

**ASSESSMENT OF SERVICE EFFECTIVENESS IN WOMEN EMPOWERMENT PROGRAMS AT
YOUNG AFRICAN REFUGEES FOR INTERGRAL DEVELOPMENT**

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**A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO THE SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES, IN PARTIAL
FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE AWARD OF A DEGREE OF BACHELOR
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**UGANDA CHRISTIAN
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DECLARATION.

I hereby declare that this work is my own and is original in nature. It has never been submitted to any institution for the award of any qualification.

Nabwire Middy Rakim

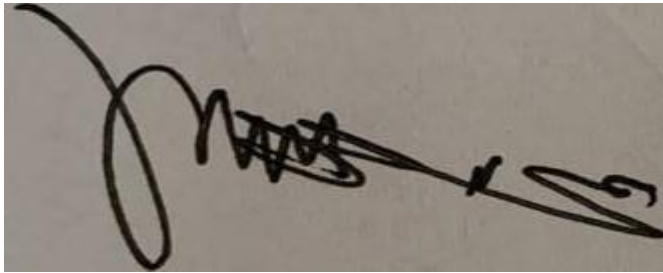
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Sign.....

Approval

This is to certify that this dissertation was developed under my supervision and has been approved for the award of the degree of Bachelor of social work of Uganda Christian University.

Mr. Kasule Kibirige

A photograph of a handwritten signature in black ink on a light-colored surface. The signature is stylized and appears to be 'Kasule Kibirige'.

Signature.....

Date.14th May,2024

Uganda Christian University

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It's God's providence that makes this moment come to pass, I acknowledge all his mercy and love that endure forever (psalms 100:5). I couldn't come this far without God's provision.

I acknowledge the momentous contribution of my supervisor Mr. Kasule Kibirige for his tireless efforts and guidance throughout the process of writing this proposal.

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ABSTRACT

The study topic was assessment of service effectiveness in women empowerment programs at young African refugees for integral development. This was guided by three research objectives which included : (i) To explore the role of YARID initiatives in supporting refugee women's leadership, community engagement and participation in decision-making processes in their communities.(ii) To identify challenges and barriers refugee women face in accessing and using YARID empowerment programs.(iii)To explore the perceptions and experiences of refugee beneficiaries regarding the quality, relevance and effectiveness of services provided by YARID.

The study adopted a phenomenological research design, utilizing a qualitative research approach.22 participants were purposively selected for the study where in-depth interviews were conducted to generate data for analysis. Analysis was done using themes. The study found that YARID had a positive role in supporting refugee women's leadership through advocacy, capacity building, networking, community engagement, community building and social cohesion, Livelihood and economic empowerment and through health and wellness activities. The challenges faced by refugee women in accessing services and YARID empowerment programs included language barrier, cultural insensitivity of the programs, culture and gender norms, limited education of refugee beneficiaries, child care responsibilities, trauma and mental health issues. The study found that refugee women felt that the programs and services provided to the refugees were very timely and that they were to have long term impact on their lives even after they have gone back to their countries. However, the refugees feel that YARID should improve on the communication channels to allow feedback from the refugees regarding the services offered to them. The study recommends that the programs and services offered by YARID to refugees be designed to suite aspects of cultural sensitivity so that all refugees can be comfortable participating in the activities.

CHAPTER ONE

1.0 Introduction

1.1 Background

Young African Refugees for Integral Development (YARID) operates in regions affected by conflict, political instability and humanitarian crises, hosting significant populations of displaced individuals, particularly women and children. Refugees face the challenges of forced migration and multifaceted barriers to empowerment, including limited access to education, economic opportunities, health services and participation in decision-making processes (UHCR,2023). Recognizing the urgent need to address these challenges and empower refugees, YARID has implemented various women's empowerment programs aimed at improving their socio-economic well-being and promoting their integration into host communities (YARID Report,2023).According to UNHCR (2023) Uganda, there are more than 34,000 women and girls of reproductive age (15-49) living in refugee settlements in southwestern Uganda. 82% of Uganda's refugee population are women and children, and 52% of these women and children are women and girls.

Amongst the leading organizations that focus on refugee women and children empowerment is YARID.The core programs of YARID support women and youth to learn new skills and start businesses, meet urgent and basic protection needs of refugee families, prepare people to apply for jobs, teach English, equip the next generation with digital skills through ICT training, and support refugee children to gain quality education. Every year, YARID directly serves over 8,000 individuals across Uganda.

YARID has a women's empowerment program. The Women Empowerment Program (WEP) aims to empower women through skills training and capacity building. WEP includes the provision of vocational skills and capacity building by providing training and information on topics such as positive parenting, reproductive health, business management and entrepreneurship.

The Women's Empowerment Program center started in 2013 to support refugee women and youth to become self-sufficient by training them in tailoring and offering health information and economic empowerment. The organization raises funds through various means such as fundraising online which so far enabled the realization of \$1,500. This enabled the organization to procure 5 machines which were the starting point for training women. This

background has seen to it that over 240 women graduate with skills in knitting and sewing clothes. This made it possible to have 102 women start their own businesses after gaining skills. The focus of YARID is on skills training in tailoring, capacity building, and social enterprise (YARID Report, 2019).

However, despite the critical importance of these initiatives, there is a gap in understanding the effectiveness and impact of YARID programs on women's empowerment. While anecdotal evidence as seen above suggests positive outcomes such as improved livelihoods and increased trust among beneficiaries, there is a lack of rigorous empirical research evaluating the extent to which these programs effectively address the unique needs and challenges refugee women face.

The background context further underscores the importance of evaluating the service effectiveness of women's empowerment programs in YARID. Refugee women often suffer from various forms of marginalization and discrimination, including gender-based violence, exploitation and limited access to resources. Moreover, the protracted nature of displacement exacerbates vulnerability and limits prospects for self-sufficiency and sustainable livelihoods.

1.2 Problem statement

Evaluating the effectiveness of services in the Young African Refugees for Integral Development (YARID) women's empowerment programs presents a critical challenge for understanding the impact of grassroots initiatives on the socioeconomic advancement of refugee women. Despite the imperative to empower refugee women to promote their integration, self-sufficiency, and community resilience, there is a significant lack of empirical research evaluating the effectiveness of YARID's empowerment services. This gap prevents a comprehensive understanding of how YARID programs contribute to improving refugee women's access to education, health care, economic opportunities, and leadership roles. Without a thorough assessment, it remains unclear whether the YARID intervention is effectively addressing the multifaceted barriers refugee women face to their empowerment and participation in society. Therefore, there is an urgent need for research to rigorously evaluate the service effectiveness of YARID's women's empowerment programs, identify potential gaps or barriers, and offer evidence-based recommendations to increase the impact and sustainability of these vital initiatives.

1.3 Study Purpose

The purpose of the study was to assess the service effectiveness in women empowerment programs at young African refugees for integral development

1.4 Research Objectives.

- i. To explore the role of YARID initiatives in supporting refugee women's leadership, community engagement and participation in decision-making processes in their communities.
- ii. To identify challenges and barriers refugee women face in accessing and using YARID empowerment programs.
- iii. To explore the perceptions and experiences of refugee beneficiaries regarding the quality, relevance and effectiveness of services provided by YARID.

1.4 Research Questions

- i. What is the role of YARID initiatives in supporting refugee women's leadership, community engagement and participation in decision-making processes in their communities?
- ii. What are the challenges and barriers refugee women face in accessing and using YARID empowerment programs?
- iii. What are the perceptions and experiences of refugee beneficiaries regarding the quality, relevance and effectiveness of services provided by YARID?

