ANALYSIS OF EMPOWERMENT OF REFUGEE WOMEN IN CAMPS AND SETTLEMENTS

Ulrike Krause[1]

Abstract

This article analyzes the empowering impact that refugeeism can have on women, a largely neglected area of research. In the past, the academic discourse of refugees' identity reveals a clear trend towards homogenization, objectification, and victimization. Refugee women are still seen as disempowered passive victims. Considering that most refugees are caused in patriarchal societies in the global south, this article presents the idea that forced displacement can break patriarchal patterns because refugees renegotiate and redefine gender relations while in camps and settlements which could lead to women's empowerment. This argument is made after an extensive review of literature on refugee identity, differing camp and settlement structures, and the discourse about actions that can disempower or empower refugee women. In order to move beyond assumptions, this paper relies on concrete empirical research of national policy analyses and a field research case study of Rhino Camp settlement in Uganda. A review of this research will show how displacement can both challenge and reinforce traditional gender roles and will focus on the potential for empowering women in this context.

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ANALYSIS OF EMPOWERMENT OF REFUGEE WOMEN IN CAMPS AND SETTLEMENTS
Ulrike Krause, PhD

Introduction

Forced displacement is often caused by violent and armed conflict, and can result in the traumatization of the affected persons. When fleeing and seeking safety, people lose their means of livelihoods, leave their familiar community structures behind, and initiate involuntary journeys with unknown destinations.

In the past, the academic discourse of refugees and their identities revealed a clear trend toward the homogenization, objectification, and victimization of refugees, which recent studies criticize (Turton 2003; Turner 2010). Although recent studies analyze refugees in studies that include such topics as femininity and masculinity and gender relations, refugee women are still perceived as passive and vulnerable victims of violence in need of support.

Considering that almost 81 percent of all refugees (UNHCR 2013: 12-13) are caused in developing countries with mainly patriarchal and male-dominated society structures in which women traditionally possess fewer rights, the author argues that forcible displacement could break patterns as ascribed gender roles and relations are deconstructed, renegotiated, and redefined during the time in refugee camps and settlements. This paper analyzes how such a renegotiation of gender roles can have an empowering impact on the lives of women in refugee camps and settlements?

Women's empowerment in refugee camps and settlements has been largely neglected in research which is why this paper aims to contribute to closing the research gap by looking at both the positive and negative impacts of displacement and its aftermath on women. The first half of the paper discusses historical developments, as well as current research. The second part draws on original empirical research of national policy analyses and a case study of the Rhino Camp settlement in Uganda. The data from the case study was collected through content analyses of grey literature in the form of annual reports from 1997 to 2006 and from fieldwork with participatory observation and semi-structured expert interviews.

After analyzing the discourse on refugee identities and living conditions in refugee camps and settlements, the paper focuses on the possible empowering and disempowering impacts of *refugeeism* (please see operational definition of the term below) on women. The second part of the paper analyzes the empirical research and then uses the data to help understand how the opportunity for more nuanced or different gender roles can benefit women.

Research Approach

The paper is based on the author's PhD research about the refugee assistance approach of development-oriented refugee assistance with a case study in Uganda.[1] As a part of that, gender-sensitive programs were studied which is of particular relevance for this paper. Gender sensitivity is understood to include a dual imperative: while in the refugee context, transformation processes are understood to hold the potential to dissolve strict patriarchal social structures, and in the developmental context, societies as a whole are thought to be part of development aid. Therefore, refugee aid mechanisms and programs are not assumed to merely satisfy basic needs, but rather to focus on strategic gender relations in order to support the process towards gender equality. While concentrating on refugees in developing countries, it is important to note that women mainly have lower social roles and less social power than men (Mulumba 2005: 175-182; Dolan 2002: 60-67; Lukunka 2011) which refers

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[1] The PhD was conducted at the Otto-von-Guericke University of Magdeburg and completed in 2012. Ethical standards were pursued and conducted at all times of research.

to the aim of gender-sensitive programs to empower women (Edward 2007: 44) and raises the question of this paper if (and how) women can become empowered in refugee camps and/or settlements.

Research about the concept of women's empowerment in the context of humanitarian and development aid is not yet coherently defined. From the outset, women's empowerment is semantically anchored in 'power given to' women, and therefore considers and addresses the imbalance of power between men and women. As all social constellations, gender power relations are not static; they are dynamic, and empowerment is a process of change (Cueva Beteta 2006: 221; Kabeer 1999: 437) that incorporates political, economic, and social aspects. In the context of forced migration, "[w]omen do need protection and are vulnerable in some circumstances, but this should not be generalised to assume that they are all just 'vulnerable victims'" (Freedman 2007: 133). The United Nations Office of High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) also acknowledges that women's "independence and economic self-reliance and their leadership and decision-making abilities" is relevant to promote women's empowerment (UNCHR 2003b: 37-38). UNHCR understands the concept of empowerment of men and women in general as

> [a] process through which women and men in disadvantaged positions increase their access to knowledge, resources, and decision-making power, and raise their awareness of participation in their communities, in order to reach a level of control over their own environment (UNHCR 2001b: 3).

