

HUMANITARIAN LEADERSHIP AND NATIONAL SECURITY: AN ANALYSIS OF UGANDA'S OPEN-DOOR REFUGEE POLICY IN NAKIVALE REFUGEE SETTLEMENT

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DECLARATION

I, **Asiimire Diana Maria** hereby declare that this dissertation is my original work and has not been submitted to any other university or institution for the award of any academic qualification.

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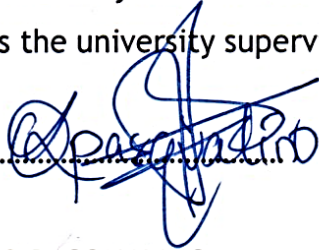
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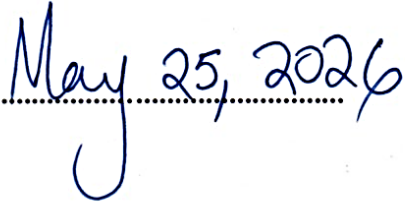
APPROVAL

This dissertation by **Asiimire Diana Maria (S23B56/008)** has been submitted with my approval as the university supervisor.

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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to the host communities of Nakivale Refugee Settlement and across Uganda whose resilience, generosity and quiet dignity in the face of overlooked hardship inspired every page of this work. To all those working tirelessly at the intersection of humanitarian leadership and human dignity, may this work however modest contribute something of value to the cause.

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ABSTRACT

Uganda's refugee policy is open based on the Refugees Act 2006 and the Refugee Regulations 2010 and has become internationally recognised as one of the most progressive refugee protection policies in Africa. Uganda has become a leading example of a development oriented approach to humanitarian action by giving refugees the right to freedom of movement, employment, access to land and access to services. However, the human security of host communities is significantly and under researched and is highly precarious due to the competition for resources, weak governance and diminishing international support.

This study looks at the implications of the open-door refugee policy on humanitarian leadership structures and human security of host communities in Uganda's oldest and largest refugee settlement Nakivale Refugee Settlement in Isingiro District, Western Uganda with an estimated population of 100,000 refugees from more than 10 countries. The study uses a qualitative secondary data analysis methodology with a systematic literature review and thematic synthesis approach to examine 5 research questions on humanitarian leadership, host community security, governance and resource allocation, role of the Government of Uganda and refugee-led organisations' contributions and draws lessons from peer-reviewed scholarship, UNHCR operational data, government policy reports and institutional assessments published between 2015 and 2025.

The study draws on the framework of Human Security Theory as presented by the United Nations Development Programme (1994) and developed by the Commission on Human Security (2003) to examine the experiences of the host communities in seven areas economic, food, health, personal, community and political security. The results indicate that although there is the concept of an open door policy, it has created a formally progressive governance architecture, there are significant gaps in its implementation at the ground level from policy intentions to policy implementation. Institutional trust was undermined and social cohesion was weakened after the 2018 corruption scandal in refugee assistance. Host communities bear the brunt of the environmental and socio-economic effects of the conflict such as land dispossession

without compensation, degradation of natural resources and unequal access to humanitarian services and are largely excluded from decision making. International burden sharing deficits remain to erode the model's sustainability. In parallel, refugee-led organizations and community-based activities are becoming vital, albeit with limiting structures, in addressing gaps in service provision and promoting social cohesion.

The research finds that durable refugee protection and safety are not mutually exclusive objectives of the host community. Structural changes to land governance, better accountability systems, fair distribution of resources, and meaningful participation of host communities and refugee-driven institutions in land governance are necessary to achieve sustainable humanitarian outcomes in Nakivale. The results have implications for the Office of the Prime Minister of Uganda, UNHCR, the Norwegian Refugee Council and other international partners who wish to build the bedrock of Uganda's humanitarian leadership model.

The key words are: open-door refugee policy, humanitarian leadership, human security, host communities, Nakivale Refugee Settlement, Uganda, thematic synthesis, governance, burden-sharing.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

DRC: Democratic Republic of Congo

JSTOR: Journal Storage (academic database)

NGO/NGOs: Non-Government Organization(s)

OPM: Office of the Prime Minister (Uganda)

SDG: Sustainable Development Goal

UN: United Nations

UNDP: United Nations Development Programme

UNHCR: United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the study

The twenty first century humanitarian leadership is working within a complicated web between conflicting national interests, multilateral coordination systems and evolving institutional changes. The global refugee crisis is in the center of these tensions and has compelled states to balance the harsh reality between the international protection and the national security interests. Claiming that a human security approach to the issue of world refugee hosting goes far beyond the physical security of displaced individuals to include the economic, social and environmental factors allowing both refugees and host populations to lead a dignified life, Betts and Collier, (2017) argues.

Across Africa, a clash between constitutional promises of civil rights and the practical necessities of inclusive practice provision is a common problem. A cautionary case study is South Africa, where bureaucratic obstruction and xenophobic violence have frequently sabotaged constitutional rights to asylum (Crush & Tawodzera, 2023). The case of the Somali refugees in the Dadaab and Kakuma camps in Kenya highlights the protracted human security impacts of prolonged displacement to the host population living in dry under resourced areas in East Africa.

The management of refugees in Uganda as an enacted policy within the 2006 Refugees Act and subsequent policy frameworks is popularly considered a progressive model. The act will provide refugees with freedom of movement, the right to work, national health and education services as well as the provision of land to settle and farm (Uganda, 2006). The Uganda model has been called an example of progressive management of refugees internationally and the World Bank (2016) marks it as a development oriented approach to managing refugees as economic participants and not aid beneficiaries.

Nevertheless, human security of host communities in Uganda, including Nakivale is still in a very fragile state despite this international recognition. The balance that has historically maintained the coexistence of refugee-host communities has placed massive pressure on food insecurity, land issues and scramble over scarce resources (Bjorkhaug, Tyldum and Namanya, 2025). The European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (2024) noted that Nakivale is both a testament and a demonstration of what the settlement model of Uganda can achieve and what constraints it faces, as refugees receive basic services but host communities have to endure unequal environmental and social impacts.

The issue of human security in Nakivale shows that the lack of proper global burden sharing can have extensive implications on the host communities. Another scandal involving the misuse of humanitarian funds that was revealed in 2018 through the refugee aid scandal further weakened trust in governance institutions and illustrated how structural breakdowns could pose a threat to the political and communal safety of all stakeholders (Tegenbos, 2024). Although these issues are large scale and intricate the literature based on empirical studies that focus on the perspectives of host communities and explore the dynamics between humanitarian leadership constructs and human security outcomes in Nakivale is lacking.

This paper therefore analyzes the open-door policy of refugees in Uganda in terms of humanitarian leadership and human security of a host community using Nakivale Refugee Settlement as its case study. The study aims to produce evidence based analysis by relying on a sound body of secondary literature such as peer reviewed studies, government reports, UNHCR operational data and institutional policy reports and therefore inform more equitable and effective humanitarian governance.

1.2 Problem statement

One of the biggest refugee populations in Africa is situated in Uganda. The Nakivale Refugee Settlement in the Isingiro District now has a population of about 100,000

refugees from across the region specifically the Democratic Republic of Congo, Somalia and Burundi among others (UNHCR, 2023). The open-door policy of the refugee policy of Uganda has been hailed internationally as an example of progressive humanitarian leadership with refugees enjoying wide rights in comparison with most other refugee receiving states in the region.

However, there is a major and unexplored gap between the policy promises of Uganda and the actual lives of host communities around settlement grounds Nakivale in specific here. Grześkowiak (2024, p. 95) shows that on the ground in Uganda's settlements it is 'strikingly different' from official accounts as resources are too limited and implementation is too lacking to serve the interests of the Uganda Model. Bjørkhaug et al. (2025) conclude that these inequities create tensions which have been felt for decades and will grow more intense without specific policy change. Past research has mainly looked into the outcomes of refugees in terms of the open-door policy of Uganda but the human security of the host populations has received relatively less systematic attention. The current literature recognizes land tenure struggles, resource contests and fading humanitarian funding as the key stressors, yet fails to effectively examine how humanitarian leadership structures mediate these pressures at the local level, particularly from the perspective of host communities (Bjørkhaug et al., 2025). While Grześkowiak (2024) documents the multi-faceted threats facing the Uganda model and notes early indications of inter communal hostility, his analysis centers primarily on refugee marginalisation rather than host community human security outcomes.

Moreover, the 2018 corruption scandal of the refugee management system in Uganda revealed the gross governance shortcomings that weakened the trust in both national and international humanitarian actors (Tegenbos, 2024). This scandal coupled with increasing funding disparities and increasing rivalry over resources implies that the sustainability of the open-door model in Uganda is under threat. If left unaddressed these structural weaknesses pose a threat of worsening the insecurity of host

communities and undermining the social cohesion on which the management of refugees in Uganda depends.

This paper closes this gap by examining the impact of the open-door policy of refugees in Uganda on humanitarian leadership practices and human security outcomes of the host communities in Nakivale through qualitative secondary data that will be used to analyze the effects of the policy on the seven dimensions of human security.

1.3 Research questions

This study is guided by the following research questions:

1. What is the impact of Uganda's open door refugee policy on the humanitarian leadership structures governing Nakivale refugee settlement?
2. What are the human security experiences and concerns of host communities in Nakivale Refugee Settlement?
3. How do humanitarian governance arrangements and resource allocation mechanisms affect social cohesion and inter-group relations between host communities and refugee populations in Nakivale?
4. What is the role of the Government of Uganda in promoting the human security of host communities in Nakivale Refugee Settlement?
5. How has refugee led organisations and community based initiatives contributed to the human security of both host communities and refugees in Nakivale Refugee Settlement?

1.4 Objectives of the study

The study has the following objectives.

1.4.1 General objective

The overall aim of the research will be to examine how the open-door policy of Uganda in regard to refugees has affected humanitarian leadership and human

security of the host communities in Nakivale Refugee Settlement in the Isingiro District, Western Uganda.

1.4.2 Specific objectives

The following objectives of the study are:

1. To test how the Open-Door Refugee Policy in Uganda influences humanitarian leadership systems within Nakivale Refugee Settlement.
2. To analyze the human security experiences and concerns of host communities in Nakivale Refugee Settlement.
3. To determine the influence of humanitarian governance and resource allocation arrangements on social cohesion and inter-group relations in Nakivale.
4. To assess how the Government of Uganda has fostered human security of host communities in Nakivale Refugee Settlement.
5. To understand the role of refugee-led organisations and community-based initiatives in enhancing human security of both host communities and refugees in Nakivale Refugee Settlement.