1.5 Scope

1.5.1 Geographical scope

The study was carried out at YARID. Young African Refugees for Integral Development (YARID) is a refugee-led, registered non-governmental organization based in Kampala, Uganda. Founded in 2007 by Congolese refugees living in Uganda. YARID is located in Nsambya Gogonya, off Kabega Road P.O. Box 71360. Kampala, Uganda.

1.5.2 Content scope

The study content included the independent and dependent variables which are identified in the research topic which is, *“Assessment of Service Effectiveness In Women Empowerment Programs At Young African Refugees For Intergral Development”*

1.5.3 Time scope

The time scope was the time when the programs started to be implemented that is to say from 2015 to 2024 is when empowerment programs for women in YARID were funded. The data shall was collected in April ,and the research report was ready by May.

1.6 Justification

Conducting research to assess the effectiveness of YARID's women's empowerment programs enables a comprehensive evaluation of the outcomes and impact of these initiatives on the lives of refugee women. By analyzing program effectiveness data, researchers can provide an evidence-based view of the success of empowerment interventions and identify areas for improvement.

Understanding the effectiveness of these programs is critical to supporting refugee women's empowerment and self-reliance. By evaluating the services provided by YARID, researchers can determine how well these programs equip women with the skills, resources, and support needed to increase their well-being, economic independence, and social integration.

The research is consistent with a community-based approach to helping refugees and highlights the importance of empowering refugees to help themselves. By assessing the impact of empowerment programs from a community perspective, researchers can ensure that services respond to the needs and aspirations of refugee women and promote a sense of ownership and responsibility within the community.

1.7 Significance

This research study shall provide outcomes that shall be used by future researchers who have interest in researching on NGO interventions in empowering refugee women and youths. Lessons shall be drawn from this piece of work and this shall be a reference point since the refugee crisis has always been available for as long as mankind lives. This shall enable NGOs to improve performance and intervention approaches.

Furthermore, government shall also use this work as a reference to inform its intervention in refugee empowerment.

1.8 Theoretical Framework **Grounded Theory**

Grounded theory was an appropriate theoretical framework to guide a research study on the evaluation of service effectiveness in women's empowerment programs in Young African Refugees for Integral Development. A grounded theory approach involved developing a theory based on empirical data collected during the research process (Sugiri et al., 2016). This methodology is particularly important when studying complex social phenomena such as women's empowerment programs, as it allows for the exploration and understanding of the experiences and perspectives of participants involved in such programs.

Grounded theory has been used successfully in previous studies of women's empowerment programs. For example, research on women's empowerment through microfinance activities has used grounded theory to develop a model for assessing women's empowerment and understanding the moderating factors that influence it (Rai & Shrivastava, 2021). Similarly, in the context of project management practices and women's economic empowerment, grounded theory has been used to clarify variables influencing program performance (Kaluai & Muathe, 2020).

In addition, grounded theory has been instrumental in exploring the experiences of beneficiaries of women's empowerment programs in different contexts. For example, a study on women empowered by INGOs in Uganda used a phenomenological approach and highlighted the importance of understanding the lived experiences of women in such programs (Wilcox et al., 2021). This is in line with the aim of the current research study to assess the effectiveness of women's empowerment programs among African Youngt refugees.

In conclusion, grounded theory proves to be a robust theoretical framework that will guide a research study on the evaluation of service effectiveness in women's empowerment programs in Young African Refugees for Integral Development. By adopting this approach, the study can delve into the nuances of women's empowerment in the specific context of refugee communities and provide valuable insights for program improvement and policy development.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

2.1 The role of YARID initiatives in supporting refugee women

NGOs play a key role in supporting refugee women's leadership, community involvement and participation in decision-making processes in their communities. These organizations serve as key facilitators in the empowerment of refugee women by providing them with

opportunities for skill development, capacity building and advocacy. NGO initiatives focus on promoting entrepreneurship, strengthening financial inclusion, and promoting awareness of women's rights and leadership potential (Lenka & Agarwal, 2017; Keysan & Şentürk, 2020; Mutua & Juster, 2021). Through various programs and interventions, NGOs contribute to the economic and social empowerment of refugee women, enabling them to actively participate in decision-making processes that affect their lives (Gupta, 2021; Ritchie, 2017; Gower et al., 2022).

Research shows that NGO-led efforts are essential to train and empower women to achieve immediate livelihoods, thereby reducing their socio-economic vulnerability (Gupta, 2021). By offering mentoring programs, peer support and professional training, NGOs improve refugee women's leadership skills and well-being, ultimately supporting their active participation in community affairs (Gower et al., 2022). Additionally, NGOs create platforms for refugee women to voice their concerns, connect with resources, and build networks within their communities (Denzongpa & Nichols, 2019; Jabbar & Zaza, 2015).

In addition, women's leadership roles in environmental NGOs have been shown to promote sustainable accountability, improve the organization's reputation, and increase the representation of women in decision-making positions (Saraite-Sariene et al., 2021). By supporting the initiatives of women leaders, NGOs contribute to challenging gender norms, strengthen political authority and empower women's autonomy within their communities (Lari et al., 2022). These efforts are essential to promote gender equality, social cohesion and community stability among the refugee population (Ritchie, 2017).

In conclusion, NGO initiatives are key to empowering refugees to become leaders, actively engage in community development, and participate meaningfully in decision-making processes. By providing support, training and advocacy, NGOs play a significant role in improving the socio-economic status, well-being and leadership potential of refugee women, contributing to more inclusive and resilient communities.

2.2 Challenges and barriers refugee women face in accessing empowerment programs

Refugee women encounter a variety of challenges and barriers in accessing and participating in empowerment programs that include socio-cultural, economic and institutional factors. These challenges hinder their ability to fully engage in such programs and hinder their empowerment process.

Sociocultural factors significantly limit refugees' access to empowerment programs. Language barriers, cultural differences and issues related to acculturation were identified as major barriers by Shrestha-Ranjit et al. (2020). In addition, discrimination, xenophobia and gender bias exacerbate the difficulties refugee women face in accessing services, particularly in reproductive health (Munyaneza & Mhlongo, 2019). These socio-cultural barriers create a hostile environment that limits the involvement of refugees in empowerment initiatives.

Economic factors also pose significant challenges for refugee women seeking to engage in empowerment programs. Limited access to financial resources, inadequate livelihoods, and poverty significantly limit their ability to afford health services and engage in economic activities that could empower them (Chuah et al., 2018; Rajaratnam & Azman, 2022). Lack of economic opportunities, lower wages and gender bias in employment further exacerbate the economic barriers refugee women face (Gower et al., 2022).

Institutional factors such as legal status uncertainty and protection issues present additional barriers for refugee women to access empowerment programs. Fear of uncertainty, legal restrictions and social exclusion contribute to problems in obtaining necessary health services (Al-Hamad et al., 2020). Additionally, the mismatch between the short-term nature of existing empowerment programs and the long-term needs of refugee women represents a significant institutional barrier (McCammon et al., 2022).

In conclusion, the challenges and barriers refugee women face in accessing and engaging in empowerment programs are multifaceted and stem from socio-cultural, economic and institutional factors. Addressing these barriers requires a comprehensive approach that takes into account the unique needs and circumstances of refugees, including providing language support, cultural sensitivity, economic empowerment opportunities and legal protection to ensure their full participation and benefit from empowerment initiatives.

2.3 perceptions and experiences of refugee beneficiaries regarding the quality, relevance and effectiveness of services provided by NGOs

Refugee beneficiaries' perceptions and experiences of the quality, relevance and effectiveness of services provided by NGOs are crucial aspects that influence their well-being and integration into new societies. Research shows that the quality of information shared between refugees and NGOs directly affects how refugees perceive the services they receive (Najjar et al., 2018). Additionally, the refugee crisis requires specialized knowledge and connections from NGOs to provide relevant services such as medical, legal and asylum assistance (Yang & Saffer, 2018).

