious challenges toward reaching environmental sustainability. It can be concluded that comprehensive land use planning, proper agricultural practices, and alternative fuels are very imperative in balancing the negative environmental impacts associated with refugee settlement. Care should be taken so that economic development is not necessarily at the expense of the environment; this may be treacherous toward the long-term sustainability of the local ecosystem and affect the well-being of refugees and the host community alike. Discussion of Findings

Results in Table 4.2.2 are varied on perceptions underlying in host communities on the settlement of refugees in Bidibidi. The frameworks which have been significantly influencing host community perceptions were drawn from economic, social, cultural, political, and security

considerations. This section therefore provides a critical discussion on these dynamics that have elicited mixed feelings and attitudes within the host community towards refugee settlement.

Positive Perceptions

On the positive side, 40% strongly agreed and 35% agreed that the impact of refugee settlement was generally positive for the host community.

These responses show that some positive contributions attributed to refugees, including economic opportunities, cultural exchange, or a more diverse environment, are appreciated. On this basis, host communities can consider the coming of refugees as an opportunity for economic growth, since the increase in demand for goods and services may spur the local economy on with new job opportunities. Besides, 25% explicitly felt that the host community benefited from the presence of refugees. These advantages would include an overall social amenity and infrastructural development promoted by international aid and NGO support in trying to meet the needs of the refugee population.

Negative Orientations

The findings also reveal some points of grave concern from the perspective of host communities. A whopping 50% strongly agreed that the problems created by the settlements outweighed any benefits. This view would insinuate that the pressure that was exerted on available resources, jobs, and any potential social tensions were outweighing any other positive contribution which the refugees were believed to contribute. Competition for land, water, and other basic resources probably aggravated the existing vulnerabilities in the host community, leading to frustration and resentment among the local residents. Of particular concern are the challenges related to resource allocation and social dynamics, where most of the time, the host communities are faced with balancing their needs against those of the refugees. In this regard, such demands on things like food, housing, and public services could have stretched the capacity of the local infrastructure to the breaking point and led to deteriorating conditions in both the host community and for the refugees themselves. Further, the social dynamics involve potential conflicts between the different cultural groups that could have made the host communities apprehensive and tense.

Need for Government and NGO Support

The findings also bring to light the immensely important role of the government and non-government organizations in mitigating the effects of the influx of refugees.

A full 75% of the respondents emphasized that more government and NGO support is called for to handle these impacts effectively. This demonstrates the reality that the host communities are very aware of how necessary external assistance is to meet their needs, which have challenged the refugee settlement. The need for more significant support thus called for the insufficiency of the measures taken on against the scale of the refugee influx and the challenges affiliated therewith. This is, therefore, a call for intervention as a means to raise concern over the future and viability of refugee settlement programs given a lack of support and prior planning.

The government and NGOs are supposed to take center stage in providing essential services, fair distribution of resources, and integration of the refugees into the host community. This can also be interpreted to mean that maybe the host communities felt their level of capacity was stretched beyond its limit by the demands imposed on them, emphasizing the need for a coordinated and resourced response to refugee settlement. Conclusion

In the light of this, results from Table 4.2.2 paint a mixed picture about perceptions towards refugee settlement in Bidibidi as reported by the host communities.

Whereas there are positive sentiments of economic and social gains that refugees might bring, these are weighed against serious concerns of the challenges relating to resource distribution, social dynamics, and infrastructure stress. Mixed feelings within the host communities show a dire need for comprehensive planning complemented by strong support from government and NGOs to address negative impacts of refugee settlement so as to ensure peaceful coexistence between refugees and the host community. The implication of these findings would be that multidimensional interventions addressing basic needs and sustainability over time are central in refugee integration projects. Discussion of Findings.

Table 4.2.3: Changes due to Refugee Impacts on the Host Community Land Use, Farming Systems, and Community Social Dynamics in Yumbe District

Results from Table 4.2.3 show that one of the major impacts resulting from refugee settlement to host communities in Yumbe District pertains to land use, farming systems, and community social dynamics. The data obtained from the household survey reflect a situation described by both environmental and social impingements due to the inflow of refugees into the area.