1.5 Scope of study

This paper is based on Nakivale Refugee Settlement in Isingiro District, western Uganda. Nakivale is one of the oldest refugee camps in Uganda and one of the largest in the world, in 1958 it was established and officially gazetted in 1960 occupying about 185 square kilometres in Nakivale Sub-County, with refugees from over 5 countries of origin (UNHCR, 2023). It was chosen for its being the most solid context in which Uganda's open door policy has been put into practice, as well as the most well documented case, with which to explore the link between humanitarian leadership and human security of its host communities.

The current study is thematically concerned with how the policy of the Republic of Uganda concerning refugees, the humanitarian leadership systems and the human security of the host communities are related. It looks at each of the seven dimensions of human security as defined by the United Nations Development Programme (1994)

economic, food, health, environmental, personal, community and political security. The study relies mostly on secondary data that has been published in 2015-2025 with special consideration of that published in 2019 and later onward to make the study relevant to the current policy context.

1.6 Significance of the study

This research has a number of significant contributions. It helps close the divide between the ideals of progressive policy frameworks and the realities of implementation and provides an evidence based analysis that could further guide equitable and effective governance of humanitarian policy. In particular, the Office of the Prime Minister in Uganda which organizes the work of the refugees can use these results to enhance the accountability system and overcome the structural imbalances in the distribution of resources.

On an international scale, this research can be used by organisations like UNHCR, the World Bank and the Norwegian Refugee Council to have a recalibration of their programming to better respond to the needs of the host community and address refugee protection. The paper has identified the danger of reinforcing the false dichotomy between the welfare of refugees and the security of the host community and it has shown that the only ways to achieve durable solutions are to invest in both groups.

The study will give humanitarian organisations working in Nakivale and other settlements an idea of the human security aspects that are the most important to the wellbeing of host communities so they can design programs that are more focused and effective. The conclusions can also be applied to civil society organisations, community-based organisations, and refugee-led organisations aiming to enhance their advocacy and operational efficiency.

Lastly, the study would add to the academic literature on the topic of humanitarian leadership and human security in East Africa because it produces a methodological,

secondary data driven analysis of the Nakivale case which would be a gap in the existing empirical literature and a base on which new research is based.

1.7 Theoretical framework

This research paper is rooted in the Human Security Theory that offers an analytical framework in the study of how the open-door policy on refugees in Uganda, humanitarian leadership and the wellbeing of host communities in Nakivale are interrelated. Human Security Theory changes the object of security that has been traditionally taken as the state to the individual and community by stating that people need to be considered as the objects of security, and it is necessary to define security in the context of freedom of people, their lack of wants, and their ability to live with dignity (Commission on Human Security, 2003).

The theory of Human Security was first presented as a worldwide policy idea by Mahbub ul Haq in the pioneer publication in the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in the Human Development Report of 1994. According to the Report, human security has seven dimensions which are interrelated and identified as economic security, food security, health security, environmental security, personal security, community security and political security (UNDP, 1994). This multidimensional conceptualization questioned the prevailing state-centric security paradigm and made the individual the central beneficiary and center of the security policy.

These dimensions have been further streamlined by the developments in human security theory. A people-centered approach that places protection and empowerment as the two pillars of human security was articulated by the Commission on Human Security (2003), which was co-chaired by Sadako Ogata and Amartya Sen. The Commission claimed that protection needs formal institutional securities, such as law, policy, and governance, whereas empowerment needs people and communities to build the capacity and strength to engage in and influence the decisions, which impact their lives (Commission on Human Security, 2003).

In 2012, the theory was further consolidated by the United Nations General Assembly Resolution 66/290 which added a third pillar, freedom to live in dignity and emphasized that human security should be conceptualized as people-centered, context-specific, prevention-oriented and based on multi-sectoral responses (United Nations General Assembly, 2012). This resolution also established the connection between human security and the humanitarian, development and peace nexus, establishing the theory as a guideline to integrated policy responses that can be applied to structural vulnerabilities in addition to immediate protection demands.

The Human Security Theory especially, is best suited to this study since it places the host communities and their experiences and vulnerabilities at the core of the discussion, which is exactly the group that has not received enough attention in literature on Uganda refugee policy. The seven dimensions of the theory offer a methodological analytical outline of evaluating the multidimensional effects of refugee hosting on Ugandan communities in Nakivale. Among some dimensions, which can be studied in a systematic manner via this framework, are economic competition over land and means of livelihoods, worsening access to health and education services, environmental degradation caused by a concentration of people and political exclusion in decisions of governance (Tadjbakhsh & Chenoy, 2007).

The dual focus of the theory on protection and empowerment is also significant to assess the efficacy of humanitarian leadership in Nakivale. The most recent corruption scandal in 2018 can also be examined as a case of governance failures that threaten the security of both the host communities and refugees. On the other hand, refugee-driven organisations and community-based efforts are empowerment tools the theory acknowledges as key to sustainable security performances (Chandler & Hynek, 2021).

Human Security Theory also allows us to make an analysis that links the local dynamics in Nakivale to wider regional and global policy structures. UNDP (2023) has made a clear link between human security and the Sustainable Development Goals, specifically SDG 16 on peaceful, inclusive societies and effective institutions. This

connection ensures that the theory can be applicable to descriptive analysis as well as the development of actionable policy recommendations that are consistent with the Uganda development agenda and the international humanitarian commitments (United Nations Trust Fund for Human Security, 2016). The theory has proved useful in the practical analysis of issues related to refugees as has been revealed by recent scholarship in the East African region. Martin and Owen (2013) also place human security within the framework of a controversial yet fruitful concept to describe the interdependent nature of the vulnerabilities experienced by communities in conflict-affected and displacement situations, and it can be directly applied to the Nakivale case.

1.8 Conceptual framework

The study has a conceptual framework that demonstrates the interconnection between the important variables in the study. The independent variable is the Open-Door Refugee Policy in Uganda which includes the Refugees Act of 2006, the Refugee Regulations of 2010 and institutional arrangements that provide the right to land, work, movement and services to refugees. This policy works by modifying intervening variables, such as humanitarian governance structures, mechanisms of resource allocation, implementation gaps, international funding levels and local power dynamics, in order to generate outputs in the dependent variables of humanitarian leadership effectiveness and host community human security.

Human security of the host communities is conceptualized on the seven dimensions that the UNDP (1994) identifies economic security, food security, health security, environmental security, personal security, community security and political security. The framework acknowledges the interrelationship and reinforcing aspects of these dimensions, and that policy outcomes are influenced by national-level frameworks, as well as the micro-level social, economic and political dynamics of Nakivale. Intervening variables are interactive and interactive that is, the same policy framework can lead to diverse results based on the governance capacity, levels of funding and the local contexts.

1.9 Operational definitions of terms.

Uganda Open-Door Refugee Policy: The legal and policy framework that governs the Uganda system of refugee protection which is mainly the 2006 Refugees Act, the 2010 Refugee Regulations, and policy instruments. With this framework, the refugees are accorded the freedom of movement, the right to employment and start businesses, right to utilize the national healthcare and education systems and settlement and farming land.

Humanitarian Leadership: exercising power, coordination and decision making by actors in the design, delivery, and governance of refugee protection and humanitarian response, at the national, international and non-governmental levels. This paper is about the role of leadership models in determining the fate of refugees and the host communities in Nakivale.

Host Communities: Ugandan nationals living and surrounding Nakivale Refugee Settlement who share land, resources, services and social space with the refugees. This involves communities within the formal settlement boundary and those around the settlement affected by the presence of the settlement.

Human Security: A multidimensional, people centered understanding of security, which incorporates economic, food, health, environmental, personal, community and political aspects of security, expressed by the UNDP (1994) and further developed in UN policy documents.

Humanitarian Governance: The institutional structures, decision-making and coordination which define the process by which humanitarian resources are distributed and the process through which protection is shared between the Office of the Prime Minister, UNHCR, international NGOs and local actors.

Implementation Gap: The gap between Uganda progressive refugee policy structure and the actualities on the ground such as bureaucracy, corruption, capacity and failure of international partners to deliver promised resources.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

The chapter relies on the available empirical and theoretical literature to discuss the study of open-door policy related to refugees in Uganda and how it impacts on humanitarian leadership and human security of the host communities. Thematic organisation of the review is in line with the intervening and dependent variables of the study and includes open-door refugee policies and humanitarian leadership, humanitarian governance structures and resource allocation. Secondly, implementation gaps and policy practice disconnects, international funding and donor priorities. Lastly, local power dynamics and community relations and the seven dimensions of host community human security. This chapter ends by realizing the research gap that is addressed by this study.

2.2 Open-Door refugee policies and humanitarian leadership.

The findings of the empirical literature on the policy of open-door refugee's policy indicates a wide range of differences in the way states institute such structures and the results that such structures produce, both to the refugees and the host societies. The contextual comparative research stresses that the original humanitarian drive of an open-door policy is not sufficient in itself, sustainable protection must entail institutionalized burden-sharing, significant involvement of host community and responsive governance.

The open door model has been internationally regarded as an innovative form of refugee protection in Uganda. In *Refugee Survey Quarterly*, (Grześkowiak, 2024) critically evaluates the Ugandan model and demonstrates that while the legal framework is genuinely progressive its implementation is being undermined by inadequate international resources and dwindling support resulting in the profound marginalization of refugees within Uganda and growing uncertainty among

government and UNHCR officials about whether the model's core assumptions can be sustained. The analysis shows that the Uganda model which was initially hailed as a success of refugees being incorporated into national development strategies, is becoming more and more incapable of delivering on what it itself has fashioned as the demands of its policy framework.

Uganda has also been an open door in its political economy which is an issue that has been given scholarly attention. Drewski and Gerhards (2024) opine that the policy of Uganda is partly informed by a strategic positioning of refugees as a Pan-African solidarity discourse which is a source of domestic political legitimacy as well as international reputation building under President Museveni. The significance of this observation is that it implies that the open-door policy is motivated by more than just humanitarian considerations but is also influenced by national interest calculations that a dynamic that has direct ramifications on the consistency and fairness with which it is exercised.

The literature on refugee leadership in Uganda gives more details. A comparative study of refugee leadership in East Africa by the Local Engagement Refugee Research Network that had a field visit to Nakivale showed that refugee leaders are formed by vacuum in the delivery of humanitarian services and not a traditional leadership desire (Carleton University, 2025). These leaders are vital in education, livelihood and community mobilization, but have obstacles such as tokenism in policymaking and precarious legal status and minimal access to funding. This literature confirms that humanitarian leadership in Nakivale is a complex interaction between the state actors, international organisations and refugee-led initiatives which are not adequately represented by conventional attempts to analyze the Uganda model.

Cevik (2025) in regional comparative perspective, looks at how the open door policy of Turkey toward Syrian refugees created initially accepted policy that failed over time as the number of refugees swelled and economic strains accumulated. The hospitality to resentment path that has taken place in Turkey illustrates that the

attitude of the host community is not predetermined but mediated by the economic conditions, the discourse of politics and the perceived fairness of the policy application. This comparative lesson supports the urgency of researching host community experiences in Uganda prior to a comparable downward spiral becoming a reality.