Studies highlight the importance of regularly listening to, validating and documenting refugee experiences in order to offer culturally sensitive, gendered and effective services that meet the specific needs of both female and male refugee survivors (Liebling et al., 2020). Additionally, understanding the evolving health needs of refugees over time and in response to changing migration policies is critical for NGOs to transition effectively in the provision of health services (Hémono et al., 2018).

NGOs play a key role in providing services to refugees and their resilience in providing these services is vital during crises (Bryan et al., 2023). However, there are challenges such as the need for better support for health and social workers in NGOs working with refugees and asylum seekers (Robinson, 2013). The empowerment of refugee women has become the focus of many NGOs, leading to the development of activities specifically tailored to their needs (Keysan & Şentürk, 2020).

NGOs are responsible for the resources they use and for the effective delivery of services to beneficiaries, which highlights the importance of accountability and sustainability in the NGO sector (Essel, 2021). Power dynamics between NGOs and beneficiaries can impact accountability, as beneficiaries may hesitate to question the organizations that provide them with essential resources (Unerman & O'Dwyer, 2010).

In conclusion, refugee beneficiaries' perceptions and experiences of NGO services are multifaceted, influenced by the quality of information shared, the specialized knowledge required, gender-specific needs addressed, and the accountability and sustainability of NGOs. Understanding and addressing these factors is essential for NGOs to provide effective, relevant and high-quality services to them

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction

This chapter focuses on the methods employed to conduct the study. This includes the research design, area of study, source of information, study population, sampling technique, sample size, procedure for data collection, data collection methods and instruments, Quality and error control, ethical considerations and study limitations.

3.1 Research design

The study adopted a phenomenological research design, utilizing a qualitative research approach. A phenomenological research design was a valuable approach to study the effectiveness of women's empowerment programs among young African refugees for integral development. This methodology focused on exploring and reflecting on the lived experiences of individuals involved in such programs (Ibrahim et al., 2022). By utilizing a phenomenological research design, researchers delved into the subjective experiences, perceptions, and interpretations of both service providers and recipients of these programs, allowing for a comprehensive understanding of the unique challenges, successes, and needs of the young African refugees who participate in women empowerment initiatives.

In addition, the phenomenological research design allowed researchers to uncover the essence of the experiences of individuals involved in programs, shedding light on the complex dynamics of service effectiveness (Polat et al., 2023). Through this approach, researchers captured the diverse perspectives of social studies teachers, pre-service teachers, and other stakeholders involved in women's empowerment programs and provide valuable insights into the impact of these initiatives on the target population.

In addition, phenomenology allowed a thorough examination of psychological aspects related to women's empowerment, such as the psychological problems and needs of deaf adolescents (Aydoğdu & Yüksel, 2019). By using interpretive phenomenology, researchers gained a deep understanding of participants' emotional and mental well-being, which was essential for designing effective and culturally sensitive programs to empower young African refugees.

3.2 Area of study

The area of study was YARID premises in the department of women empowerment department. The study participants were drawn from this organization.

3.3 Source of information

The source of information was both primary and secondary. The use of primary sources of information in conducting qualitative research evaluating the effectiveness of services in women's empowerment programs among young African refugees offered several advantages for integral development. Primary sources such as direct observations, interviews, and documents provided first-hand and unfiltered data that offered rich and detailed insights into the experiences, perceptions, and needs of individuals involved in these programs (Fetters & Rubinstein, 2019). By directly involving participants and stakeholders, researchers captured

authentic and context-specific information that was not be available from secondary sources alone.

In addition, primary sources allowed researchers to make direct connections with research subjects, thereby fostering a deeper understanding of the lived experiences and perspectives of young African refugees participating in women's empowerment initiatives (Hays et al., 2017). This direct involvement allowed various aspects of service effectiveness to be explored, such as the challenges that beneficiaries face, the impact of programs on their daily lives, and the factors influencing their decision-making processes.

In addition, primary data sources offered researchers the flexibility to adapt their data collection methods based on real-time feedback and emerging themes during the research process (Aslani & Naaranoja, 2015). This iterative approach allowed for a more dynamic and sensitive exploration of the research topic and ensures that the study remains grounded in the voices and experiences of the participants.

3.4 Study population

The study population included women beneficiaries of programs run by YARID. The key participants were the project officers who run the program, the monitoring and evaluation officers, the YARID CEO.

Table for sample size determination of study population

Category	Target population	Sample	Sampling Techniques
Women beneficiaries of YARID programs	50	20	Purposive
Monitoring and evaluation officer	3	1	purposive
YARID CEO	2	1	purposive
Total	55	22	

Source: YARID records,2024

3.4 Sampling procedure and selection

3.4.1 Sampling method

The study used nonrandom approach to sampling so as to enable the selection of the needed participants who were suitable for the study. The researcher relied on his judgement to choose who participates in the study as opposed to random sampling approach that is nonjudgmental (Taherdoost,2016).

3.4.2 sampling technique

Purposive sampling technique was used since it is recommended for a qualitative study which is exploratory in nature. It is noted by Rai &Thapa (2015) that purposive sampling is considered to be very judgmental, selective, and subjective owing to the fact that it is the researcher who is deemed fit to participate in the study.

3.4.3 Sample size

The researcher purposively selected 20 women beneficiaries from the 50 women beneficiaries because the 20 are considered to be representative enough to come up with conclusive study findings.

3.5 Procedure for data collection

A letter of introduction was acquired by the researcher from the ethics and research committee of Uganda Christian university. This letter was used by the researcher to introduce herself to the authorities in at YARID In Nsambya Gogonya so that the authorities can know that the researcher is undertaking the study for specifically academic reasons.

The principal researcher trained two research assistants who participated in conducting the one-on-one interviews.

3.6 Data collection methods and instruments

3.6.1 Interview method

In-depth Interviews were conducted on one-to-one approach with the women beneficiaries of YARID. According to Rosenthal (2016), in-depth interviews enabled the researcher to gain rich information which was a result of asking open ended questions which allowed the participant to provide information which is exhaustive. Through in-depth interviews, women beneficiaries of YARID empowerment programs fully explored the topic under study.

An interview guide was used as the data generation tool

3.7 Quality and error control

3.7.1 Reliability and validity.

Reliability is largely concerned with trustworthiness in qualitative research. The choice of the participants ensured credibility and dependability. According to Rose and Johnson (2020), assessing trustworthiness ensures reliability in qualitative research. The researcher ensured that only the needed participants who are deemed desired for the study participated in this study. In this case the women who benefit from the empowerment programs run by YARID and the officers who were in charge of administering the programs were interviewed.

The researcher ran a pretest of tools that were to be used in data generation for the study so as to ensure that they observed trustworthiness, but also enabled the researcher to reduce errors by identifying obstacles in the study tools (Hurst et al., 2015).

3.8 Data coding

The data was coded to ensure that the data was recorded under the themes where it belonged. manual reading and data classification was undertaken. Nvivo (version 11) was used to enter the coded data which was then analyzed since Nvivo is a qualitative data analysis tool.

3.9 Ethical considerations

The researcher obtained a letter from the research ethics committee to authorize her to conduct the research. This very letter was used to gain access to the participants.

Informed consent. The researcher used an informed consent form which was used to be shown to the participants as a way of the researcher introducing herself to the participants for them to acknowledge consent by signing the form. The form was signed to acknowledge consent.

Those who declined to participate in the study were allowed to do so since the participants do so at their own will.