Since this definition incorporates the above-mentioned political, social and economic aspects as well as imbalance of power, it is applied in an adjusted manner in this paper. Due to the focus on refugee women in this paper, the definition concentrates on women's empowerment *per se*.

The study does not only concentrate on the process of forced displacement and its impact on women. Due to the global tendency to protracted refugee situations, the focus of this research is on the impact of *refugeeism* on women. *Refugeeism* is understood to include forced displacement and migration as well as the life of the displaced persons which often takes place in camps and settlements and is influenced by protection and aid mechanisms.

In order to study an operational approach to refugee aid and its impacts on gender, the research design of this project is characterized by a firm theory-practice linkage and is structured in a diachronic manner that takes into account historical and recent developments. A multi-method approach applied for the research project consists of qualitative social science methods and corresponds with the research design: the historical analyses in the first part of the paper discuss past developments and perspectives. The second part uses original empirical research of a context analysis from Uganda and the north-western region of Uganda, national policy analyses and a case study of the Rhino Camp settlement in Uganda capturing the timeframe of ten years from 1997 to 2006. Data for the case study was collected by means of grey literature and field research, participatory observation and semi-structured expert interviews. The annual reports are treated as the main source of information due to the staff fluctuation. Expert interviews and field observation are used as secondary data. The triangulation of the interdisciplinary research design and multi-method approach serves the validation of results and to obtain additional insights.

The regional context analyses of Uganda and particular north-western region, where Rhino Camp settlement is located, are based on research literature and reports of international and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). The context analysis focuses on historic events and developments. It reveals the underdeveloped state of the region compared to other regions in the country and the security threats due to rebel groups. The national policy analysis encompasses the Self-Reliance Strategy, the following policy on Development

Assistance for Refugee Hosting Areas and the national Refugee Act of 1960. The analyses of the policies of the Self-Reliance Strategy and the Development Assistance for Refugee Hosting Areas focus on the strategic direction, structural key elements, and expected results while the refugee act is analyzed against international refugee law standards of the Convention relating to the Status of Refugees of 1951 and its Protocol of 1967. Findings are briefly summarized in this paper

The case study of Rhino Camp settlement is conducted by means of grey literature and field research. The grey literature encompasses annual program reports about the operational implementations at Rhino Camp settlement. The implementing partner of UNHCR is the DED (Deutscher Entwicklungsdienst; *engl. German Development Service*). DED provided access to annual program reports of the care and maintenance program called LS 403 from 1997 to 2006. The reports were screened through content analyses by systematically capturing relevant information, summarizing them, and reproduce developments and changes within the operations.

The field research consists of participatory observation and semi-structured expert interviews. Field study observations were taken in the form of brief written notes. The expert interviews were conducted in a semi-structured manner. Instead of using a beforehand outlined questionnaire, topics were introduced by theme. Interviews were conducted with 15 national and international employees of the implementing agency who were considered to be experts. Experts are understood to be representatives of organizations or institutions who participate in problem solving and decision-making. Furthermore, experts are persons who have privileged access to information about decision-making structures (Meuser/Nagel 2005: 74-75). Interviewees were not asked about their personal histories or experiences, but rather the organizational and institutional context of their operations. The interviews are analyzed by means of an adjusted assessment method according to Meuser and Nagel which focuses on the shared knowledge provided by the interview subjects (Meuser/Nagel 2004, 2005).

Gender and *Refugeeism*

Refugee camps and settlements constitute a post-conflict environment in which changes in gender relations are particularly manifested. Tickner defines gender

> as a set of variable but socially and culturally constructed characteristics – such as power, autonomy, rationality, and public – that are stereotypically associated with masculinity. Their opposite – weakness, dependence, emotion, and private – are associated with femininity (Tickner 1997: 614).

Based on that, gender comprises of social, cultural, political, and biological components that can historically change (Engels 2008). Due to socially ascribed identities, roles, characteristics, and assumptions, women and men are observed differently. These assumptions are based on socialization, norms, and values and are therefore learned. This constitutes what a social collective perceives as normal and natural, and hence, what women and men should be like (Butler 1990).

Similar to all other political, social, and economic relations, gender relations are strongly influenced by contexts and therefore also the changing contexts of coexistence. As a result of forcible displacement, the learned and historically developed roles and functions of community members cannot be applied in the traditional manners because of the new living situation, and changing livelihood conditions during encampment. Therefore, Hans (2008: 69) describes displacement as a gendered process.

Gendered Refugee Identity and Experiences

Article one of the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees along with the 1967 Protocol defines the term refugee. It postulates that forcibly displaced persons have to be outside of their country of nationality, without protection from that country, and unable to return due to fear of specific reasons in order to be recognized as a refugee (UNHCR 1951: Article 1). Among others, Valji highlights that the refugee definition disregards gender and is therefore gender-blind (Valji 2001: 25) while Crawley notes that "[g]ender-related persecution refers to the experiences of women who are persecuted because they are women because of their identity and status as women" (Crawley 2001: 7).