Siddikoglu and Sagiroglu (2023) in their study of the situation in Pakistan and Turkey, add another point that initial hospitality led to ad hoc policies in both countries when displacement became chronic and this structural constraint in policies that remained unsupported through adequate international burden sharing. Their conclusions can be directly applied to the case of Uganda where the number of refugees has increased but the international funding has reduced (Bjørkhaug et al., 2025).

2.3 Humanitarian governance structures and allocation of resources.

In situations where refugees are hosted, governance arrangements are key factors in determining humanitarian outcomes. The literature is in agreement that the organisation of humanitarian assistance, decision making process including who is involved in the process and distribution of resources between the refugee and the host population significantly influence the protection outcomes and social cohesion.

The Office of the Prime Minister in Uganda is the primary governmental institution on managing refugees coordinating with the UNHCR and various international and local NGOs. The Uganda Country Refugee Response Plan 2024-2025, which was co-authored by the OPM and UNHCR (2024) recognizes the fact that Uganda has long been a leader in the global community in terms of hosting refugees and host communities coexisting, and highlights that refugees and host communities have health centers, schools and other social infrastructure in common. Although such a combined strategy is admirable in theory, it puts a massive strain on the facilities that were not originally intended to accommodate doubled populations.

The study of the response of Bangladesh-based Rohingya refugees shows how dangerous it can be to have a governance structure that establishes parallel systems of service delivery to refugees and ignores host communities. Siraj (2025) discovered that the host communities in Ukhiya and Teknaf were systematically marginalized in humanitarian aid when incurring the environmental and social costs of the presence of refugees. The resulting resentment, recorded as mixed-methods studies gave rise to worsening outcomes of community security such as growing petty crimes and gender-based violence. This find in Bangladesh underscores the dangers of the Nakivale situation where such trends of feeling unfairness in resource allocation have been observed.

The management of foreign aid in Uganda has also been a problem. Tegenbos (2024) uses his thirteen months of fieldwork in ethnography to record the corruption scandal in refugee aid in Nakivale in 2018 that exposed how misappropriation of humanitarian resources instilled power imbalances among national, international, and refugee actors. The scandal did not only channel resources to the wrong beneficiaries but also demonstrated the structural gaps in accountability and oversight mechanisms that is still being used to delegitimize humanitarian governance in the settlement. This observation highlights that failures in governance do not just reflect issues of administration but are direct challenges to political and community safety of host societies.

A valuable dimension to the perception of governance actors by refugees as it influences their behaviour and decision-making. Their survey of the Syrian refugees in Lebanon established that the perception of the effectiveness of governance plays a significant role in influencing the preferences of refugees in terms of mobility and has implications on how the quality of governance is likely to affect the overall operation of the refugee protection system. Although the study is geared towards another context, the importance of governance legitimacy to sustainable protection of refugees is emphasized.

2.4 Implementation gaps and policy practice disconnect

Another theme common in the literature on the refugee model in Uganda is the disjunction between its liberal legal and policy declarations and the actualities of implementation on the ground. This gap has been well written up in the studies that have been done on Nakivale and is one of the most significant discoveries in the empirical literature applicable to this study.

Bjørkhaug, Tyldum and Namanya (2025) present a qualitative study founded on the in-depth interviews with twenty three members of the host community in Nakivale. Their results indicate that host communities perceive the presence of refugees as beneficial economically and socially but raise serious concerns regarding the resource competition, perceived inequalities in implementing the policy, and the necessity of increased fairness. More to the point, the researchers discovered that host community frustrations are not so much targeted at refugees per se but instead at the policies of Uganda concerning refugees, which has significant implications concerning policy reform. It is found necessary to deal with structural injustices in land distribution and economic opportunities to ensure social cohesion.

The land governance dimension of this implementation is important. According to the records by Bjørkhaug et al. (2025), the land where Nakivale settlement is located was under settlement land declared in 1995 without any formal acquisition under the Land Acquisition Act of Uganda, and without any proper demarcation, as well as without any compensation to the Ugandan nationals who have customary ownership of the land. This institutionalized injustice has created a long-standing resentment of tensions and disruption of the social contract between host societies and the state. Similar structural flaws in the land management strategy in Uganda were recognized by the World Bank (2016) which suggested a transition to a development-based refugee programming.

Grześkowiak (2024) goes on to examine the increasing gap between the humanitarian principles and practices of Uganda, stating that the self-reliance concept has reached

the extremes due to resource limitations and the decrease in the level of international assistance. The model will be more of a dream than a working reality unless there is substantive reform and more international cooperation. Doyel (2022) also provides a related criticism, that self-reliance policies have the unintended impact of making precarity worse by shifting the responsibility to refugees and hosts without creating the structural conditions in which meaningful autonomy can be achieved.

Ahimbisibwe (2019) also provides a valuable historical context to this study, reporting that Uganda has faced direct and indirect threats to its security due to its open-door policy, including the armed groups using the settlements of refugees as bases and the Rwandan government threatening to assault Nakivale and Oruchinga settlements in 2003. These acts of insecurity reveal that the loopholes in the Uganda model of refugees are not only in resource allocation, but also in the basic issues of physical security of communities to which refugees are sent.

2.5 International funding and donor priorities.

International funding is a core component in the sustainability of the open door policy of refugees in Uganda and therefore, the priorities of donors and the level of funding are the most important factors to determine the success of the policy to the refugees and their host communities. The literature records a long standing disjuncture between international commitments and real resource flows, and its effects that have a ripple effect within governance structures, service delivery and community security.

According to Bjørkhaug et al. (2025), although the policy on refugees in Uganda has gained a global following, funding deficit has direct impact on the host populations, as a decrease in humanitarian aid translated into service delivery, livelihood support, and social cohesion programming. The Nakivale Settlement Dashboard (2023, Quarter 4, 2023) of UNHCR offers operational data to confirm the presence of large funding

gaps and their direct influence on service provision, reporting deficits in food assistance, health services, and livelihood programs that impinge on the lives of both refugee and host populations.

In comparative research, Siddikoglu and Sagioglu (2023) show that in the case of international funding not being realised on the promised levels, host countries have no option but to make impossible decisions on whether to keep progressive policies or consider real domestic interests regarding resource allocation. The Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework has also been criticized in the Ugandan context, where it has put pressure on the host states without providing equal international assistance (Kebede, 2025). This dynamic of burden-shifting directly poses a threat to the human security of host communities sharing land and resources with refugees.

The evaluation of the management of refugees conducted by the World Bank (2016) recognized the importance of the international financing but demanded the transition towards development-based financing rather than humanitarian financing. The Uganda Country Refugee Response Plan 2024-2025 (OPM & UNHCR, 2024) also highlights the importance of long-term development financing to support the demands of the host community and the protection of refugees. Recent attempts to open economic opportunities of refugee inclusion in Uganda are recorded in the Shorey (2025) of the Hilton Foundation, but they are not enough to fill funding gaps at the structural level.

2.6 local power dynamics and community relations

The micro level social relationship between refugee and host populations in Nakivale have been studied in an increasing body of empirical literature that highlights the complexity and context-specificity of inter-group relations. This literature disputes the easy accounts of either a collaborative co-existence or an unavoidable confrontation and instead evidence points to a landscape in which everyday cooperation and resource driven conflict coexist and where inter-group relations are

shaped less by inherent animosity than by governance decisions about land, services and resource allocation.

Bjørkhaug (2020) examines the refugee-host relationship in Nakivale, finding that Uganda's open-door policy creates economic gains for some while pushing others deeper into poverty, and that the policy itself is being undermined by land conflicts and corruption. This early but important work establishes a pattern that runs throughout the literature: a policy that promises inclusion and shared prosperity but is quietly failing the people it is meant to serve due to poor governance and structural neglect.

The latest empirical data on Nakivale is recorded by Bjørkhaug et al. (2025) who report positive and negative accounts on the presence of refugees as narrated by the members of the host community. On the one hand, respondents understand that refugees are market makers, job creators and humanitarian investors. Conversely, they also worry about resource competition, unfairness in accessing services and the insufficiency of the policy provisions to host communities. Importantly, the research concludes that such ambivalence is not the result of xenophobia but rather the result of tangible material experiences and a felt structural injustice a result that has significant policy implications on how host community concerns ought to be addressed by policymakers.

These findings are supported by research in other contexts. Zigashane (2025) analyses refugee leadership in Kakuma, Kenya, where refugee-led organisations fill the gaps in the humanitarian services with a high level of barriers to effective involvement in the governance. In the DRC, Lhazom, Pham, and Vinck (2025) discover that, in addition to safety, job prospects, social networks and political activism which are common human security priorities, are valued by the displaced population, regardless of the refugee host dynamics and orienting towards the types of integrated programming that most effectively maintain coexistence.

The study by Siraj (2025) in Bangladesh is a comparative warning of what might occur when the local power relationship goes down the drain, resource competitiveness and

culture clash lead to friction and social stress, decreased community trust and physical and community security degradation. The similarities with Nakivale, where competition over resources and perceptions of policy inequities produce the same stressor, highlight the pressing need to manage local power dynamics by equitable governance before the lack of social cohesion can further weaken.

2.7 Human security Dimensions

2.7.1 Economic security

One of the key human security issues to the host people in Nakivale is economic security. According to a report by Bjørkhaug et al. (2025), the members of the host community express both the positive effects of the presence of refugees such as markets generated by the refugees, employment prospects and humanitarian investments and the negative ones such as someone having to compete in the informal sector and feeling unfairly treated with regards to access to livelihood support programs. The “30-70 principle”, where humanitarian organisations are expected to devote thirty percent of their programming funds to the host communities, is a possibly significant tool in regard to economic grievances, but its actual usage is uneven.

The World Bank (2016) identified economic security as a paramount aspect of wellbeing of host communities and demanded development-oriented funding that recognises both refugees and host communities as economic players, able to contribute to national development. This is a recommendation that has not been put into effect and the Uganda refugee response is still largely run by humanitarian financing at the cost of the long term development investments to support the host community with economic security (OPM & UNHCR, 2024).

2.7.2 Food Security

The lack of agricultural land and the reduced humanitarian aid is a serious concern to food security in Nakivale. Bjørkhaug et al. (2025) record that land given to refugees has caused conflicts with the host communities who assert customary possession and this has lowered the land area used by Ugandan families in agriculture and compromised food production. Reduced food rations, which are prompted by lack of funds cause desperate situations which impact the populations and create competition among food resources.