The researcher upheld the privacy and confidentiality, and participant's data was protected to ensure that it was not put out to public access or third party. participants were allowed to avoid questions that they were not comfortable to answer.

3.10 Methodological constraints and mitigation measures

Sometimes conducting research in an NGO setting more so one which focuses on empowering women may seem troubling to the administrators of the NGO who may misinterpret the purpose of the research and therefore may be an obstacle. However, the researcher introduced herself with proof of this being a purely academic study that was to lead her to graduate with a bachelors' degree in social work.

CHAPTER FOUR: DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS, AND DISCUSSION

4.0 Introduction

This chapter focuses on data presentation, analysis and discussion of the findings from the field in line with the three research objectives. (i) What is the role of YARID initiatives in supporting refugee women's leadership, community engagement and participation in decision-making processes in their communities? (ii) What are the challenges and barriers refugee women face in accessing and using YARID empowerment programs? (iii) What are the perceptions and experiences of refugee beneficiaries regarding the quality, relevance and effectiveness of services provided by YARID?

4.1 The role of YARID initiatives in supporting refugee women's leadership

This objective explored the role of YARID initiatives in supporting refugee women's leadership in decision making in their communities. The findings were represented thematically and reported verbatim.

Capacity building

The study found that capacity building was one of the approaches used by YARID to empower refugee women leaders so as to enable them to serve their communities well. This submission was made by the program officer who was quoted verbatim as seen below.

“YARID initiatives often provide training and capacity building programs specifically tailored to refugee empowerment. These programs may include leadership workshops, skill development sessions and educational opportunities aimed at strengthening women's confidence, knowledge and ability to actively engage in social issues” **Program officer, YARID.**

The above was supported by one of the refugee women leaders who confirmed the above submission from the program officer of YARID.

“Yes, YARID has trained us on leadership through organizing leadership workshops which have been very helpful to us” **Woman Refugee Leader in an interview**

Young African Refugees for Integral Development (YARID) uses capacity building strategies to support female refugee leaders in service to their communities. Capacity building involves improving the knowledge, skills and abilities of individuals and organizations to effectively address challenges and achieve their goals (Wei et al., 2021). YARID focuses on empowering refugee women by supporting trauma-informed initiatives that benefit both community members and service providers (Wei et al., 2021). By building the capacity of refugee women leaders, YARID equips them with the necessary tools to take on leadership roles, engage in their communities and participate in decision-making processes.

Capacity-building initiatives within YARID may include training programs, mentoring opportunities, and skill-building workshops tailored to the specific needs and aspirations of women refugee leaders (Wei et al., 2021). These initiatives aim to improve the leadership skills of refugee women, promote community engagement and enable active participation in decision-making processes in their communities. By investing in capacity building of refugee women leaders, YARID contributes to the overall strengthening and development of refugee communities.

Additionally, YARID's capacity-building efforts align with the principles of community-based participatory research (CBPR), emphasize equitable voice, recognize indigenous knowledge, and focus on building community capacity as agents of transformation and change (Morrison et al., 2023). Through these approaches, YARID ensures that refugee women leaders are actively involved in shaping programs and initiatives that impact their communities and promote a sense of ownership and sustainability.

Advocacy

The study found that YARID advocates for the rights and needs of refugee women to empower them so that they can serve their communities better. This was quoted from the chief Executive Officer as seen below.

“YARID initiatives advocate for the rights and needs of refugee women at local, national and international levels. By raising awareness of the unique challenges refugee women face and promoting their inclusion in decision-making processes, these initiatives help amplify refugee voices and ensure their concerns are addressed” **CEO, YARID on 1st May 2024**

One of the refugee women leaders who said as quoted below.

“YARID includes us in all its programs and this has enabled us to be part of the decision-making process. This has enabled us to also be inclusive in the way we lead other people” **Woman Refugee leader on 1st May 2024**

Like other refugee supporting agencies, YARID uses advocacy as a core strategy to empower refugee women leaders to serve their communities. Advocacy efforts within YARID focus on amplifying the voices of refugee women, raising awareness of their unique challenges and needs, and advocating for policies and programs that strengthen their leadership roles and community engagement (Hawkins et al., 2021). Through advocacy, YARID aims to address systemic barriers and promote gender equality in refugee communities, enabling refugee women to actively participate in decision-making processes and community development initiatives.

YARID's advocacy work also focuses on improving the health and well-being of refugee women by educating community leaders about the psychological stressors refugee women face and promoting compassionate and confidential support systems (Hawkins et al., 2021). By highlighting the specific needs of refugee women, YARID contributes to fostering a more supportive and inclusive environment for refugee women leaders to excel and make meaningful contributions to their communities.

Additionally, YARID's advocacy efforts may include working with stakeholders, policy makers, and community members to address issues such as sexual violence prevention, mental health promotion, and gender equality in refugee communities (Robbers & Morgan, 2017; Im et al., 2021). By promoting trauma-informed and culturally informed systems of care, YARID seeks to bridge the gaps between mainstream services and refugee resettlement programs and ensure that refugee women have access to the necessary support to lead effectively (Im et al., 2021).

Networking and Support

The study established that networking is what YARID partly does to support women refugee leaders to enable them to serve their communities.

“YARID initiatives create networks and support systems for refugee women, enabling them to connect with peers, mentors and resources that can help them on their leadership journey. These networks provide a platform to share experiences, exchange ideas and offer mutual support, fostering a sense of community among refugee women leaders” **Program officer**

To empower refugee women leaders to serve their communities, refugee support agencies use networking and advocacy as key strategies. By fostering social ties and building support networks, these agencies create opportunities for refugee women to access the resources, information, and mentorship necessary to develop their leadership and community involvement (Denzongpa & Nichols, 2019) Koyama & Kasper, 2020. Networking it allows refugee leaders to establish relationships with other community members, organizations, and stakeholders, enabling them to collaborate, share experiences, and leverage collective knowledge and expertise (Denzongpa & Nichols, 2019).

In addition, support mechanisms provided by refugee support agencies play a key role in empowering refugee women leaders. By offering tailored assistance, guidance, and encouragement, these agencies help refugee women manage challenges, build self-confidence, and develop the skills needed to effectively lead and serve their community (Frost, 2018; Denzongpa & Nichols, 2019). Support can take many forms, such as mentorship programs, training, and access to educational resources, all of which contribute to the empowerment and capacity building of refugee women leaders (Koyama & Kasper, 2020).

Additionally, refugee support agencies recognize the importance of culturally sensitive services and programs that recognize the unique experiences and needs of refugee women (Ussher et al., 2017). By understanding the cultural and religious contexts in which refugee women construct their identities and experiences, these agencies can provide support that is respectful, inclusive and effective in fostering empowerment and leadership among refugee women (Ussher et al., 2017).

Community Engagement

YARID initiatives actively engage refugee women in community development projects and initiatives, enabling them to contribute their skills, perspectives and expertise to the betterment of their communities. By participating in community activities and decision-making processes, refugee women can assert their leadership and contribute meaningfully to solving local problems. The community engagement programs include Education and Literacy Programs

“YARID organizes programs aimed at providing educational support and promoting literacy among the refugee population. These programs include

formal education for children, adult literacy courses, and vocational training courses that equip women refugees with valuable skills for employment and entrepreneurship” Program officer at YARID,2nd May,2024

Health and Wellness Initiatives

The study found that Health and wellness initiatives was one of the programs that are undertaken by YARID to empower refugee women.

“YARID can conducts health and wellness programs to improve the physical and mental well-being of refugees. These initiatives include health care awareness campaigns, awareness campaigns on hygiene and disease prevention, as well as psychosocial support services to address trauma and mental health issues” Program officer,2nd May,2024.