Since the convention was adopted in 1951, refugee protection and assistance mechanisms have manifested reactive, exile-oriented and refugee-centric characteristics (Loescher/Betts/Milner 2008: 18). Along with that, in the past, the academic discourse about the identity of refugees has represented them as victims; refugees were seen as victims of rather than contributors to history. They were understood to be in a vulnerable state, which is why they required protection and assistance (Lubkemann 2008: 16). With no or little regard to age, gender, and background, refugees were mainly observed as a group of persons with apparently similar experiences. This led to the loss of subjective and individual identities and experiences (Turner 2010: 3). Turton criticizes the perception of refugees' shared and mutual needs and experiences and argues that "we risk seeing them as a homogeneous mass of needy and passive victims" although "that there is no such thing as the 'Refugee Experience' […], and there is therefore no such thing as 'the refugee voice': there are only the experiences, and the voices, of refugees" (Turton 2003: 7).

Victimizing refugees is increasingly criticized. Defining refugees as traumatized victims creates an external identity construction of refugees of passiveness, political innocence and disconnectedness from community structures, which reveals the "contemporary narcissistic cult of victimisation" (Pupavac 2006: 14). In spite of that, labeling persons has a powerful impact. According to Zetter, the term *refugee* is one of the most powerful ones in humanitarianism because the respective persons receive a legal status, and gain access to resources and protection which outlines bureaucratic procedures but also creates the ascribed refugee identity (Zetter 1991: 39, 59). While Turner criticizes the identity construct imposed by the international refugee regime (Turner 2010: 43-64), Kebeke highlights the need to acknowledge that labeling refugees as vulnerable and helpless institutionalizes and categorizes an identity that can stigmatize and isolate refugees (Kebede 2010: 16).

Seeing refugees as a homogenous collective produces gender-blindness as the group is situated in the center of attention instead of its individual members. The body of research has grown to shed some light on how women and men perceive the refugee experience differently. This led to the increasing inclusion of questions about gender and women in forced migration research and operations (Edward 2007: 38). According to UNHCR, the majority of refugees escape violent conflicts in the global south (UNHCR 2013: 2-3). Thus, the refugee context as a post-conflict situation cannot be analyzed without acknowledging the violent conflicts they endured and eventually escaped. Many women are confronted with violence both inside and outside of conflict zones (Turshen/Meintjes/Pillay 2002), which provokes researchers to describe the phenomenon as a continuum of violence (Cockburn 2004: 24-44; Freedman 2007: 46, 49-68; Carlson 2005).

In the refugee camps, women and men are dependent on external aid structures (Harrell-Bond 1986; Inhetveen 2010; Werker 2007). Women in particular are found to face structural, physical, and cultural violence and limitations in refugee camps.[2] For example,

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[2] See among others, Martin 2004; Hans 2008; Ferris 2007; Carlson 2005; Lukunka 2011.

Gale notes that refugee women are often forced to and declare themselves "'single mothers' or 'war widows'" in order to qualify for increased assistance while "[i]n reality, women's statuses might be more ambiguous" (Gale 2006: 76).

The analyses of women in conflict and post-conflict spaces discuss the binary of female peacefulness, docility, and vulnerability versus, male strength, power and independence. This increases the perception of women as victims of violence while the nexus of masculinity and conflict remains either unanalyzed or one-dimensionally presented as patriarchal and violent (Engels 2008; Buckley-Zistel 2013). On the other hand, a research focus on men and masculinity in conflict and post-conflict also entails the danger of reproducing binary categories and merely describing one side of the coin of the alleged perpetrators while factoring out the other side(s).

The dichotomy of the powerful male and weak female that is reproduced in conflict and in peace creates a situation in which violence is seen as part of masculine nature and suffering seen as a part of feminine nature (Harders/Clasen 2011: 324-332). It is believed to be necessary to move beyond these binary categories, one-dimensional analyses, and stereotyping process of relations between men and women. Research rather needs to approach the study of men and women in conflict, post-conflict, and conflict-related refugee camps and settlements through a gender-specific analysis of power relations (Buckley-Zistel 2013; Turner 1999).

Though, it is now widely accepted that women and men experience conflicts and the aftermath in refugee camps and settlements differently, a certain victimization and objectification of refugees remains. The 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and the 1967 Protocol declare the "social and humanitarian nature of the problem of refugees" in the preamble (UNHCR 1951: preamble). While the preamble identifies the need for immediate protection and assistance to those forcibly displaced, it also imposes a vulnerable and passive refugee identity, which is why refugees worldwide remain to be largely observed as needy *passive* victims requiring support and protection.