According to the Uganda Country Refugee Response Plan 2024-2025 (OPM & UNHCR, 2024), food insecurity is among the most urgent issues in refugee settlements in Uganda as it is associated with funding shortages and agricultural land use. These systemic causes of food insecurity cannot be solved only with emergency food aid but with combined land management, agricultural investment and the long term financing.

2.7.3 Health Security

Another aspect where the progressive policy aspiration of Uganda, that the refugees and host communities enjoy equal health centers, creates an opportunity and a challenge, is access to health services. Bjørkhaug et al. (2025) observe that health facilities in Nakivale are often over strained with both refugee and host population groups reporting declining access as facilities find it challenging to provide services to increasing numbers with only minor incremental capacity, staffing and supply additions.

The Nakivale Settlement Dashboard prepared by UNHCR (2023) reports health funding shortages and their impact on service quality. Comparative evidence in Siraj (2025) of under-resourced shared health infrastructure in Bangladesh creating perceptions of inequity undermining social cohesion has some obvious parallels in Nakivale. The literature defines the importance of integrated health service delivery that increases

capacity to serve both populations to keep both health security and community relations (OPM & UNHCR, 2024).

2.7.4 Environmental Security

The most obvious and recorded impact of concentrated refugee populations in Nakivale is environmental degradation. Bjorkhaug et al. (2025) record the pressures of water resources, deforestation to firewood and buildings and land degradation due to intensive cultivation environmental factors that cause resource competition between the refugees and the host populations and are one of the causes of grievances expressed by the host population members.

Comparative evidence presented by Siraj (2025) of Bangladesh shows that environmental security is not a technical problem only but a social and political problem, environmental degradation breeds conflicts, endangers livelihoods and contributes to a decline in community relations. The lack of proper environmental management programming in Nakivale implies that host communities are left to shoulder these environmental costs without proportional compensation or assistance.

2.7.5 Individual and Community Security.

The two dimensions' personal security or freedom of violence and crime and community security or maintenance of social cohesion and peaceful relations between groups are interrelated and the literature continues to recognize these as the aspects that are weak in the context of refugee hosting. According to Bjorkhaug et al. (2025), host communities in Nakivale usually talk of peaceful coexistence with refugees and are concerned about tensions due to competition over resources, land, and perceived inequities in policy execution.

The threats to security in the past such as armed activity correlated to the presence of refugee populations and threats posed by governments of neighbouring countries are recorded in Ahimbisibwe (2019) illustrating that personal security issues in Nakivale have a tangible historical underpinning and are not merely perceptual. Recent studies confirm that land disputes have continued to be a major cause of inter

community conflicts (Bjørkhaug et al., 2025) which highlights the necessity to enhance land governance and conflict resolution mechanisms.

The 2018 corruption scandal as reported by Tegenbos (2024) also exemplifies how governance failure can create a sense of community insecurity through channeling resources, compromising trust and creating an imbalance of power that puts both the host communities and refugees in disadvantages. It is found that effective humanitarian leadership that restores transparency and accountability is crucial to restoring community security.

2.7.6 Political Security

Political security the right to be meaningfully involved in making decisions about one's life and the right to exercise fundamental rights is a dimension where host communities in Nakivale have major shortcomings. Bjørkhaug et al. (2025) record that Ugandan nationals staying in the settlement are not officially recognised by the government which has branded them as encroachers despite their ownership claims on the basis of customary settlement. Such a lack of formal inclusion in the decision making and other processes is a key political security advantage that generates complaints and erodes trust in the governing structures.

Studies concerning leadership of refugees by Carleton University (2025) also record that meaningful engagement in the policy making process has been elusive to both the leaders of the refugees and the representatives of the host communities and that tokenism and marginalisation characterize most policy deliberations. These findings are substantiated by Zigashane (2025) in the Kenyan context who argues that politics of exclusion is a structural aspect of refugee governance in East Africa as opposed to being a single issue peculiar to Uganda.

2.8 Summary and Research.

The reviewed literature in this chapter attests to the fact that the open-door policy on refugees in Uganda is an important yet a progressively challenged humanitarian construct whose practice does not meet its progressive legal obligations. The empirical data indicates that there is a regular trend: the lack of governance, resource scarcity and structural inequalities in the land management and service provision degrade the human security of the host communities although Uganda keeps its international status of a model of refugee protection.

There is a critical gap in the literature. Although the separate dimensions of human security of the host community have been analysed there is no secondary data driven analysis that unifies the dimensions in a single analytical framework grounded in the Nakivale setting. Additionally, the literature on the topic is insufficient to test the role of humanitarian leadership structures between policy framework and host community outcomes. This paper seeks to fill these gaps by offering a thematic and systematic analysis of the evidence through the Human Security Theory as an integrating concept and the objective of coming up with insights that can inform more fair and effective humanitarian governance in Nakivale and other such places.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter provides the research design, data sources, data collection plan, inclusion and exclusion criteria, analytical methodology and ethical issues that will inform this study. This research design uses qualitative design of secondary data analysis, which is based on systematic review of literature, policy documents and institutional reports on the relationship between the open door policy on refugees in Uganda, humanitarian leadership and human security of the host communities in Nakivale Refugee Settlement.

3.2 Research Design

The current research design is based on a qualitative research design, namely, the systematic literature review and thematic synthesis, based on the framework elaborated by Thomas and Harden (2008). This method is suitable to this research due to a number of reasons.

To start with, there is already a significant amount of empirical literature on the policy of refugee in Uganda, Nakivale Refugee Settlement and human security of the host community. By secondary analysis of this literature, the study would be able to synthesize and build on existing evidence as opposed to fieldwork. Second, the research questions demand a thorough and comparative analysis of evidence, across multiple dimensions of human security which is best met by systematic synthesis rather than by any primary data collection method. Third, a qualitative design is suitable since the study seeks to comprehend the meanings, experiences and structural dynamics that define host community security issues that cannot be determined statistically but are best interpreted through an interpretive method.

The systematic literature review aspect is based on the methodological principles of qualitative synthesis. The thematic synthesis approach of Thomas and Harden (2008) was chosen due to its capacity to integrate empirically heterogeneous studies, the opportunity to conduct an analysis according to the theory and its ability to be especially effective when addressing policy oriented research questions. In contrast to meta-analysis which presupposes statistical comparability of the studies, thematic synthesis is able to reflect the diversity of methodological approaches reflected in the literature on refugee hosting and human security.

3.3 Data Sources

This research is based on four types of secondary data. The main evidence base is peer reviewed journal articles. The major sources are Bjørkhaug, Tyldum, and Namanya (2025) on the host community relations in Nakivale. Grześkowiak (2024) on the limits and possibilities of the Uganda model. Tegenbos (2024) on the corruption scandal and humanitarian authority. Ahimbisibwe (2019) on security challenges associated with Uganda's refugee hosting, Bjørkhaug (2020) on the refugee-host relationship in Nakivale and Siraj (2025), Cevik (2025) and Siddikoglu and Sagiroglu (2023) for comparative evidence from other refugee-hosting contexts.

The government and institutional reports contain critical policy and operational information. They are the Uganda Refugees Act (2006) as the legal framework, current policy frameworks, the Uganda Country Refugee Response Plan 2024-2025 (OPM & UNHCR, 2024), operational and demographic statistics of Nakivale Settlement offered by the UNHCR (2023) and the evaluation of the progressive refugee management approach in Uganda.

Journal evidence is supplemented by academic theses and books. They are the doctoral thesis on host state and refugee security in Uganda by Ahimbisibwe (2015), theoretical background on the farming of refugee policy by Drewski and Gerhards

(2024), the theoretical grounding in Human security theory of the UNDP (1994) Human Development Report, Chandler and Hynek (2021), Martin and Owen (2013), Tadjbakhsh and Chenoy (2007) and the theoretical background of the article on global refugee protection by Betts and Collier (2017),

International legal and normative tools are the tools that give the basis of evaluation of the obligations of Uganda. The main instruments in mind are the 1951 United Nations Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, the 1967 Protocol, the 1969 Organisation of African Unity Convention, and the United Nations General Assembly Resolution 66/290 (2012).

3.4 Data Collection Strategy

A systematic search strategy was used to locate the secondary sources related to the study. The searches in databases JSTOR, Google Scholar and Journal of Refugee Studies archive were made with the search terms Uganda refugee policy, Nakivale refugee settlement, human security host community, humanitarian leadership Uganda, open-door refugee policy Africa, refugee governance East Africa and Uganda open-door policy host communities.

The official websites of UNHCR, the World Bank, the Uganda Office of the Prime Minister and the United Nations system were used to obtain institutional and government reports. The Uganda Legal Information Institute and the UNHCR legal database were used to find legal instruments. The search was done based on literature published in the past 5 years (2015-2025) but the older theoretical works were not excluded based on the year of publication.

The identified sources were filtered on relevance to the research questions and thematic focus of the study. The sources that were kept included sources that offer empirical evidence or theoretical analysis directly pertinent to Uganda open-door refugee policy, humanitarian leadership in Nakivale or similar East African situations,

host community human security aspects or governance, finance and implementation aspects in refugee hosting environments.

3.5 Inclusion and exclusion criteria

The sources were included in case they discussed Uganda policy on refugees, Nakivale Refugee Settlement or human security of the host community or presented empirical evidence in a peer reviewed article, institutional documents or policy analysis that is directly relevant to the research questions of the study were published in the last five years (2015-2025) with an exception of foundational theoretical and legal literature and were available.

Sources were filtered out when they viewed refugee populations in isolation of host communities or governance frameworks, were published before 2015 with no underlying theoretical or legal interest, not in full text and were an opinion piece, blog or lacked scholarly or institutional authority.

3.6 Data Analysis

Interpretation was carried out in the three themes of thematic synthesis suggested by Thomas and Harden (2008). The first stage, line by line coding involved coding all the sources that were read in their entirety and then the important findings, arguments and evidence that were pertinent to the research questions of the study were coded. Codes were based on both what each source reported and how analytical the findings were in terms of their contribution to the theoretical and policy questions of the study.

Through the second stage, development of descriptive themes, related codes were pulled into descriptive themes which reflected the key patterns within the evidence. These themes are related to the thematic subsections of the literature review open-door policies and humanitarian leadership, governance and resource distribution, lack

of implementation, funding and donor priorities, local power relations and the seven dimensions of human security.

During the third stage, the production of the analytical themes, descriptive themes were examined in terms of the Human Security Theory to come up with higher order analytical themes that answer the research questions of the study. This step entailed cross-source comparison, finding similarities and differences in the evidence and evaluating the quality and strength of evidence on each discovery. The research employs a narrative synthesis method to combine the results of various methodological studies, preempting the most empirically sound and contextually fitting evidence and noting the shortcomings and gaps in the current literature.