Refugee support agencies are implementing health and wellness programs to empower refugee women leaders to serve their communities by focusing on a holistic approach that addresses their physical, mental and social well-being. These programs often include psychotherapeutic interventions, mental health services, and psychosocial support to help refugee women cope with the psychological stressors they face (Hawkins et al., 2021; Murray et al., 2010). By engaging individual clients, families, and communities, these programs aim to promote individual and social growth, resilience, and positive adaptation to adversity (Murray et al., 2010).

In addition, these initiatives emphasize the importance of culturally sensitive and trauma-informed care to meet the unique needs of refugee women (Siddiq & Rosenberg, 2021; Im & Swan, 2021). By working with community organizations, health care providers, and public health agencies, refugee support agencies can ensure that health services, including vaccination programs, are accessible and tailored to the specific needs of the refugee population (Zhang et al., 2021; Frost, 2018). In addition, programs such as Embrace Refugee Birth Support have been successful in providing culturally tailored pregnancy and birth support to refugee women and have demonstrated the effectiveness of community-based initiatives in addressing the complex needs of this population (Kirkendall & Dutt, 2023; Mosley et al., 2021).

In addition, these health and wellness programs play a critical role in addressing specific health issues facing refugee women, such as postpartum depression and reproductive health issues (Mohammad et al., 2018; Bocanegra et al., 2022). By offering support, education, and advocacy, these programs aim to improve health outcomes, empower refugee women to take charge of their own well-being, and ultimately empower them to become leaders in their communities (Ryan et al., 2020; Winn et al. al., 2018).

Livelihood and Economic Empowerment

One of the community engagements that YARID has with refugee women include livelihood and economic empowerment. This was seen by the researcher, but also confirmed by testimonies from the program officer and the women beneficiaries of these programs.

“YARID implements livelihood and economic empowerment programs to help refugees build sustainable livelihoods and achieve financial independence. These programs could include skills training workshops, microfinance initiatives and support for small business development among refugee communities.” **Program officer on 2nd May 2024**

Community Building and Social Cohesion

“YARID organizes community building activities aimed at promoting social cohesion and integration between the refugee population and the host community. These activities could include cultural exchange events, sports tournaments and community dialogue sessions to promote understanding and solidarity between different groups.” **CEO, YARID**

Refugee support agencies use community building and social cohesion strategies to empower refugee women leaders to serve their communities. By fostering social connections, building networks, and fostering collaboration, these agencies create an environment that enables refugee women to thrive as leaders and active members of the community.

Community-building initiatives within refugee support agencies focus on creating spaces where refugee women can meet, share experiences, and build relationships with each other and other community members (Im & Rosenberg, 2015; . Through peer-led interventions, health workshops communities and mentoring programs, refugee women leaders can develop social capital, strengthen their sense of belonging and strengthen their ties within the community (Im & Rosenberg, 2015; Paloma et al., 2019; Gower et al., 2022). , but also contribute to the overall well-being and resilience of the community.

Social cohesion efforts by refugee support agencies aim to promote unity, trust and cooperation between refugee women leaders and their communities (Elliott, 2014). By engaging in participatory workshops, fostering collective efficacy and promoting social connectedness, refugee women can work together to solve common problems, advocate for their needs and drive positive change in their communities (Leddy et al., 2018; Huminuik et al., 2022). These initiatives play a key role in building solidarity, strengthening community resilience and fostering a sense of belonging among refugee women leaders.

In addition, the use of culturally sensitive approaches in community building and social cohesion initiatives ensures that the unique experiences, traditions and needs of refugee women are respected and integrated into program design (Kirkland et al., 2022). By maintaining cultural traditions, promoting family unity, and recognizing the importance of social support, refugee support agencies create inclusive environments where refugee women can thrive as leaders and agents of change (Kirkland et al., 2022).

Environmental Sustainability Initiatives

The study established that YARID trained women refugee leaders on environmentally sustainable initiatives.

“YARID engages in environmental sustainability projects aimed at promoting environmentally sound practices and mitigating environmental risks in refugee camps and host communities. These initiatives include tree planting campaigns, waste management programs and efforts to conserve natural resources.” Program officer YARID

To empower refugee women leaders to serve their communities, refugee support agencies are using environmental sustainability initiatives as a strategic approach. By incorporating sustainability practices into their programs, these agencies seek to address environmental issues and empower refugee women leaders in various ways.

Environmental sustainability initiatives offer women refugee leaders opportunities to participate in activities that promote environmental stewardship, resilience, and community well-being (Wardeh & Marques, 2021). By engaging in sustainability projects within their

communities, refugee women can improve their leadership skills, sense of agency, and contribute to improving living conditions in refugee settlements (Wardeh & Marques, 2021).

In addition, these initiatives can act as platforms for capacity building and skills development among refugee-led women. By participating in sustainable practices such as waste management, renewable energy projects, or community gardening, refugee women can gain new skills, increase self-confidence, and cultivate a sense of empowerment (Karl & Karl, 2022). This hands-on involvement in environmental initiatives not only benefits the community but also enhances the leadership skills of refugee women.

In addition, Environmental Sustainability Initiatives can promote social cohesion and cooperation between refugee women leaders and their communities. By working collectively toward shared environmental goals, refugee women can strengthen their networks, build relationships with other community members, and cultivate a sense of unity and shared purpose (Karl & Karl, 2022). This collective action can empower refugee women leaders to advocate for the needs of their communities and drive positive change.

Advocacy for human rights: YARID can advocate for the rights of refugees and marginalized communities through information campaigns, legal aid programs and lobbying efforts aimed at influencing policy decisions and promoting greater respect for human rights principles.

Policy Impact

The study found that YARID initiatives work with policy makers and stakeholders to advocate for policies and practices that promote gender equality, women's empowerment, and refugee rights. By participating in policy discussions and decision-making processes, these initiatives help shape policies that are more inclusive and responsive to the needs of refugees.

“YARID has participated in writing policy papers that have advocated for the plight of refugee women. For example, we took part in analysing Uganda's refugee policy and we made recommendations to parliament to consider increasing more funding for refugees so as to fund women empowerment programs like skilling programs” **Program officer, YARID on 2nd May,2024.**

This submission was proved by the policy paper which was seen by this researcher who confirmed the day and date of the submission of the paper to parliament. The minutes for the day when the paper was written were also seen by this researcher. This confirms.

Young African Refugees for Integral Development (YARID) initiatives play a key role in supporting refugee women's leadership, community engagement and participation in decision-making processes in their communities. These initiatives provide significant support to young refugee mothers and facilitate their re-engagement in education, work and other aspects of life (Watts et al., 2015). By recognizing the strengths and resilience of young refugees, mental health professionals can help them adapt positively to their new environment and support their recovery journey (Marshall et al., 2016). YARID initiatives, such as the Association of Somali Communities in Uganda and the South Sudan Association, actively lobby for essential resources such as personal protective equipment and food, demonstrating a commitment to the welfare of refugee communities (Sseviiri et al., 2022).

4.2 What are the challenges and barriers refugee women face in accessing and using YARID empowerment programs

Refugee women challenges and barriers in accessing and using YARID (Refugee Integration and Development of Youth and Adults) programs. Some of these challenges are as discussed below.

Language barriers

The study found that there was a challenge of language barrier owing to the many nationalities of refugees in the operational areas of YARID. The program officer was quoted verbatim as seen below.

“Many refugee women may not be fluent in the language of the host country, which can hinder their ability to understand program materials and instructions.” **Program officer, YARID**

One of the women leaders also had this to say in support of the above.