Refugee Camps and Settlements

The majority of refugees are caused and assisted in countries in the global south, especially in Africa and Asia. According to UNHCR, almost 81 percent of the world's refugees (8.5 million) were in developing countries in 2012 (UNHCR 2013: 12-13). Since the 1980s, refugee camps have constituted one of the main tasks of UNHCR and have become today's prevailing form of shelter structures for refugees, in particular in countries of first asylum (Loescher/Betts/Milner 2008: 3). According to Jacobsen,

> [c]amps are purpose-built sites, usually close to the border, and thus usually in rural areas. For security reasons, UNHCR encourages camps to be built at least 50km from the border, but even when this regulation is complied with, camps are often in conflict zones. Since camps are intended to be temporary structures, they are seldom planned for long duration or population growth. Dwelling structures are tents or flimsy huts, and water and sanitation infrastructure is problematic, especially over the long term. Camps are administered by UNHCR and the host government (Jacobsen 2001: 7).

Refugee camps are of a provisional nature: understood as a short-term interim solution, they encompass social units, organizational rules, administrative procedures, and institutionally developed norms and values. This entails the creation of structural and formal hierarchies among the existing organizations, as well as informal structures among the refugees (Inhetveen 2010: 16-18, 165 ff).

The provisional nature of camps, however, oppose the current international trends revealing that UNHCR is rarely able to reach one of three durable solutions for refugees —

repatriation in the country of origin, local integration in the country of asylum, and resettlement in a third country — in short or medium term after refugees' arrival in the asylum country. Protracted refugee situations arise which UNHCR defines as "one in which 25,000 or more refugees of the same nationality have been in exile for five years or longer in a given asylum country" (UNHCR 2013: 12). In 2012, almost 42 percent of all refugees worldwide (6.4 million) were encamped in 30 protracted refugee situations (UNHCR 2013: 12-13) with an estimated average duration of 20 years (Milner/Loescher 2011: 3). Due to protracted refugee situations, refugee camps become transitional spaces to living spaces where new hierarchies are established.

The lives of refugees in camps depend almost entirely on external structures. While organizations providing aid produce dependence on assistance, the governments of the countries of asylum provide the legal framework that defines what refugees can and cannot do (Harrell-Bond 1999 and 1986). While being settled in camps, refugees face limitations and restrictions: refugees are often not allowed to work and move freely within the country of asylum (Betts 2009; Crisp 2001). Livelihood conditions, access to resources and markets, as well as remote set-ups of camps limit the lives and personal development of refugees (Werker 2007: 471; Inhetveen 2010).

Rural local refugee settlements constitute a type of camp, yet they differ from the typically known tent-structured camps.[3] The rural settlement structures were initiated to improve the conditions of refugees when durable solutions could not be reached shortly after refugees' arrival in an asylum country. Since refugees are expected to stay for years, the aim was to connect refugee protection and development assistance in the host region. At the Second International Conference on Assistance to Refugees in Africa (ICARA II) in 1984, the General Assembly of the United Nations pointed out:

> Where voluntary repatriation is not immediately feasible or possible, conditions should be created within the country of asylum so that the refugees can temporarily settle or integrate into the community, i.e., participate on an equal footing in its social and economic life and contribute to its development. For this purpose, settlement programmes should be development-oriented and, wherever possible, be linked to existing or planned economic and social development schemes f or the area or region (A/39/402).

In the context of linking refugee protection with development assistance, refugee settlements provide more livable conditions for refugees and decrease the likelihood for conflicts among national communities living close to the settlement. This kind of linked assistance provides them access to services such as educational and medical facilities (Krause 2013: 82-83; Betts 2009: 10).

As a type of refugee encampment, rural local refugee settlements encompass a certain geographical area that is allocated by the government of the country of asylum. The land is allocated for certain amount of time as the vast majority of host countries still focus on voluntary repatriation instead of local integration of refuges. Rural settlements are therefore understood to be an interim solution. UNHCR and its partners provide protection and assistance to refugees. In contrast to the typical tent-structured camps, rural refugee settlements encompass improved livelihood conditions because these semi-permanent set-ups provide refugees with land for housing and agriculture. This promotes independence from aid structures, and supports refugees' self-reliability (Crisp 2004: 1-2; A/39/402/Annex II: B3).

The research and operational communities have yet to reach a consensus for a precise definition of refugee settlements. Researchers have so far established differentiations

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[3] In addition, a largely unknown number of refugees are self-settled. This research, given its lack of specifics, is not addressed in this paper.

between, among others, transit and permanent camps, assisted self-settlements, and unplanned self-settled refugees.[4] According to Jacobsen, local rural refugee settlements

> […] also referred to as organized settlements, are planned, segregated agricultural enclaves or villages created specifically for refugees, but which differ from camps in that refugees are expected to become self-sufficient pending their repatriation. […] There is limited freedom of movement (refugees are usually not permitted to leave the areas of residence defined for them by the authorities), more permanent housing construction, and refugees have access to land provided by the government (Jacobsen 2001: 7).

Similar to refugee camps, local rural settlements encompass social units, organizational rules, administrative procedures, and institutionally developed norms and values, as well as formal and informal hierarchical structures. This reveals that life in settlements is institutionalized. Program structures in rural settlements are ideally based on self-sufficiency such as agricultural yields and access to markets through which the independency of aid and self-reliant lives of refugees is promoted. In addition, refugee and national communities live side by side and interact. This means that national communities have access to delivered services. While refugee settlements can provide some livelihood advantages for refugees, national asylum restrictions often hinder refugees from working and moving freely in the host country, which constitutes constraints (Kaiser 2006; Mulumba 2005).