3.7 Ethical Considerations

Being a secondary data analysis research, the study does not require direct interaction with human subjects and as such there are no primary ethical issues regarding consent, confidentiality or harm. Nevertheless, the research follows principles of research integrity in the course of the analysis. All references are appropriately referenced and cited following the APA 7th edition guidelines. The paper does not distort the conclusions, arguments and weaknesses of the sources it relies on. Where there is some contested or inconclusive evidence, it is mentioned explicitly but not hidden in favour of a more palatable narrative.

The paper is also aware of the positionality of the secondary data analysis: sources used are based on the priorities and the views of the researchers, institutions and funders who have worked in Nakivale and may not fully reflect the lived experiences and voices of host community members. This is admitted as a weakness of the methodology and taken into consideration in the recommendations of the study in the future primary research.

CHAPTER FOUR

FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction

The chapter provides the results of the research which are thematically arranged in a direct relation to the five research questions and five particular objectives outlined in Chapter One. The sections are syntheses of evidence based on the secondary sources I reviewed during Chapter Two and using the thematic synthesis approach to Thomas and Harden (2008) to derive analytical responses based on the existing empirical and policy literature. The results are explained in the context of the Human Security Theory that conceptualizes host community wellbeing as the 7 interrelated dimensions of economic, food, health, environmental, personal, community and political security. The chapter is presented in the sequence of the research questions, where the initial section focuses on the effect of the open door policy in Uganda on humanitarian leadership organizations then the host community human security experiences, governance and social cohesion, the role of Government of Uganda followed by the role of the refugee led and community based organisations.

4.2 Finding One: Effect of Uganda Open-Door Refugee Policy on Humanitarian Leadership Structures

The initial research question was What is the effect of the Open-Door Refugee Policy in Uganda on the humanitarian leadership systems of Nakivale Refugee Settlement? The evidence shows that the open-door policy in Uganda has created a multi-actor humanitarian leadership design that is formally progressive but functionally tense due to gaps in governance, lack of accountability and inadequate alignment between the policy ambition and capacity of implementation.

4.2.1 The Formal Leadership Architecture.

The 2006 Refugees Act and the ensuing policy frameworks in Uganda provided a clear legal requirement of a humanitarian governed state with the Office of the Prime

Minister (OPM) as the central government entity charged with the responsibility of managing refugees. In Nakivale, this is translated into hierarchy in leadership where the OPM liaises with UNHCR, international NGOs, national organisations and a growing yet marginalised tier of refugee-led and community-based structures (OPM & UNHCR, 2024). This integrated, development oriented approach was identified by the World Bank (2016) as a progressive model precisely because it tries to integrate the management of refugees into the national systems instead of establishing entirely parallel humanitarian systems.

This architecture is further institutionalized in the Uganda Country Refugee Response Plan 2024-2025, which expresses shared responsibility between the government and international partners in sectors such as food, health, education, livelihoods and protection (OPM & UNHCR, 2024). Paper-wise, the open-door policy of Uganda has created a fairly coherent humanitarian leadership structure with well-defined roles.

4.2.2 Governance failures and the 2018 Corruption Scandal.

In reality though, humanitarian leadership architecture in Nakivale has been grossly undermined by government failures, the most glaring example of which is the 2018 scandal of corruption of refugee aid. Based on thirteen months of ethnographic fieldwork, Tegenbos (2024) reports the misappropriation of humanitarian funds that revealed power imbalances between national, international, and refugee actors. The scandal disclosed that OPM officials, in conspiring with some of their international partners, were exaggerating the number of refugees registered to receive more and more amounts of aid, which in turn was redirected but not channeled to the targeted beneficiaries. This is no longer simply the failure of the administration it was a direct menace of political and economic safety of the refugees and the host communities whose rights were redirected.

Tegenbos (2024) goes on to contend that the scandal revealed how structural coloniality of power inherent in the humanitarian leadership of Nakivale could be so

that international actors held power over resources distribution when Ugandan state actors and refugees' communities were in subordinate roles with weak accountability measures. The fallout of the scandal was a period of temporary reforms in supervision, yet the structural preconditions of the scandal such as poor monitoring, disjointed reporting relationships and weak whistleblower protection have not been completely mitigated.

4.2.3 Refugee Leadership as an Emerging but Marginalised Force.

One of the most important insights of the evidence is related to the role of refugee leaders in the humanitarian leadership context of Nakivale. A study by the Local Engagement Refugee Research Network, that involved the use of Nakivale as a field site, has revealed that the leaders of refugees create themselves to bridge gaps in humanitarian service provision and not because of traditional leadership desires (Carleton University, 2025). These leaders organize communities around education, livelihoods as well as protection, frequently executing roles which the official humanitarian apparatus fails to execute. Women refugee leaders especially have spearheaded efforts to tackle sexual and reproductive health rights and economic empowerment of women.

Nevertheless, the same study records that leadership by refugees is systematically undermined in all meaningful governance forums by such factors as tokenism, precarious legal status, ineligibility in funding mechanisms and further delays in acquisition of identity documentation to open bank accounts or open organisations. These findings are confirmed by Zigashane (2025), who states that marginalisation of the leadership of refugees is not an isolated issue in the Kakuma context in Kenya, but a structural aspect of East African humanitarian governance. The overall impact in Nakivale is a humanitarian system of leadership where the voices of individuals who are the most impacted by policy making choices, both refugees and members of the host community are systematically underrepresented.

4.2.4 Open-Door Policy of Pan-African Political Economy of Uganda.

The evidence also indicates that the open-door policy implemented by Uganda is not solely based on humanitarian ideals but it is also influenced by the political interests. According to Drewski and Gerhards (2024), the policy serves as partially a tool of Pan-African identity and building an international reputation under President Museveni, with refugees portrayed as a part of a larger we, beyond national borders. The implications of this political economy of the open-door policy on humanitarian leadership are significant, policy continuity in part is facilitated by international visibility and donor acceptance instead of domestic responsibility to host society or empirical evidence of beneficial effects. The policy is challenged by existential questions when its international recognition wanes or when its donor base is diminished or terminated and its leadership architecture is ill structured to respond.

4.3 Finding Two: Experiences and Concerns of Human Security of Host Communities in Nakivale

The second study question was What do host communities in Nakivale Refugee Settlement experience and what are their human security concerns? The evidence repeatedly indicates that the human security of host communities is undermined on a multidimensional basis and that the combined effect of these insecurities is neither sufficiently appreciated nor tackled by the existing humanitarian leadership models.

4.3.1 Economic Security

One of the most hotly debated aspects of the wellbeing of host communities in Nakivale is economic security. Bjørkhaug, Tyldum and Namanya (2025) record that the members of host communities have framed the narrative in different ways the presence of refugees creates local markets, stimulates demand on goods and services and draws in humanitarian investments that positively impact the region at large but also has a negative effect on the wages in the informal sector. The 30-70 principle (humanitarian organisations must direct 30 percent of program funds to the host communities) is a formal tool to help solve economic imbalances but there is uneven implementation and inadequate control (Bjørkhaug et al., 2025).

The World Bank (2016) identified economic security as a key aspect of the wellbeing of host communities and demanded development-oriented financing that recognises refugees and host communities as economic actors. Nonetheless, this recommendation has failed to translate into real changes in resource distribution. The Uganda Country Refugee Response Plan 2024-2025 also recognises the ongoing livelihoods gaps among host communities, yet it does not offer any specific funding mechanisms to address them (OPM & UNHCR, 2024). The outcome is that economic security of the host community is structurally fragile, being based on the benevolence of individual humanitarian organisations instead of being entrenched in policy.

4.3.2 Food Security

The combination of agricultural land shortage and the reduced humanitarian aid is posing a critical threat to food security in Nakivale. The settlement land where Nakivale settlement is located was proclaimed as settlement land in 1995 without having been formally acquired under the Land Acquisition Act in Uganda and with no compensation being given to Ugandan nationals who had customary claims over the land (Bjørkhaug et al., 2025). This structural dispossession has increasingly left less agricultural land to accommodate community members who may have to depend on subsistence farming and food production.

To add to this land pressure, according to the Nakivale Settlement Dashboard by UNHCR (2023) under Quarter 4 of 2023, there are severe funding gaps in food assistance activities, and food rations are being cut or halted to parts of the settlement population because of budget constraints. The OPM and UNHCR (2024) recognize food insecurity as one of the most topical issues in the refugee settlements in Uganda and interconnection it to the two pressures of land and humanitarian funding shortages. These circumstances are leading to unstable security situation whereby fight over food resources creates inter-community frictions and undermines the social bond that is required to enable peaceful co-existence.

4.3.3 Health and Education Security

The progressive policy vision of Uganda, where refugees and host populations have the same health centers and schools, creates the benefits of integration and the degradation of the quality of services. Bjørkhaug et al. (2025) record that combined demand of health facilities and schools in Nakivale has continually overwhelmed the facilities, teacher shortages, overcrowded classes, inadequate medical supplies and understaffed health posts are typical of daily conditions. The lack of these services is directly felt by the host community members who do not have the necessary infrastructure to effectively address the increasing population of refugees and the inability of the humanitarian programming to increase infrastructure capacity accordingly.

This is confirmed by the Nakivale Settlement Dashboard by the UNHCR (2023), which states that health funding gaps are present and result in operational consequences, such as the lack of essential medicines, health workers' salaries, and facility maintenance. Describing the effect of shared health infrastructure in the context of under-resourcing, Siraj (2025) can show that such perceptions of inequity foster a lack of social cohesion, which can be directly applied in the context of Nakivale, where the allocation of health and education resources between refugee and host populations is a major source of resentment.

4.3.4 Environmental Security

One of the most visible and well documented human security challenges that have been experienced by host communities in Nakivale is environmental degradation. Bjorkhaug et al. (2025) refer to firewood and construction deforestation, strain on water sources, and intensive cultivation degrading the land as the main environmental hazards. These strains can be directly related to the high density of a huge number of refugees in an ecologically limited region with no commensurate investment on environmental management. The natural resources subjected to these environmental costs are disproportionately borne by host community members who rely on the same natural resources to sustain their livelihoods and daily survival.

Comparative evidence given by Siraj (2025) in Bangladesh indicates that environmental degradation in refugee-hosting regions serves not only as a material threat but also as a symbolic complaint in increasing inter-community conflicts and sending a message to host populations that their interests are subordinate to those of refugees in the eyes of governance actors. In Nakivale, the lack of proper environmental restoration and management programming implies that environmental security is still not able to improve without the intervention of systematic policies.

4.3.5 Personal and Community Security

There is a weak balance of coexistence with resource-based conflicts that characterize personal security and community security in Nakivale. Bjorkhaug et al. (2025) discover that members of host communities tend to report peaceful daily interactions with refugees and are more concerned with conflicts related to land allocation, water access, competition over casual labour, and the feeling of being treated unequally by humanitarian organisations. Importantly, the research concludes that these anxieties are more towards policy frameworks and actors of governance than towards refugees per se- a significant result that contradicts the narratives of inter-community tension created by cultural differences or xenophobia.