“We face language barrier since some of us come from French speaking countries where we have been civilised in French and our local languages and therefore adjusting to the English language is tasking” **Woman refugee leader on 1st January,2024**

Language barriers represent a significant challenge for refugee women in accessing Youth Intervention and Diversion (YARID) programs. These barriers impede effective communication and understanding between refugee women and service providers, impacting women's ability to access and benefit from programs Shrestha-Ranjit et al. (2020) Henry et al., 2019; Watkins et al., 2012). A lack of culturally appropriate interpreting services further exacerbates this problem, making it difficult for refugee women to navigate the health care

system and understand the services available to them (Henry et al., 2019; Watkins et al., 2012; Griffin et al., 2022).

Studies have highlighted that language barriers not only impede access to health services, but also affect the quality of care that refugee women receive (Griffin et al., 2022; Sharifian et al., 2020; DeSa et al., 2022). In the context of maternal health, language barriers can lead to misunderstandings, miscommunication and ultimately affect the health outcomes of refugees and their children (Henry et al., 2019; Griffin et al., 2022; Boyle et al., 2019). . In addition, the inability to communicate effectively due to the language barrier can lead to feelings of frustration, isolation and disempowerment among refugee women, further hindering their integration and well-being (Duckles et al., 2018).

Additionally, language barriers have been identified as a key contributing factor to mental health problems among refugee women, as they limit access to mental health services and support. The stigma associated with mental health problems is exacerbated by language barriers that make it difficult for refugee women to seek help and receive appropriate care. In addition, language barriers can hinder service providers' ability to identify and address the mental health needs of refugee women, leading to underdiagnosis and undertreatment of mental illness.

Limited education

The study found that many refugee women leaders didn't have formal education as many were dropouts of lower levels of learning. Most were ordinary level dropouts while a few had advanced level education qualifications.

“Many refugee women have limited formal education, making it difficult for them to engage with the content of empowerment programs, which may require basic literacy and numeracy skills.” **CEO, YARID**

Limited education significantly affects refugees' access to Youth Intervention and Diversion (YARID) programs. Refugee women with limited education face challenges in navigating educational structures to access the limited educational resources available that are critical to their success (Floyd & Sakellariou ,2017; Drummond et al., 2011) Lack of formal education often leads to low literacy, which intersects with factors such as gender, refugee status, and language barriers, creating additional layers of disadvantage that prevent women from

accessing health services, including YARID programs (Svensson et al., 2016 ;Zhang et al., 2016) .

Refugee women's limited education also affects their ability to understand preventive measures, cancer screening, and reproductive health information, leading to gaps in knowledge and health practices (Bocanegra et al., 2022; Kaplan et al., 2021; Cin & Doğan, 2020) . In addition, lack of education may contribute to negative expectations about treatment, cultural beliefs, and limited health literacy, which further prevent refugee women from accessing health services, including mental health support available through programs such as YARID (Zhang et al., 2016; Mwoma & Chege, 2021 ;

In the context of higher education, limited education among refugee women presents barriers to accessing educational opportunities, scholarships, and resources necessary for academic success (Mayr & Oppl, 2022; Deacon & Sullivan, 2009). Factors such as interrupted schooling, traumatic experiences, lack of knowledge of the local language, and non-recognition of prior qualifications further compound the challenges refugee women face in pursuing higher education (Mayr & Oppl, 2022). Additionally, limited education can limit refugees' employment opportunities, economic empowerment, and overall socioeconomic conditions, perpetuating cycles of disadvantage (Deacon & Sullivan, 2009).

Cultural Norms and Gender Roles

The study established that cultural norms were a barrier to refugee women access to YARID programs.

“Some women think some roles are entirely for men and therefore this affects their participation in YARID programs that seek to empower women refugees.” **Program officer, YARID**

Cultural norms and gender roles significantly influence women's access to YARID (Youth At-Risk Intervention and Diversion) programs. Refugee women often face challenges accessing these programs due to gendered expectations within their families, conflicts arising from new gender roles, and clashes with evolving identities in the host society, all of which intersect with cultural and societal norms Khanlou et al. (2017). These factors can hinder women's ability to seek out and use needed health services, including mental health support available through programs like YARID.

Studies have shown that refugee women are affected by pervasive gender roles and expectations that expose them to gendered health systems and practices that may pose risks to their health, particularly in terms of mental health and access to services (Zivot et al., 2020). Cultural beliefs, norms and attitudes play a significant role in how health, pain and treatment are perceived, particularly among refugee and immigrant women, and influence their access to care (Altun et al., 2023). Additionally, rigid gender divisions often require men to provide financial support while women maintain the household and care for children, limiting women's autonomy and access to resources, including health services (Zadhy & Erman, 2022).

Additionally, cultural barriers related to discussing sexuality and sexual health may affect women's access to sexual and reproductive health services, further highlighting the influence of cultural norms on access to health care (Mengesha et al., 2017). Gender imbalances in power can affect women's sexual and reproductive health decisions, mobility, and access to health procedures, highlighting the impact of gender roles on women's health outcomes (Yasmine & Moughalian, 2016). These cultural norms and gender roles create barriers that limit refugee women's ability to seek care, navigate health care systems, and access support provided by programs like YARID.

Childcare Responsibilities

The study found that women who have child care responsibilities found it difficult to participate in the programs of YARID.

“Many refugee women have significant childcare responsibilities, which make it difficult for them to participate in programs that do not offer childcare facilities.” **Program officer, YARID.**

Childcare responsibilities represent a significant barrier for refugee women to participate in Youth Intervention and Diversion (YARID) programs. Childcare responsibilities may limit women's ability to attend program sessions, engage in activities, or commit to regular participation due to childcare demands (Dasgupta et al., 2013; Nicklas et al., 2020; Minor & Cameo, 2018). . Refugee women often face challenges in balancing childcare responsibilities with program schedules, especially when faced with time constraints, infant care needs, and the responsibilities of older children (Nicklas et al., 2020). The pressure of childcare responsibilities can prevent women from enrolling in programs, inhibit their ability to attend sessions regularly, and limit their participation in interventions aimed at promoting their mental well-being (Vallejo-Martín et al., 2021).

Cultural norms and gender roles also play a role in shaping childcare responsibilities, with women often expected to prioritize caregiving responsibilities over other activities (Hunt, 2023; Kogan & Kalter, 2020). These expectations may further limit women's opportunities to engage in educational or support programs, including YARID initiatives. In addition, the lack of available childcare options, difficulty fitting program schedules around school hours, and the absence of support for single mothers may further hinder refugee women's participation in these programs.

In addition, there is a key need for childcare support to enable women to participate in programs, as discussed in studies of diabetes prevention and postpartum weight loss initiatives (Dasgupta et al., 2013; Nicklas et al., 2020). Providing adequate childcare assistance can help ease the burden on refugee women and enable them to access the necessary support and resources available through YARID programs. By addressing the challenges of childcare responsibilities, refugee support agencies can create more inclusive and accessible programs that meet the needs of refugee women and enable them to fully participate in interventions aimed at improving their well-being.

Trauma and mental health issues

Trauma was identified as a mental health aspect that affected refugee women from participating in YARID programs.

“Many refugee women have experienced traumatic events before and during displacement that affect their mental health and ability to engage in educational or empowerment activities.”

Trauma and mental health issues significantly impact refugee participation in Youth At-Risk Intervention and Diversion (YARID) programs. Refugee women often experience high rates of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), depression, anxiety and other mental health conditions as a result of the traumatic events they have experienced, including war, forced displacement and adverse experiences during their refugee journey (Hawkins et al., 2021; Williams & Berry, 1991; Ahmed et al., 2017). These mental health issues may act as barriers to women seeking and engaging in support programs such as YARID, as trauma symptoms and mental health issues may affect their ability to fully engage in interventions aimed at promoting their well-being.