In both refugee camps and settlements, there is a certain degree of physical insecurity and the potential for radicalization. A variety of issues such as armed robbery, ethnic-based assaults, as well as sexual and gender-based violence reveal security challenges.[5] The living environments in refugee camps and settlements therefore constitute a mainly isolated and poly-hierarchical space with limited livelihood perspectives and safety challenges. In case of protracted situations, these conditions last for several years to decades (Crisp 1999).

Similarly to the refugee identity discourse, living conditions in refugee camps and settlements cannot be observed without analyzing gender relations It is widely accepted that structures of powers and hierarchies are always gendered (Buckley-Zistel 2013: 94). The hierarchical structures in refugee camps and settlements are to be understood as gendered processes.

Impact of *Refugeeism* on Women and Gender Relations
In general, community rules and social norms are social constructions: how to interact is learned, anchored in individual, collective, and cultural memories, and can change. Most forced migration dynamics take place in countries in the global south, where society structures are predominantly patriarchal and male-dominated. Women traditionally possess fewer rights and are, in the case of strict patrilineal rulings, even owned by men, initially fathers and then husbands. While men are responsible for heading the households and making decisions, women raise children and take care of domestic work. Women are often not allowed to own land but are allowed to help farming (Mulumba 2005; Carlson 2005). These social arrangements provide men with superior, powerful, and authoritarian positions over women and constitute the relation between gender in the private and public space.

Historical Developments
In case of forcible displacement, refugees involuntarily leave their homes behind and in the process of fleeing and setting up life in a country of asylum, their familiar community structures rupture. Reaching the country of asylum means that some community patterns,

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[4] Researchers have identified different parameters. See among others, Van 1995; Hoerz 1995; Jacobsen 2001
[5] A growing number of studies have focused on security issues and challenges. The following list represents the diversity of challenges: Kaiser 2005 and 2006; Crisp 1999; Carlson 2005; Vann 2002.

ascribed roles, and learned relations between women and men are deconstructed and need to be renegotiated and redefined (Boateng 2010: 390). As noted above, the 1951 Convention is criticized for disregarding gender in the definition of the term *refugee* (Valji 2001: 25; Crawley 2001: 7; Edward 2007: 38). In 1982, Ingrid Palmer highlighted changes in gender roles and relations of Sudanese refugee in camps:

> that the refugee population is characterized by abnormally high percentages of single men, on the one hand, and women on their own with children, on the other. […] Where the family is normally constituted refugee women appear to assume a lower social profile than usual while patriarchy in the family intensifies. This is partly due to the new alien environment when men assume greater mobility and social visibility relative to women, and partly due to the fact that the dependent family is given attention by relief agencies through the male representative (except in the case of maternal and child health and supplementary feeding). This lower social profile of women must be seen as an obstacle to the family reaching self-reliance since in poor countries women need to make a contribution to family income. It is also desirable that they find their own way to social services that do exist (Palmer 1982: 1).

She also notes that mothers were found to hold a pivotal role in keeping the family together. Based on that, in 1986, Harrell-Bond argued that women were put at a disadvantage in camps by rules regulating land provision, agriculture, and protection

> through ignorance and sometimes through personal prejudices, both policymakers and fieldworkers [who] often unknowingly contribute to the further weakening of women's position. […] The male bias built into refugee programmes at the planning stage, conspires with the fact that African women do not normally expect to take on public roles (Harrell-Bond 1986: 266-267).

She explained how male staff supported male refugees, and she concluded that refugee protection and assistance mechanisms "bolster male status," therefore maintaining the dominant roles of men (Harrell-Bond 1986: 267-268).

UNHCR responded to these research findings. In 1985, the Executive Committee of UNHCR elaborated recommendations arguing for increased protection and participation of female refugees while noting "that refugee women and girls constitute the majority of the world refugee population […,] that many of them are exposed to special problems in the international protection field [… which] frequently exposes them to physical violence, sexual abuse, and discrimination" (UNHCR 1985). Five years later, the Executive Committee provided even broader recommendations for women including improved protection against violent attacks, consideration for the specific needs of women, project-based participation, and political participation in decision-making (UNHCR 1990). These recommendations were followed by several guidelines including, among others: the 1990 *Policy on Refugee Women*, *UNHCR's Commitments to Refugee Women* in 2001, the 2003 *Guideline for Prevention and Response of Sexual and Gender-Based Violence against Refugees, Returnees and Internally Displaced Persons*, the 2008 *Handbook for the Protection of Women and Girls*, and the 2011 updated strategy about *Action against Sexual and Gender-Based Violence*.[6] These documents changed protection and assistance standards in refugee camps and settlements.