Ahimbisibwe (2019) reports that Nakivale has traditionally faced tangible personal security threats, such as the armed groups operating on or near the settlement and the 2003 threat of the Rwandan government to conduct military operations against Nakivale and Oruchinga settlements. These events in the history show that the open-door policy has actual security externalities to the host communities that cannot be discounted as being merely perceptual. More current data provided by the UNHCR (2023) dashboard and the OPM and UNHCR (2024) response plan recognizes that there are still protection issues in the settlement, but there is still a lack of systematic figures on incidents that have affected host communities specifically.

4.3.6 Political Security

Perhaps the best systematically overlooked aspect of human security of the host community in Nakivale is political security, i.e. the ability to engage oneself in decisions that have an impact on their lives. Bjørkhaug et al. (2025) record that the citizens of the Ugandan nation who are living within the settlement boundary are not formally recognised by the government and have been classified as encroachers despite the fact that they consider them as stewards by the virtue of their ancestral settlement and historical utilization. Such official disenfranchisement deprives members of host communities of their rights and protections to which Ugandan citizens are entitled and excludes them through which decisions of resource allocation and settlement planning are made.

Such political marginalization is exacerbated on the humanitarian governance level. The data of Carleton University (2025) and Zigashane (2025) proves that not only the representatives of the host community, but also the leaders of the refugee groups are systematically denied meaningful entry to the policy forums, and their voices are marginalised in token consultations that do not translate into the actual policy impact. The compounding consequence is a lack of political security that gives rise to grievance, distrust in governance institutions, and weakening the legitimacy of humanitarian leadership in Nakivale.

4.4 Finding Three: Humanitarian Governance, Resource Allocation and Social Cohesion

The third question of the research was How does the humanitarian governance arrangements and resource allocation mechanisms influence social cohesion and inter-group relations between the host communities and the refugee populations in Nakivale? The evidence shows that governance arrangements and resource allocation decisions are the main factors that mediate social cohesion and that structural inequities inherent to the current system act proactively to challenge the circumstances that might support peaceful and sustainable coexistence.

4.4.1 Perceived Inequities as Drivers of Tension

The most reliable result of the literature is that the root cause of host community frustration in Nakivale is not inherently antipathy towards refugees as individuals but rather the sense of unfairness of the governance structures which seem to be focusing on refugee interests, rather than on the needs of the host communities. Bjørkhaug et al. (2025) record that the members of the host communities have a real sense of pride in the humanitarian tradition of Uganda and they realise that the presence of refugees leads to economic gains but at the same time, they feel the humanitarian governance system is unfair since it is mainly those who receive the visible resources such as food aid, land, health services, livelihood support, and so on, which are not

This is based on actual resource inequalities. The UNHCR (2023) Nakivale Settlement Dashboard records programmatic investment vastly focused on the registered refugee population, and the host community allocation an insignificant and irregular proportion of overall programming. Host community programs are often cut first when funding gaps arise (as it has regularly happened over the last few years) to drive home the point that their requirements take a back seat (OPM & UNHCR, 2024).

4.4.2 Land Governance Crisis as a Social Cohesion menace.

The most critical governance failure which has impacted on the social cohesion in Nakivale is land governance. According to Bjørkhaug et al. (2025), the gazettment of Nakivale as settlement land in 1995 was done without legal acquisition of the land, no compensation to the Ugandan nationalities who were affected, and lacked demarcation of the boundaries. This has created decades of land tenure insecurity between the populations of refugees and their hosts, which are fighting over agricultural land, grazing areas and even construction areas. These fights are not only economic fights, but also recognition, rights and belonging fights which resonate at the very basis of community security.

Ahimbisibwe (2015) also captures the pivotal role that land conflicts play in the dynamic of security in Nakivale, claiming the inability of the host state to answer the land tenure question is a systemic failure of governance with systemic ramifications in the refugee-host relationship. The World Bank (2016) also noted land management as a major weakness of the Uganda refugee governance system but further policy documents such as the OPM and UNHCR (2024) response plan do not spell out specific measures to address the underpinning land rights conflicts.

4.4.3 Parallel Service Delivery and Social Consequences of the same.

The policy of Uganda does incorporate refugees into the national services delivery systems, but the reality on the ground in Nakivale is the creation of quasi parallel systems whereby the refugee-specific program is running alongside the national programs, whereby there is an observable difference in access to resources which breed resentment. Comparative results provided by Siraj (2025) in Bangladesh indicate clearly that parallel service systems, despite being individually better-resourced than the national services, create social stress and declining trust in the community by exposing inequities to not just national view, but daily experiences.

The 30-70 principle, which mandates humanitarian organisations to allocate thirty percent of their resources to the host communities, is a well-planned and yet poorly implemented mechanism in this challenge in Uganda. Bjørkhaug et al. (2025) discover that the adherence to this principle differs greatly across organisations and industries and that even members of the host communities are largely unaware of its presence and lack power to hold organisations to account regarding its application. Enhancing the application and availability of this mechanism is thus found as a priority governance reform with direct consequences on social cohesion.

4.5 Finding Four: Government of Uganda involvement in Host Community Human Security

The fourth research question was as follows: What does the Government of Uganda do to ensure human security of host populations in Nakivale Refugee Settlement? The

evidence is a complex one, in which the role of the government is formally central but practically inadequate, and the contributions are influenced by the conflicting interests of international reputation management, domestic resource limitations, and political economy of the open-door policy.

4.5.1 The Formal Government commitments.

The official policy of the Government of Uganda is the formal expression of its pledge of human security of the host communities in the form of legal and policy framework. Both the 2006 Refugees Act and the 2010 Refugee Regulations set the principle of equal access to national services, which provides both refugees and host communities with equal access to health, education and social protection systems (Uganda, 2006). The Uganda Country Refugee Response Plan 2024-2025 explicitly obligates the government to a collaborative refugee and host community response noting that host community wellbeing is part of the sustainability of the Uganda refugee paradigm (OPM & UNHCR, 2024).

Uganda has been an ardent advocate of the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework as well as the Global Compact on Refugees at the policy level, which mandate host governments to not only meet the needs of host communities but also those of refugees. The engagement of Uganda in these international structures has created a diplomatic presence and international sources of funding (Kebede, 2025).

4.5.2 Gap between the commitment and delivery.

The evidence also indicates that the Governmental pledged promises of host community human security have not actually been translated into systematic, resourced and consistently provided support. Grześkowiak (2024) records that the self-reliance paradigm that the Ugandan government has been using in managing refugees has been stretched to its extremes by the gradual reduction of international donations against the national demand. The OPM, as the lead government agency, does not have the funds or institutional capacity to bridge the gap created by the shrinking international assistance, which then subjected host communities to the entire impact of funding losses.

One such clear example of how the government treats Ugandan nationals residing within the borders of Nakivale as encroachers, but not as citizens with rights is a very graphic example of how the government officially pledges that its obligations are to treat host communities, yet how actually it does it. According to Bjørkhaug et al. (2025), this categorisation deprives the afflicted Ugandan nationals of the right to formal legal recognition, the right to compensation on land acquired, and the ability to affect the settlement governance which is a direct breach of their rights as citizens. According to Ahimbisibwe (2019), a lack of responsiveness by the government toward host community grievances on distribution of resources and land allocation is a longstanding issue that has led to tension.

4.5.3 The Role of International Advocacy and the Burden-Sharing Deficit.

An important aspect of the role of the government is that it promotes international burden-sharing. Uganda has always claimed in multilateral forums that its progressive policy on refugees needs a corresponding contribution in terms of international financial input and that hosting refugees cannot be an international responsibility of a developing nation. This advocacy stance is justified: Siddikoglu and Sagiroglu (2023) show that the sustainability of open-door policies in Pakistan and Turkey was equally compromised by the lack of international burden sharing, and Kebede (2025) records that Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework has in practice transferred the burden to host nations without providing the promised international resources.

The consequence is a structural contradiction where the Government of Uganda is, on the one hand, a sincere supporter of refugee protection and on the other hand, a participant whose local practice of that protection is, systematically, discriminatory against host peoples. To solve this tension, it is necessary to not only have better accountability institutions in the government, but also to have more credible and developmental international financing that will allow the government to meet its commitments to both the refugee and the host population.

4.6 Finding Five: Refugee-Led Organisations and Community-Based Initiatives (Research Question 5 / Objective 5)

The fifth research question was: What role have refugee-led organisations and community-based initiatives had in the human security of the host communities and refugees in Nakivale Refugee Settlement? The evidence recognises refugee-led and community based organisations as important, under-resourced, and systematically under-valued participants within humanity security situation at Nakivale, whose role cuts across numerous dimensions of security and whose potential has not been largely realised by structural barriers.

4.6.1 Gap-Filling and Service Delivery Functions.

The main role played by the refugee-led organisations in Nakivale is the filling of the gaps in the delivery of humanitarian services. Studies by the Local Engagement Refugee Research Network, which included field research in Nakivale, report that refugee leaders create schools, health outreach programs, livelihood cooperatives, and protection networks to fill gaps left by the formal humanitarian system (Carleton University, 2025). These organisations often cater to the refugee and the host communities, and they are truly integrative organisations that establish social bridges between population groups.

Refugee-led schools in the education sector have offered children access to learning, where their needs surpass the ability of formal UNHCR-supported schools. Refugee-led savings groups and cooperatives have also created an economic activity and informal financial services in the livelihoods sector to both refugee and host community members. Refugee-led networks have been involved in the protection sector, where they have monitored and acted in response to gender-based violence, offered psychosocial services, and facilitated dispute resolution in the community, which formal humanitarian actors cannot often execute on the community level (Carleton University, 2025).

4.6.2 Investments towards Social Cohesion and Community Security.

In addition to service delivery, refugee-led and community-based organisations also play significant roles in fostering social cohesion and community security through the provision of inter-group contact and establishment of relationships of trust between the refugee and host populations. Bjørkhaug et al. (2025) observe that every-day economic relations, such as shared markets, joint farming and employer-employee relations, are the main points of positive engagement between refugees and hosts in Nakivale, and that many of these relations are made possible through economic initiatives led by refugees.

Through the following unique approaches, female refugee leaders have facilitated community security by breaking cultural norms that promote gender-based violence, formed women groups that involve host community members, and promoted sexual and reproductive health rights that enhance women across population groups (Carleton University, 2025). Such contributions to community security are often not reflected in official humanitarian reporting systems where outputs are more important than relational and cultural change processes.

4.6.3 of Structure and the Scope of Community-Based Action.