Studies have shown that refugee women are vulnerable to violence during migration and often have high rates of PTSD, which can affect their mental health and ability to engage in

programs that require regular attendance and active participation (Ahmed et al., 2017; Pogarell et al., 2019). The prevalence of mental health disorders among refugee women, such as depression and anxiety, further underscores the need for targeted support and interventions to address these issues and facilitate their involvement in programs such as YARID (DeSa et al., 2022; Nithianandan et al., 2016).

Social Isolation

The study established that refugee women face social isolation which makes them to miss out on the programs of YARID.

“Refugee women experience social isolation due to language barriers, cultural differences or loss of social networks. This isolation makes it difficult for them to access support systems or participate in community empowerment programs”. **Program officer, YARID**

Social isolation presents a significant challenge for refugee women when engaging in Youth Intervention and Diversion (YARID) programs. Refugee women are often affected by social isolation due to factors such as limited social networks, separation from friends and family, language barriers and cultural displacement that increase their vulnerability to isolation Johnson et al. (2021) Simich et al., 2005; Gagnon et al., 2006). Social isolation can result in feelings of loneliness, lack of social support, and limited access to community resources, all of which can prevent women from participating in programs designed to promote their well-being.

Research shows that refugee women, especially in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, faced an increased risk of experiencing additional stressors due to isolation, lack of social support, and difficulty accessing health services and follow-up care (Hirani & Wagner, 2022; Cameron et al., 2021). The absence of prior social support systems, language barriers, and exposure to traumatic events may further contribute to social isolation among refugee women, impacting their mental health and overall well-being (Gagnon et al., 2006; O'Mahony et al., 2021).

In addition, social isolation can exacerbate mental health problems such as depression and anxiety among refugee women, making it difficult for them to seek help and engage in support programs such as YARID (Rees et al., 2019). Misunderstanding of their condition, fear of stigma and feelings of inadequacy as

mothers can deepen women's isolation and prevent them from accessing the necessary support and resources provided by programs aimed at improving their mental health.

4.3 perceptions and experiences of refugee beneficiaries regarding the quality, relevance and effectiveness of services provided by YARID

Quality of Services

The study found that the refugees were contented with the quality of the training programs offered by YARID to them. They were grateful as they have found the programs to have empowered them to function well as leaders in their communities, For example a number of the women refugee leaders said that they can now confidently participate in public speaking activities without fear. They are knowledgeable on health aspects like the spread of HIV/Aids and how it can be prevented. They were grateful to their trainers.

“The programs are of high quality and we are grateful to YARID and our trainers” **Woman Leader in an interview**

Contrary to study findings by Cameroon et al., (2021) Refugee beneficiaries perceive the quality of services provided by refugee supporting agencies differently based on factors such as accessibility, staff professionalism, adequacy of resources, and the overall environment of program facilities. Positive experiences may include well-structured programs, knowledgeable instructors, and helpful resources, while negative experiences may include overcrowded classrooms, outdated materials, or unresponsive staff.

Relevance of Services

The study found that the refugees found the programs to be relevant to their needs since most of what was packaged in their training addressed their needs.

“We are grateful to YARID programs because they were very good interms of relevance to us. For example the training on mental health of refugees ,and economic empowerment for refugees was very timely and relevant to us as refugees” **Refugee woman Leader**

Refugee beneficiaries can assess the relevance of YARID services based on their alignment with their needs, interests and goals. Positive perceptions can arise when programs offer skills training or educational opportunities that are directly applicable to the lives and aspirations of participants. Conversely, if the services offered do not address the specific challenges and priorities of refugee recipients, they may be perceived as irrelevant or disconnected (Mahony et al.,2021).

Effectiveness of services

The programs were found to be effective on ground that many of the refugee beneficiaries were already putting into practice the knowledge that they acquired. For example, they were already carrying out entrepreneurship after attending a program on entrepreneurship and economic empowerment for refugees.

“I am running a mobile money business and a hair dressing business. This was after I attended a program organised by YARID on economic empowerment for refugees. This business has helped me to live a better life”

Inline with Watts et al., (2015) Refugee beneficiaries' experiences of the effectiveness of refugee agency services may vary depending on their ability to achieve desired outcomes such as improved language skills, work readiness, or social integration. Positive feedback can come from participants who have successfully transitioned into employment or further education as a result of program support. Conversely, dissatisfaction may arise if participants believe that the services provided have not led to a tangible improvement in their lives or if they encounter barriers to accessing opportunities outside the program.

Cultural Sensitivity

The study found that although the programs were good, the aspect of cultural sensitivity was not promoted owing to the many cultures of the refugees. The programs were made universal meaning that they respected universal views and perspectives on humanity.

“The programs do not care much about my culture as an Eritrean. For example, mixing us together with men during training is not acceptable in my culture” **Woman Refugee Leader.**

Cultural sensitivity is a critical factor in shaping refugee women's perceptions of empowerment programs such as Youth At-Risk Intervention and Diversion (YARID) initiatives. Designing and implementing programs that respect refugee women's cultural norms, beliefs and traditions is critical to effectively addressing their needs and promoting empowerment (Heslehurst et al. (2018) Haque & Malebranche, 2020; Ahmed et al., 2017). By aligning programs with refugee women's cultural values and expectations, culturally sensitive approaches can increase the relevance, acceptability, and effectiveness of empowerment programs (Yazdkhasti et al., 2015; Percac-Lima et al., 2011; Mosley et al., 2021).

Research has shown that incorporating cultural sensitivity into program design and implementation has a positive impact on refugee women's engagement, confidence, and participation in empowerment initiatives (Mengesha et al., 2018; Stapleton et al., 2013; Liebling et al., 2020). . Organizations can create a more inclusive and supportive environment for refugee women by integrating cultural competence, awareness and responsiveness into program components such as educational materials, training and support services (Mengesha et al., 2017; Wiechers et al., 2023; Lotzin et al. , 2021). Culturally tailored interventions that recognize and respect the diverse backgrounds and experiences of refugee women can promote a sense of belonging, agency, and empowerment (Heckert et al., 2019; Huis et al., 2017; Al-Krenawi & Bell, 2022).

In addition, cultural sensitivity can help overcome language, communication, and social integration barriers and allow refugee women to access and benefit from empowerment programs (Jesuthasan et al., 2019; Henry et al., 2021; Pérez-Vázquez & Campos, 2022). By promoting cultural understanding, sensitivity and inclusiveness, organizations can create a safe and supportive space for refugee women to share their experiences, seek help and engage in activities that improve their well-being and empowerment (Sabri et al., 2019; Kainat et al. , 2021;

Communication and feedback mechanisms

The study established that YARID did not have a streamlined and clear channel of refugee feedback after the training which made it difficult for refugees to give their timely feedback to the administrators of the refugee agency. This made created ambiguity regarding who register the feedback of the refugees, and yet they needed to report their feedback for changes to be made.

“We would like to offer our observation to our leaders but we have no clear channel to go to regarding the training.” **Refugee woman Leader**

Lack of feedback can be a significant barrier to improving refugee empowerment programs. Feedback is essential to evaluate the program, monitor progress, identify areas for improvement, and ensure that the needs and preferences of refugee recipients are met. Without feedback mechanisms in place, organizations may have difficulty evaluating the effectiveness of their programs, making necessary adjustments, and addressing the challenges faced by refugee women. A lack of feedback can lead to missed opportunities to improve program outcomes, tailor interventions to better meet the needs of beneficiaries, and promote sustainable positive impacts in the long term.