During the past three decades, the corpus of research literature on refugee protection and assistance and its impact on refugee women and their role grew. Martin highlights a number of international initiatives that contribute to women's empowerment (Martin 2004: 81-82) and Ferris points out that "the fundamental disparity of power and the inadequacy of relief assistance […] lead women and children to exchange sex for things that they need to survive" (Ferris 2007: 589). Cases of sexual and gender-based violence against women in

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[6] For a holistic list, see Krause 2013: 60-64 or online on UNHCR's RefWorld website http://www.refworld.org/women.html

refugee camps and settlements are evident worldwide[7] and demonstrate the necessity of continuing research to understand and identify ways to sustainably improve conditions for women. However, as noted above, an analysis of women as victims and men as perpetrators does not represent the complexity of gender relations, which is why it is significant to include power relations in gender-specific analyses.

As the majority of refugees escape patriarchal societies, it is assumed that displacement can give women the opportunity to create or negotiate new and different gender roles in refugee camps and settlements. UNHCR assumes that the gendered process of forcible displacement and settlement in a country of asylum could positively and negatively impact on person and hence, can be an empowering or a disempowering experience for women (UNHCR 2008: 39-40).

Disempowerment of Women in Refugee Camps and Settlements?
UNHCR acknowledges that displacement can have negative effects on women due to intense changes. According to UNHCR, the disempowering experiences for women are multifaceted:

> Traditionally responsible for children, older people, and domestic work, women are often overburdened during displacement. When they are excluded from decision-making processes, whether in camp contexts or as a result of social isolation in urban areas, they are unable to voice their opinions about decisions affecting their lives, including whether and when to return, or take control of their environment. Relegated to the domestic sphere, they must often depend on male relatives for access to the basic necessities provided in camps. They may be too busy surviving and protecting their dependents and have little time to attend meetings or training sessions. An increase in violence against women, including domestic violence, and the absence of policing or judicial mechanisms mean that violence against women is often undetected, unreported, or is not addressed (UNHCR 2008: 39).

Studies and operational reports draw attention on violent incidences against women over the past years,[8] which reveal that sexual and gender-based violence is a global phenomenon in refugee camps and settlements (Hans 2008; Carlson 2005). The Inter-Agency Standing Committee indicates "a manifestation of the difference in power relations at its most extreme" (UNHCR 2001a: 6) and defines sexual and gender-based violence as "an umbrella term for any harmful act that is perpetrated against a person's will, and that is based on socially ascribed (gender) differences between males and females" (IASC 2005: 7).

Violence and abuse such as kidnapping, forced labor, rape, and murder were acknowledged as protection challenges already in 1986 (Harrell-Bond 1986: 155-159) and more recent field reports from NGOs reveal the scope and intensity of violence against women. For example, Care International reported that sexual violence in Dadaab refugee camp in Kenya quadrupled from 2010 to 2011, while Refugee International estimates that 25 percent of women in refugee camps in Tanzania are victims of sexual violence (Care International 2011; Refugee International 1999). The Women's Refugee Commission recently published a study and highlighted that "[a]dolescent girls […] are concerned about a range of issues affecting their lives, including various forms of physical insecurity, barriers to education, limited peer and social support, poverty and overwork, and inability to meet their basic needs" (Women's Refugee Commission 2013: 1).

Scholars agree on the different forms of sexual and gender-based violence including, among others, survival sex (Ferris 2007), domestic violence (Carlson 2005), rape (Lukunka 2011), forced marriage and forced prostitution (Edward 2007: 26-27). Male perpetrators of

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[7] See among others, Carlson 2005; Lukunka 2011; Hans 2008; Care International 2011; Refugee International 1999; Women's Refugee Commission 2013; Krause 2013.
[8] It is known that women and men suffer from violence, yet the focus of this paper is on women.

sexual and gender-based violence are often; besides family members, perpetrators belong to security forces, aid workers, and community leaders. They abuse their position of power and the dependency of victims to carry out acts of violence (Ferris 2007: 586 ff; Godziak 2008: 186 ff; Hyndman 2004: 204). In spite of intervention programs and the inclusion of gender as a cross-cutting issue in refugee protection and assistance strategies, most incidences remain unreported and therefore invisible (Ward 2002: 56; Hans 2008: 64; Women's Refugee Commission 2009: 3).

UNHCR notes that sexual and gender-based violence against women remains a "taboo topics in public or private conversation" (UNCHR 2008: 16), which is supported by research (Valji 2001; Hyndman 2004). In contexts in which women are blamed for sexual attacks against them, the likelihood that the victim will report the case is low. In additional, the invisibility of cases is also grounded in the shift into domestic spaces (Crisp 1999; Carlson 2005; Vann 2002).

Beyond the level of violence, Mehta reveals that forced displacement and migration indicate a dual negative impact on refugee women through male biases: In addition to patriarchal societies which perpetuate unequal access to resources, imposed structural processes are male biased through policies and regularities (Mehta 2002: 4). Hans notes that women are marginalized during the processes of displacement and encampment because they are embraced by the new authorities and economic dependence, which is "contributing to women's sense of powerlessness" (Hans 2008: 69).