Refugee-led organisations in Nakivale, despite their important roles, have structural barriers which are overwhelming and adversely affecting their reach and sustainability. According to Carleton University (2025) and Zigashane (2025), the main restrictions are tokenism during policy forums, precarious legal position, non-existence in formal funding structures, and postponement of identity documentation. When invited to policy consultations, refugee leaders often realize that their contributions are being recorded, but not implemented, which creates frustration and disappointment with formal governance procedures.

The fact that the organisations that are led by refugees are excluded in significant sources of fund implies that their activities are generally small-scale, under-resourced, and reliant on the voluntary efforts of community members who

themselves are in precarious economic and legal conditions. It is this structural under-investment that can be heavily contrasted by significant resources that are given to international NGOs and UN agencies, which, in its turn, begs some fundamental questions regarding the equity and efficacy of humanitarian resource allocation in Nakivale (Betts and Collier, 2017).

4.7 Summary of Findings

The results of this paper, which are structured according to the five research questions, culminate in a coherent analytical image of the form that the open-door policy of refugee admissions in Uganda has created an ostensibly progressive humanitarian leadership architecture the application of which is systemically sabotaged by governance failures, resource shortages, political exclusions, and a structural ignorance of the host community human security. Host communities in Nakivale incur disproportionate costs of refugee hosting across all seven dimensions of human security including economic, food, health, environmental, personal, community and political but are not supported or given commensurate rewards. The role of the Government of Uganda is significant yet inadequate due to the lack of income through burden-sharing deficits of the international community and limitations of domestic capacity. Refugee-led and community based organisations play important roles in human security and are structurally marginalized by formal humanitarian governance system. Chapters Five and Six are based on these findings and their discussion and recommendations.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION

5.1 Introduction

This chapter explains the findings in Chapter Four in comparison to the already existing literature in Chapter Two and the theoretical framework of the Human Security Theory laid out in Chapter One. The discussion will answer the main analytical question of the study: how the open-door refugee policy in Uganda influences humanitarian leadership and human security in the host population in Nakivale and place the results within the context of the wider academic discussion on the topic of hostage refugee policies, humanitarian governance, and the sustainability of progressive approaches to protecting refugees. The chapter is thematic in nature, starting with the structural tensions of the Uganda model, the use of the Human Security Theory, governance failure, sustainability issues and implications on humanitarian leadership practice.

5.2 Uganda Model: Promise and Structural Limits.

The open-door policy of Uganda regarding refugees has taken a unique niche in the refugee protection discourse in the world. The legal framework created by the 2006 Refugees Act is truly progressive according to international standards, as it grants refugees their rights, including to work, free movement, national services, and land plots that most host countries deprive, as shown by Grześkowiak (2024). This framework has been identified by the World Bank (2016) and European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (2024) as a possible template to other developing world refugee-hosting countries. But the results of this paper prove what a rising mass of critical commentary has maintained: that the Uganda model is actively sub cutting its own progressive aims with structural factors its policy framework was not intended to resolve.

The structural conflict in the Uganda model is that a country with low income and major domestic development difficulties should take in one of the largest refugee populations in the world in exchange of being recognized internationally and receiving financial assistance that has never been properly met in terms of promised assistance. It is exactly this dynamic which is traced by Siddikoglu and Sagiroglu (2023) in their comparative study of Pakistan and Turkey and proves that the policies of open-door which are maintained by humanitarian impulse and not by institutionalized burden-sharing inevitably cause tensions between protection of refugees and the welfare of the host community when displacement turns protracted. This is the trend which is quite evident in Uganda: what used to be defined as one of the world-renowned examples of humanitarian leadership has grown to be a model whose execution is marked by budget deficits, ineffective governance and the increasing resentment of the host population.

This observation supports the argument by Doyel (2022) that the self-reliance model is flawed in its assumptions that policies aimed at enhancing the self-sufficiency of refugees can unintentionally increase precarity by transferring it onto the refugees and their hosts without providing any structural assistance that would make the latter truly independent. In practice, the self-reliance model in Nakivale has implied that refugees and host communities have to create their own economic security with little institutional assistance and that a fixed base of land and environmental resource upon which they rely is, at the same time, eroded by the accumulation of a large and increasing population.

Another significant political economy aspect brought by Drewski and Gerhards (2024) to this discussion is that the open-door policy of Uganda is part of the tool of international reputation-building. The implications of this observation are profound: the continuity of the policy, in part, depends on its extrinsic factors, and the humanitarian consequences of the policy, in turn, do not have accountability to the populations in need of assistance, i.e., refugees and host populations. The feedback process that in most situations drives reform is weakened when a policy is legitimized by its international acceptance, not by its domestic impact.

5.3 Human Security Theory Applied to Nakivale

When the Human Security Theory is applied to the results of Nakivale, there are two critical analytical conclusions. To begin with, the theory offers a multidimensional framework that illustrates that host community insecurity in Nakivale cannot be discussed in the context of discrete and isolated threats but intersecting and mutually reinforcing vulnerabilities that are simultaneously present and interact across all of the seven dimensions. Second, the focus of the theory on protection and empowerment shows that the existing humanitarian governance in Nakivale focuses more on protection (through service delivery, but insufficiently) than empowerment (through meaningful participation, recognition of rights, and structural investment) to the extent that it is fundamentally ineffective.

In the land governance crisis, the relationship amongst human security dimensions is especially apparent. Land is both an economic insecurity (loss of agricultural income), food insecurity (less capacity to sustain subsistence farming), environmental insecurity (land degradation and competition over natural resources), personal insecurity (disputes that lead to violence), community insecurity (erosion of social cohesion), and political insecurity (exclusion in land allocation and settlement planning). Any analytical model that focuses on each of these dimensions individually would be missing the compounding and cumulative impact of the insecurity that they all generate. The Human Security Theory, with its emphasis on the inter-relationship of dimensions, offers the analytical prism that can reflect this complexity (UNDP, 1994; Tadjbakhsh and Chenoy, 2007).

The two-fold focus of the theory on protection and empowerment is also educative. The results indicate that present humanitarian governance in Nakivale is heavily skewed towards protection in the narrow sense, that is, provision of food, health services and education, although insufficiently, but much less so than the empowerment aspects as defined by the Human Security Theory as both crucial. The

members of the host community are not included meaningfully in the land allocation, resource allocation and settlement planning decisions. Funding mechanisms and governance mechanisms systematically exclude refugee-led organisations. The settlement of Ugandan nationals is not legally recognized. Such empowerment shortfalls are not merely peripheral concerns but are key drivers of whether the protection investments undertaken in Nakivale can yield sustainable security results (Commission on Human Security, 2003; Martin and Owen, 2013).

The results also echo the focus of the theory on political security as an aspect that facilitates or compromises all other aspects. Chandler and Hynek (2021) suggest that one of the fundamental dimensions is political security, the ability to exercise rights and engage in governance since, based on whether individuals and communities can effectively advocate changes in other dimensions of security. The political marginalization of host communities and leaders of the refugees in Nakivale implies that the voices that are most impacted by the failures of the policies are also the least able to hold the people who should take action on them accountable. This political security deficit is not just a single dimension among seven but rather a structural situation that predetermines the results of all other dimensions.

5.4 Accountability Deficit and Governance Failures.

The most dramatic yet not the only manifestation of the lack of accountability in governance described by the findings as the main dilemma of humanitarian leadership in Nakivale is the 2018 corruption scandal. Tegenbos (2024) proves that this scandal is not an exception but the embodiment of the structural conditions such as the power imbalances between the international and national actors, the lack of monitoring and oversight systems, and the absence of the voices of a refugee and host community in the accountability procedures, which are not fully addressed. The fallout of the scandal brought certain benefits to the process of internal oversight within UNHCR, whereas the structural-level prerequisites that enabled the misappropriation have not been reformed in a systematic manner.

This result relates to a more general point in the literature regarding the linkage between the quality of governance and the outcome of human security. Siraj (2025) reveals how failures in governance in resource allocation create social stress and worsening community relations in the situations of refugee-hosting. The implication to Nakivale is that governance reform is not a tertiary objective but a requirement to human security enhancements in all seven dimensions of host community human security.

The lack of governance accountability also implies on the role of international actors in Nakivale. It is always recorded in the literature that UNHCR, international NGOs and donor governments wield enormous powers when it comes to the allocation of resources in Nakivale and they are not subject to much accountability to the Ugandan communities whose lives they determine. Betts and Collier, (2017) maintain that such a lack of accountability is a structural aspect of the international humanitarian system and that its solution involves not merely enhanced scrutiny of international actors by international actors but empowering affected communities, refugees and hosts, to hold international actors responsible in their promises.

5.5 The Sustainability Question

The most pressing question that the findings raise, perhaps, is whether open-door policy on refugees is sustainable in Uganda, and in what circumstances sustainability could be ensured or reinstated. The facts indicate a trend of decreasing sustainability that is precipitated by the combination of three structural processes: increasing refugee numbers, reduced international aid and escalating grievance in the host communities.

The UNHCR (2023) Nakivale Settlement Dashboard reports a settlement population that has significantly increased over the past few years as the conflict in the DRC, South Sudan and other home countries are perpetually contributing to displacement and the OPM and UNHCR (2024) response plan reflects a growing gap in funding across

all sectors. This mix of increasing demands and decreasing resources, as Grześkowiak (2024) argues, is pushing the model of self-reliance in Uganda to the brink. Devoid of significant reform and more international assistance, the model runs the risk of a gradual decline of progressive ambition to humanitarian emergency.

A sober parallel is drawn by the comparative evidence by Cevik (2025) on the path of Turkey. The first open-door policy developed by Turkey towards Syrian refugees which was also acclaimed internationally unraveled into more and more restrictive policies when economic strains increased and the frustrations of the host community lacked a proper policy reaction. Uganda is not there yet in terms of erosion, but the same structural factors that propelled the policy course of Turkey, namely, a lack of burden-sharing, a lack of support of host communities, and political manipulation of the issue of refugees, are all evident in the Ugandan setting.

Milner and Wojnarowicz (2024) posit that durable solutions to the East African refugee predicaments would entail prolonged political dedication, sufficient funding, and authentic interaction with host communities, which has yet to be provided consistently in the Nakivale case. These findings of the study support this argument and propose that sustainability involves not just greater funding of the efforts of the international community but also a radical change in the mode of governance, accountability, and the participation of host communities in policymaking procedures.

5.6 Implications of Humanitarian Leadership.

The implications of the findings have profound implications on the understanding and implementation of humanitarian leadership within Nakivale and other similar contexts in which refugees are hosted. The evidence questions the dominant model of humanitarian leadership, where international organisations and national governments have power over the distribution of resources and the design of programs as refugees and host populations are situated largely as recipients but not as actors with rights, knowledge and capabilities.