Loss of Agricultural Land

A full 86% of respondents reported that land in host communities was used primarily for agriculture prior to the refugees' arrival. This finding is consistent with the agrarian livelihood that typifies most of Uganda's rural economy, where land is one of the primary productive assets, providing food and income for the inhabitants. It has, however, been observed that the inflow of these refugees resulted in the loss of much agricultural land, with 65% of the respondents believed to have said that the refugee camps had indeed affected available farming land. In reality, this decline in agricultural land would more likely increase food insecurity and decreased farm incomes among locals, hence affecting the livelihood of the hosting community negatively.

Section 3: Environmental Degradation

Environmental degradation became the other important issue, with 70% of respondents showing how settlement of refugees led to deforestation and loss of vegetation cover.

This is directly related to space requirements for refugee accommodation and needs for fuelwood. The loss of the vegetation cover not only diminished the quantity of land but also contributed to wider environmental hazards such as soil erosion and loss of biodiversity. These alterations could have very serious long-term implications for the sustainability of agricultural practices and overall ecological health of the area.

The refugees coming in increased land conflicts within the host communities.

Results showed that 30% strongly agreed, while 40% agreed that tensions and conflicts over the right to use land increased due to the settlement of refugees. Such tension may arise from the competition for the limited land resources between the host communities and refugees. These conflicts may increase friction in social relationships between the two groups and lead to social instability that prevents integration measures that would make them part of the local community. The conflicts on land use rights also point to the need for clear policies and mechanisms of

conflict resolution that will ensure proper addressing and management of these tensions.
Compensation by Government

On the compensation by the government for the loss of land and other damages related to the settlement of refugees, the feelings of the respondents were not so absolute. A total of 70% affirmed that they had received compensation, whereas 25% remained neutrals; this suggests a level of uncertainty or dissatisfaction regarding compensation. This ambivalence would therefore suggest that there were compensations, yet not sufficient or evenly distributed. There would be differences in how compensation is perceived across different segments of the community to correspond with mixes of questions; land lost, the perceived equity of compensations, and the communication and implementation of such schemes by the government play a determining role in these differences. Conclusion

Therefore, from the findings in Table 4.2.3, there have been a fair number of challenges faced by the host communities as a result of the refugee settlements within Yumbe District.

Emerging key issues include the loss of agricultural land, environmental degradation, and rising conflicts over land, all of which have caused losses in livelihoods and coherence among the host community. While the appreciation of government compensations was expressed, mixed responses were in some sense an indication that there still leaves some room for the best way to do so and how such is received by affected communities. To this end, holistic approaches must be made to land management, care for the environment, and mechanisms of handling disputes. In addition, fair compensation, transparent in nature and sensitive to the needs of the host communities will play a key role in minimizing the negative impacts of refugee settlement and help build positive relations between refugees and the host communities. 5.2 Recommendations of the study

From the conclusions of the study drawn, the following recommendations were suggested;

It is recommended that the government of Uganda has to collaborate with stakeholders for refugee settlement in putting mechanisms in place to ensure that the local host community can take advantage of the facilities availed to the refugees in a bid to improve the social-economic

development of the host community. For example, the taking advantage of amenities such as schools, hospitals.

Both refugees and members of the host community want to live together peacefully. For this to effectively happen, non-governmental organizations and international agencies have to design and actualize a plan for integrating the host community into the existing education, skills-building, medical, and psychosocial activities in the refugee camp. They should apportion a better share of their annual expenditure toward projects that will foster peaceful coexistence among refugees and host communities.

On the other hand, the government of Uganda should institute stern measures against the criminal offences by the refugees. This may be through putting up mechanisms that ensure broad-based legal protection to the host community; these may include increasing the security personnel in the camp.