Empowerment of Women in Refugee Camps and Settlements?
To discuss the potential positive aspects of living in refugee camps, women must be defined as active agents (instead of passive victims). UNHCR explains that women's

> experience and the changes in gender roles brought about by displacement may enable them actively to challenge traditional gender roles that hinder their participation in the political, economic, and social realms. Where they have organized, they may be able to claim their right to participate in different aspects of camp or urban life and in return communities. The inclusion of women in camp management, economic life, peace negotiations, and return and (re)integration processes can widen the range of choices available to women, give them greater control over their futures, and enhance the quality of their lives and those of their families and communities. Particularly in protracted displacement situations, women's involvement in income generation and vocational training programmes can increase their economic independence, their capacity to provide for themselves and their families, and their empowerment. (UNHCR 2008: 39-40).

This perspective that looks at potential positive experiences for women is based on historical developments within the refugee regime, starting with the two recommendations by the Executive Committee in 1985 and 1990, as well as the adoption of several guidelines on women's protection and assistance in refugee camps and settlements which were noted above. These developments impacted standards of protection and assistance in refugee camps and settlements and "offer guidance on ways to empower refugee and displaced women and protect their rights and physical safety and security" (Martin 2011: 90).

As a result of the operational recommendations and guidelines, refugee women were systematically integrated in aid structures within camps and settlements (Martin 2004: 149-156; Krause 2013: 60-64). According to UNHCR, women and single female-headed households belong to the category of vulnerable persons, which entails preferential treatment and assistance (UNHCR 2003a: 22, 54, 61). In practice, women are supported by means of specific projects; education is provided for boys and girls and data is collected about attendance rates; women are encouraged to participate politically in refugee committee

structures; resources are made equally accessible to women and men (UNHCR 2003a; UNHCR 2008; UNHCR 2006).

So far, the potentially positive impact on refugee women of displacement and stays in refugee camps and settlements has largely been neglected among the research community. Considering the information about sexual and gender-based violence against women, the focus on negative instead of positive impacts is understandable. However, there are also activities that are confidence-building because they allow women to experience greater power over their own lives. In addition to the earlier noted discussion of UNHCR regarding positive experiences that women can have in refugee camps and settlements, the renegotiation of gender relations can also provide women with more autonomy over their lives.

Despite the overall lack of research of the ways that *refugeeism* can lead to women having more decision making power, Martin indicates the correlation between physical and social mobility when women are freed from traditional and patriarchal authority (Martin 2007: 4). In the context of self-settled refugees in cities in Uganda, Hovil underlines the limitations and challenges refugees face, but also the opportunities of employment and self-determined lives. Businesses are diverse, owned and handled by men and women, and appear to be thriving (Hovil 2007: 610-611). "The fact that self-settled refugees are engaged in the local economy demonstrates that they are not, as assumed, passive victims of their fate" (Hovil 2007: 612).

Research findings about livelihood opportunities in refugee settlements reveal additional information about the potentially positive impact on women. The Women's Refugee Commission highlights that women in a refugee settlement can gain educational and vocational training that allows them "to pursue trades that are not traditional for women, as these tend to pay more than traditional female trades" (Women's Refugee Commission 2013: 16). Bloom concentrates on economic opportunities and analyzes innovative approaches linked with the private sector. She found that the empowerment of women (and men) is related to local economic entrepreneurship and ownership. For example, a Somali refugee woman established a bakery and a shop with her husband, selling local products from the refugee settlement (Bloom 2013a: 21) and a Congolese woman makes and sells mats (Bloom 2013b: 5), both self-initiated in Nakivale refugee settlement. UNHCR also identified the importance of women's empowerment by means of local economic integration in Kosovo and explains that the respective project aims to improve skills, to increase the confidence of women in themselves and their work and to provide access to micro-finance mechanisms so they can initiate businesses (UNHCR 2001b: 4).

These findings refer the possibility that life in refugee settlements (instead of tent-structured camps) can have positive impacts on refugee women. Considering the discussion about the differences of camps and settlements, rural local settlements were found to provide improved livelihood conditions which are likely to positively impact on the social status of women. Hence, it is assumed that it is more likely that women's empowerment can be supported in refugee settlements than widely restrictive camps.

Case Study: Women's Empowerment at Rhino Camp Settlement in Uganda
Regional Context and Settlement Structure
Uganda is known to host refugees especially from neighboring countries since the 1960s (Merkx 2000: 13). Due to the long-lasting and violent conflict between the Government of Sudan and the Sudanese People's Liberation Army, people were forced to seek safety and security in Uganda. Due to the massive refugee influx in 1993, refugees were granted a prima facie status and initially assisted in transit camps near the border town Koboko. Since the refugee population grew beyond 100,000 persons, the pressure to find an interim solution for their protection and assistance increased. As a reaction, the Government of Uganda decided

to establish local rural settlements in the north-western region of Uganda to which refugees were transferred (Merkx 2000: 13-16; Krause 2013: 145-147; Kaiser 2005: 359-360).