Long-term impact

The study found out from the different testimonies of women leaders that the programs had equipped them for long term service, skills which will be important to them even when they are in their home countries. This is underscored by the fact that evaluation of YARID services by refugee beneficiaries go beyond immediate results to consider the long-term impact on their lives and communities. Positive experiences can include participants feeling empowered to pursue their goals, build sustainable livelihoods, and make positive contributions to society. Conversely, if the benefits of YARID services are short-lived or if participants encounter systemic barriers that limit their options for progression, their perceptions of program effectiveness may be tempered.

“The knowledge that I got from YARID programs is going to help me in the long run even when I have gone back to my country Eritrea. I learned leadership skills, women’s rights, child protection, entrepreneurship and economic empowerment” **Woman Refugee Leader**

In agreement with Vlassopoulos et al., (2020) Refugee empowerment programs are designed to have positive long-term effects on refugee recipients. These programs aim to improve various aspects of beneficiaries' lives, including financial resources, educational outcomes, health, household functioning and overall well-being. By providing resources directly to marginalized women, these programs significantly contribute to the empowerment of refugee women, enabling them to improve their situation and increase their impact over time (Iqbal et al.,2020; Vlassopoulos et al., 2020; Gower et al., 2022).

Additionally, culturally sensitive empowerment programs have increasingly important implications for global refugee agencies as they address the unique needs and challenges faced by refugee women and promote resilience, social connectedness, and overall well-being in the context of resettlement (Komatsu, 2023; Biswas, 2023 Ghazi et al., 2021). By tailoring interventions to the cultural background and experiences of refugee women, organizations can create a supportive and inclusive environment that promotes empowerment and positive long-term outcomes (Hando & Dinkisa, 2022; Sperandio et al., 2017; Parker & Vogl, 2018).

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.0 Introduction

This focuses on the conclusions and recommendations of the study in line with the research questions which include; (i) What is the role of YARID initiatives in supporting refugee women's leadership, community engagement and participation in decision-making processes in their communities?(ii) What are the challenges and barriers refugee women face in accessing and using YARID empowerment programs?(iii)What are the perceptions and experiences of refugee beneficiaries regarding the quality, relevance and effectiveness of services provided by YARID?

5.1 CONCLUSSIONS

5.2 What is the role of YARID initiatives in supporting refugee women's leadership, community engagement and participation in decision-making processes in their communities?

The study concludes that YARID initiatives have gone a long way in supporting women's leadership and community engagement through capacity building, advocacy, networking and support, community engagement, health and wholeness initiatives.

5.3 What are the challenges and barriers refugee women face in accessing and using YARID empowerment programs

The study concludes that the challenges and barriers which refugee women face in accessing and using YARID empowerment programs include language barrier, limited education, cultural norms and gender roles, Trauma and mental health issues, child care responsibilities, and social isolation,

5.4 What are the perceptions and experiences of refugee beneficiaries regarding the quality, relevance and effectiveness of services provided by YARID?

On this research question. the study concludes that refugee beneficiaries perceive services offered by YARID to be relevant to their needs, the quality of the services offered is

satisfactory, the services are effective, the services are not culturally sensitive enough. There is need for improvement in Communication and feedback mechanisms.

Furthermore, I conclude that the services offered by YARID had long term effects on the beneficiaries.

6.1 RECOMMENDATIONS

I recommend that the programs and services offered by YARID to refugees be designed to suite aspects of cultural sensitivity so that all refugees can be comfortable participating in the activities.

I also recommend that there be improved communication channels to enable refugees offer feedback to help in improving services offered.

There should be improved approaches that can enable the accommodation and handling of the challenge of language barrier.

6.2 AREAS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

There should be research carried out on the mental health of refugee women in Uganda.

Research should be carried out on the reproductive health services offered in refugee settlements and their efficacy on the health of refugee women.

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Appendix 1. Informed consent form

I am Nabwire Mildred, a student of Uganda Christian University offering a bachelors degree in social work and social administration.

I am conducting a research study on YARID as an organization and how its empowerment programs have empowered women in Nsambya Gogonya area. I request that you participate in this study so that I can be able to use the research findings to write a research report that will enable me to graduate with the above-mentioned Degree. I will be grateful if you accept to participate in the study.

Name.....

Signature.....

For more information, please call my number below.

0773334487

Appendix 2 Interview guide

- 1) Can you please provide an overview of your role and responsibilities within YARID?
- 2) How long have you been involved with YARID and its refugee support initiatives?
- 3) What motivated YARID to focus on supporting refugee women's leadership, community engagement and participation in decision-making processes?
- 4) What specific initiatives or programs does YARID offer to support refugee leadership development?
- 5) How do these initiatives aim to promote community engagement among refugee women?
- 6) In what ways does YARID facilitate the participation of refugee women in decision-making processes in their communities?
- 7) Can you describe the process of implementing these initiatives within refugee communities?
- 8) What are some of the main challenges or barriers you face in supporting refugee women's leadership and community engagement?
- 9) How does YARID address these challenges to ensure the effectiveness of its initiatives?
- 10) What positive results have you seen as a result of YARID's initiatives to support refugee women's leadership?
- 11) How do you measure the impact of these initiatives on refugee community engagement and participation in decision-making?

- 12) Can you provide any specific examples or success stories that highlight the impact of YARID initiatives on refugee women?
- 13) Does YARID work with other organizations or stakeholders to support refugee women's leadership and community involvement?
- 14) How do these partnerships increase the effectiveness and reach of YARID initiatives?
- 15) Are there any lessons learned or best practices from these collaborations that you would like to share?
- 16) Based on your experience, what recommendations would you offer to improve and expand YARID's refugee support initiatives?
- 17) How do you imagine the future of YARID's activities in this area?
- 18) Are there any specific areas for further research or exploration that you would highlight?
- 19) Is there anything else you would like to add or discuss about YARID's role in supporting refugee women's leadership and community engagement?
- 20) Explain that the interview focuses on understanding the challenges and barriers refugee women face in accessing and using YARID's empowerment programs.
- 21) Ensure confidentiality and obtain consent to continue the interview.
- 22) Can you provide a brief overview of your involvement with YARID and its refugee empowerment programs?
- 23) How long have you been working with refugee communities and in what capacity?
- 24) What led you to get involved in supporting refugee women through YARID programs?
- 25) In your experience, what are some of the main challenges and barriers refugee women face in accessing YARID's empowerment programs?
- 26) Can you elaborate on any socio-cultural factors that may prevent refugee women from using these programs effectively?
- 27) How do economic factors such as financial constraints or lack of resources affect refugee participation in YARID programs?

- 28) Are there any institutional factors within YARID or the wider community that present barriers to refugee women's access to empowerment programmes?
- 29) Can you share any specific examples or anecdotes of challenges refugee women have faced accessing or using YARID programs?
- 30) How do these challenges manifest themselves in the daily lives of refugees and their families?
- 31) Do you see any differences in the challenges faced by refugee women from different cultural backgrounds or demographics?
- 32) How do refugee women navigate and overcome these problems when accessing YARID programs?
- 33) Are there any strategies or support mechanisms that YARID provides to help refugee women overcome these barriers?
- 34) Can you share any examples of resilience or empowerment of refugee women despite these challenges?
- 35) Based on your observations and experiences, what recommendations would you offer to YARID to address the challenges and obstacles faced by refugee women?
- 36) Are there any specific changes or modifications that you think could improve the accessibility and effectiveness of YARID's refugee empowerment programs?
- 37) How can YARID work with other organizations or stakeholders to better support refugee women in overcoming these challenges?
- 38) Is there anything else you would like to add or discuss regarding the challenges refugee women face in accessing YARID's empowerment programs?