According to Akgul, Grimes, and Valentine (2025), humanitarian leadership necessitates the incorporation of the three pillars of human security, namely freedom from fear, freedom from want, and freedom to live with dignity, in governance structures that are proactive in empowering the affected communities. The results of Nakivale show that the current humanitarian leadership is a long way away to the standard, especially in the areas of dignity and empowerment. Members of the host community lack formal recognition, are not included in the governance process, and they are not consulted in the process of making decisions that affect the allocation of resources. Refugee leaders are engaged in consultations which fail to generate any meaningful policy impact.

To achieve successful leadership in humanitarian in Nakivale, at least the following four structural reforms would be necessary: first, the inclusion of representatives of the host community and refugee leaders in governance forums with real decision-making power; second, the institutionalization of the principles of equity, like the 30-70 rule of resource allocation, across all humanitarian organisations. Third, the resolution of the land tenure issue through a transparent and legally based Chapter Six deals with the discussion of certain recommendations based on these conclusions.

CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATION

6.1 Conclusions

This paper aimed to examine how the open-door policy on refugees in Uganda has influenced humanitarian leadership and human security of the host communities in Nakivale Refugee Settlement, Isingiro District, Western Uganda. Using a systematic review of secondary sources, policy documents, legal tools and institutional reports, and applying the analytical framework of the Human Security Theory, the study has yielded results and discussion that answer all five of its research questions and five specific objectives. This part provides the main conclusions of the study, arranged to be directly related to the research questions.

6.1.1 Research Question 1 Conclusion Impact on Humanitarian Leadership Structures.

The open-door policy of accepting refugees in Uganda has created a formally coherent, yet functionally fractured humanitarian leadership architecture in Nakivale. The policy made the OPM the initial coordinator, a multi-stakeholder governance framework consisting of UNHCR, international and national NGOs and community structures, and a legal mandate of integrated service delivery. Nevertheless, the corruption scandal of 2018 has shaken this architecture through the revelation of power inequities, absence of accountability, and misappropriation of resources that has destroyed trust and legitimacy of governance. The leaders of refugees and the representatives of the host community are still systematically marginalised in this architecture and reduce the responsiveness, accountability, and effectiveness of humanitarian leadership in Nakivale.

6.1.2 Research Question 2 Conclusion: Human Security Experiences of Host Communities.

The insecurities of host communities in Nakivale are compound and intersect in every one of the seven dimensions of human security. Land dispossession, employment competition and poor livelihood support result in economic insecurity. The lack of agricultural land and the reduced humanitarian provision of food contributes to food insecurity. Combined demand on infrastructure undermines health and education security. Deforestation, water pressure, and land degradation are threats to environmental security. There is delicate balance between personal and community security, interspersed with resource-driven conflicts and undermined by governance failures. Formal exclusion of the members of the host community in terms of their recognition and participation in the governance are the most fundamental means of denying political security. These insecurities are compound and reinforcing, creating a structural vulnerability condition which is not sufficiently addressed by current humanitarian programming.

6.1.3 Conclusion on Research Question 3: Governance, Resource Allocation and Social Cohesion

The key sources of social cohesion in Nakivale are humanitarian governance arrangements and resource allocation decisions. Inequality of resource distribution, especially as manifested in the apparent distribution of food assistance, land, health and livelihood assistance to refugees, create grievances among host community members but these grievances are directed at policy frameworks and not refugees themselves, thereby undermining the social trust that is required to have sustainable co-existence. The one major governance failure that has impacted on the social cohesion is the land governance crisis that is based on gazettelement of settlement land in 1995 without legal acquisition and payment. Equity mechanisms like the 30-70 principle which have a gap in enforcing them is a symptom of the weakness of governance as well as a chance to implement specific reforms.

6.1.4 Research Question 4 Conclusion: The Government of Uganda.

The Government of Uganda has a formally central, but practically inadequate role in the promotion of human security of the host communities. It has a progressive legal and policy framework that is international, and its promotion of international burden-sharing is valid and justified. But its practice domestically is far less than its promises: the members of the host communities on Nakivale are not recognized as citizens, and they do not participate in the governance of the settlements, and their needs are systematically underfunded. The international burden-sharing gap limits the ability of the government to deal with these deficits, but structural mechanisms within its power, such as the clearance of land tenure problems and granting formal status to host community members, has not been dealt with.

6.1.5 Research Question 5 Conclusion: Refugee-Led Organisations and Community-Based Initiatives.

Nakivale Refugee-based organisations and community-based projects contribute significantly but systematically under acknowledged to the human security of both refugee and host communities. They address important gaps in humanitarian service provision, create social bridges among groups of the population, and promote empowerment agendas that formal humanitarian actors find it difficult to effectively pursue. But these organisations are structurally sidelined by the official governance system by tokenistic consultation, lack of access to funding mechanisms and bureaucratic obstacles to legal registration and operation. One of the greatest opportunities that have not been realised in the refugee response in Uganda is the potential of the refugee-led and community-based organisations.

6.1.6 Overall Conclusion

Overall, the open-door or open-gate approach to refugees in Uganda can be viewed as a truly progressive legal and policy framework that has been persistently undermined through poor governance, lack of structural funding, political exclusions and deliberate indifference towards the human security of host communities. The global

perception of the policy as an example of progressive management of refugees is becoming increasingly incompatible with its domestic results, leaving host populations in Nakivale with complex insecurities, which are not sufficiently addressed in terms of recognition, resources, and participation in governance. The Uganda model is sustainable only under immediate structural changes that can eliminate the deficit in accountability, resolve land governance crisis, systematize the inclusion of the host communities and refugee leaders in governance, and ensure the development-oriented international financing that would help the policy to deliver on its ambitious promises.

6.2 Recommendations

The recommendations that are based on the conclusions of the study are made to particular actors that have the power and capability to effect the required reforms.

6.2.1 Government of Uganda recommendations.

First, the Government of Uganda must immediately address the land tenure confusion in Nakivale by commissioning a land rights assessment independent of Government that records the customary ownership claims by Ugandan nationals in the settlement boundary, and develop an effective, legally based compensation and resettlement process to those who were displaced without compensation in 1995. This is one of the underlying injustices that need to be resolved to achieve lasting social cohesion and political security of the host community.

Second, the OPM must officially acknowledge the Ugandan nationals living in the borders of Nakivale as full citizens with all the constitutional rights, and put an end to the encroacher label that deprives them of the rights guaranteed by the law. This appreciation must be complemented by incorporation of host community leaders into settlement governance frameworks having real decision making mandate, rather than consultative roles.

Third, the OPM ought to enhance monitoring and enforcement of the 30-70 principle, such as regular reporting to the public on compliance by the humanitarian organisations and a formal complaint system under which members of the host community have an opportunity to report violations. International NGOs operating in Nakivale should be subject to conditions of compliance to enjoy operating permissions.

Fourth, the accountability framework of refugee management should be enhanced by ensuring that OPM financial management is independently checked, whistleblowers can report their misappropriation, and independent human resources flows to refugees are regularly audited to avoid such a situation in the future.

6.2.2 UNHCR and International Partners Recommendations.

The UNHCR and other international NGOs working in Nakivale must strategically invest in empowering, institutionalizing and equipping refugee-based and community-based organisations. This must involve setting up easy financing systems of refugee-led organisations, technical assistance in legal registration and financial management, and the formation of formal platforms within governance arenas where the representatives of the refugee and host communities have their authentic decision-making powers and not symbolic presence.

The international donor governments are expected to fulfil their obligations as stipulated in the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework and the Global Compact on Refugees, by offering development-focused funds that support the host communities and safeguard refugees. In particular, donors must invest in multi-year livelihood and infrastructure and environmental management programs that have an impact on both refugee and host populations, as opposed to emergency humanitarian funding which directly focuses on beneficiaries of the refugee programs.

To produce systematic evidence on the state of host community wellbeing, and to offer a source of accountability, UNHCR ought to contract periodic, publicly available human security evaluations of host communities in Nakivale, through the UNDP seven-dimension framework. Nowadays, the UNHCR Nakivale Settlement Dashboard is largely oriented towards the population information on refugees, the situation in host communities is simply under-observed.

6.2.3 Norwegian Refugee Council and Civil Society recommendations.

The Norwegian Refugee Council and other civil society organisations based in Nakivale should consider focusing their programming on enhancing host community agency and political security, such as legal aid services to host community members who have not been recognised or compensated, community organising support services to enable host community voice to be stronger in governance processes, and environmental restoration programming to reduce natural resource pressures that have fueled inter-community tensions. Civil society organisations are also encouraged to invest in documentation and advocacy efforts which bring to light human security situations of host communities in Nakivale, the evidence base and political will needed to continue policy reform efforts not just within individual project cycles.

6.2.4 Academic Community recommendations.

This paper, which was carried out using secondary data analysis, has found that there are a number of gaps that primary empirical research is direly needed in them. A longitudinal primary research among the host community members in Nakivale in the future should be carried out to ensure that the change in the situation of human security is captured as time goes by and to produce the evidence that is community based that secondary sources cannot fully offer. Studies should also be done to identify the politics of donor decision making in the refugee response in Uganda, the effectiveness of refugee led organisations and the success of international NGO programming on similar goals and the long term social cohesion in the results of various models of resource allocation in refugee-hosting settlements.

6.3 Limitations and Areas for Further Research

There are a number of limitations to this study. As a secondary data analysis research, it will rely on the quality, scope, and availability of the existing literature. The most empirical studies on Nakivale, especially Bjørkhaug et al. (2025), are invaluable yet based on qualitative interviews with host communities conducted in 2022 and as with all qualitative studies of this nature may not capture the diversity of experiences across a settlement with thousands of Ugandans.

Some groups, such as women-headed families, members of host communities in the peripheral areas of the main settlement or young people may not be represented adequately in the literature.

The absence of systematic quantitative evidence base on the host community human security conditions in Nakivale is also a limitation of the study. Although there is a data on the population of refugees in the dashboard of UNHCR (2023), similar systematic data on the livelihoods of the host community, health conditions, food security, and the environment is not openly accessible on the same scale. Such void in monitoring and data infrastructure of host communities is also a study finding and a priority area to be addressed.

Future studies based on the secondary analysis presented in this study would then include longitudinal mixed methods primary research in Nakivale with the focus of host community voices and monitoring of the change in human security conditions as a response to policy and program intervention. Cross-studies between the refugee settlements of Uganda, which include Bidi Bidi, Adjumani and Rwamwanja, would also be worthwhile to determine whether the trends observed in Nakivale are only particular to the settlement or are a general feature of refugee management in Uganda. Lastly, a study that explores the views of the OPM officials, international NGO employees and donor delegates on the political economy of the Uganda model would be valuable in terms of understanding the governance dynamics influencing humanitarian leadership choices.

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