It is also recommended that a participatory needs assessment be undertaken, where both the refugees and the local host community member participate in the whole process right from the identification of their needs, prioritization, planning, implementation, and evaluation of such programmes. More importantly, the refugee agencies should raise resources aimed at offering services that are at par with those that are directed to the refugees.

It is also recommended that the refugees consider the use of alternative cost-effective energy efficient cooking devices to curb on the consumption of firewood for domestic needs. Energy and fuel supply seems to be the most serious environmental issue associated with refugee settlements therefore refugees should embrace the use of energy saving practices.

5.3 Suggestions for further research

Some of the important issues were identified during the course of study but were not investigated or discussed in depth. These issues, therefore, call for further investigation:

Need for a more detailed research on the role of humanitarian agencies as a response to the plight of refugees in host communities.

QUESTIONNAIRE

Dear respondent, am **NALUBANGA PHIONA REG NO. S21B15/085 student** of Uganda Christian University pursuing Bachelors' degree in social work and social Administration. I am conducting a researcher on the ENVIROMENTAL IMPLICATIONS OF REFUGEE INFLUX ON HOST COMMUNITIES IN UGANDA; A CASE OF BIDIBIDI REFUGEE SETTLEMENT, YUMBE DISTRICT. Am Kindly requesting you to share your experience and knowledge in this study. The information you share will be kept with utmost confidentiality and only used for study purposes. You are hereby requested to spare some time and respond to the questions below.

Section A: Demographic Information

1.) Gender of the respondents

Male

Female

2) Age of the respondents

Not more than 18yrs 9- 25 years 26-25 years 36-45 years above 45 year

3. Education level of the respondents

Primary Secondary Tertiary University

Others (please specify)

SECTION B. The Drivers of environmental degradation in Bidi Bidi camp in the host communities in Yumbe District.

		Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
	Statement					
1	Environmental Degradation is caused by need for settlement.					

2	The land is degraded for economic production.									
3	Road construction leads to environmental degradation.									
4	Farming destroys the environment.									
5	The need for fuel wood, like charcoal and firewood									

SECTION C. The overall perception of the host communities on refugee settlement in Bidi Bidi camp and in the host communities in Yumbe District

		Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree	
	Statement						

6	The refugee settlement has had a generally positive impact on the host community.												
7	The host community has benefited from the presence of refugees in the area.												
8	The challenges brought by the refugee settlement outweigh the benefits to the host community.												
9	More support is needed from the government and NGOs to manage the impact of the refugee influx.												

SECTION D: The Implications of refugees on land use in the host communities in Bidi Bidi camp and in the host communities in Yumbe District.

		Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
	Statement					

10	Most of the land in the host community was used for agriculture before the refugees settled.								
11	The refugee settlement has led to a significant loss of agricultural land in the host community.								
12	The refugee settlement has caused deforestation and loss of vegetation cover in the area.								
14	The influx of refugees has increased land conflicts between the host community and refugees.								
15	The government has compensated the community for the land allocated to refugees								

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**UGANDA CHRISTIAN
UNIVERSITY**

A Centre of Excellence in the Heart of Africa

August 19th, 2024

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

Dear Sir/Madam

Re: INTRODUCTORY LETTER FOR RESEARCH

This is to introduce to you NALUBANGA Phiona Registration number S21B15/085, a student of Uganda Christian University, pursuing Bachelor's degree in Social Work. She is expected to carry out research in the final year under the guidance of a university supervisor in partial fulfillment for the requirements of the above mentioned award.

Topic: "Environmental Implications of Refugee Influx on Host Communities in Uganda: A Case of Bidibidi Refugee Settlement, Yumbe District."

The purpose of this communication is to request your office to allow her collect data from your organization. Any assistance rendered to her will be highly appreciated.



Doreen Kikugiza
Coordinator, Research & Fieldwork Programmes
Tel: 0773395349
Email: dkukugiza@ucu.ac.ug

A Centre of Excellence in the Heart of Africa

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