Among the created settlements, Rhino Camp was established first in 1992 followed by Ikafe in 1994, Imvepi in 1995 and Madi Okollo in 2003. Rhino Camp settlement still exists to date. By establishing the local rural settlements, the Government of Uganda pursued the intention of developing a medium-term solution in which refugees were targeted to become self-sufficient. By allocating a large scale of land for refugee protection and assistance, the government considered that the region was sparsely populated by nationals and underdeveloped (Merkx 2000: 18).

While the government remained to focus on voluntary repatriation of refugees as the long-term solution, the government also hoped to benefit from refugee protection and assistance in the region by developmental initiatives towards infrastructure (Meyer 2006: 6; Merkx 2000: 23-24). During 1996 and 1997, insecurity caused by the West Nile Bank Front rebels challenged refugee protection and assistance at the settlements (Okello/Gottschalk/Ridderbos 2005: 9). After that, men-made security challenges decreased but several droughts and floods negatively affected the population and livelihood conditions.

The north-western region of Uganda borders to South Sudan and the Democratic Republic of Congo. It is relatively remote and under-developed compared to other parts of the country. Rhino Camp settlement is located in this rural and remote region and encompasses an approximate area of 225 square kilometers with a carrying capacity of 32,000 refugees and 18,000 nationals. It is set up in 10 zones and 42 clusters, which are structured as villages containing several compounds with huts people live in. The map below shows how Rhino Camp settlement is set up:

Figure 1: Set-up of Rhino Camp and population density, 2001[9]
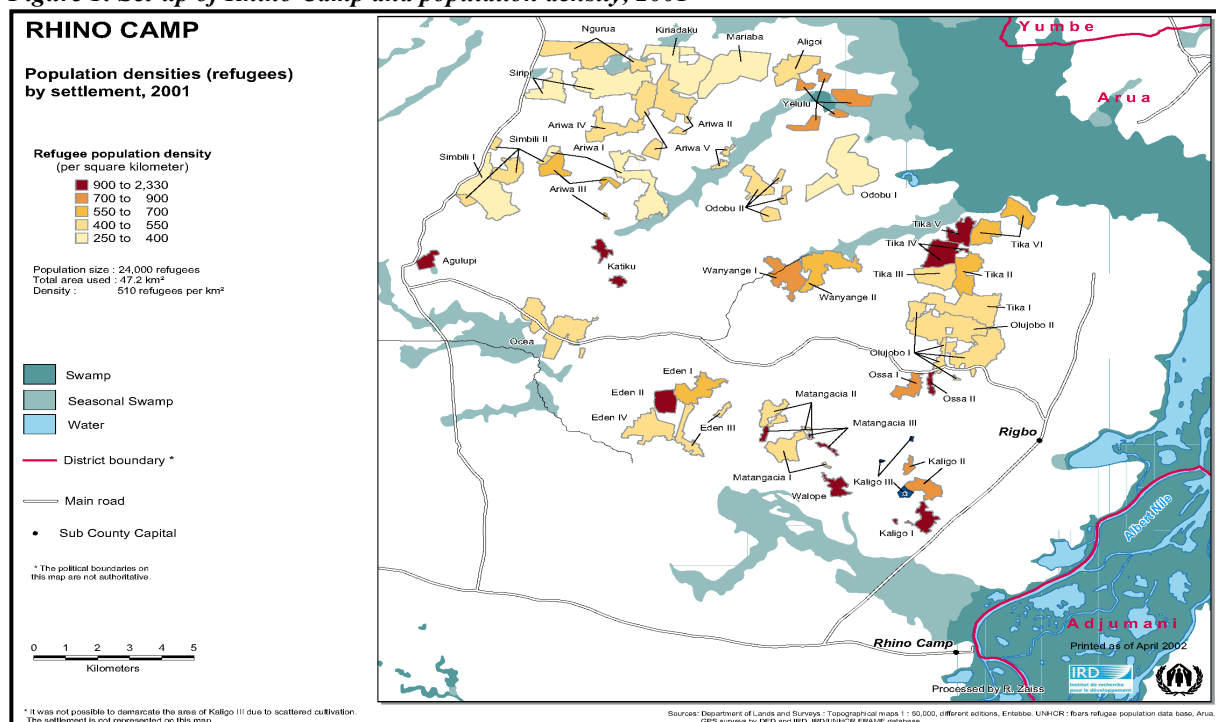
About 97 percent of the refugees at Rhino Camp settlement originated from rural areas and towns in South Sudan, mainly from Equatoria Province, while few other refugees are from the Democratic Republic of Congo, Kenya and Nigeria. The vast majority of refugees had an agricultural background, with some skilled artisans. Out of the refugees from

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[9] Beaudou et al. 2003:65b

South Sudan, a number of different ethnic groups with specific languages and cultural traditions lived side by side peacefully. According to the reports, the ethnic groups are Kakwa, Pojulu, Moru, Madi, Bari, Kuku, Kaliko, Zande, Lotuko and Didinga. Some of the groups, such as the Kakwa are located in Congo, South Sudan and Uganda and are only disconnected by nationality due to the colonial demarcation. Despite the cultural and language differences, the groups shared a commonality, namely that they maintain a male-dominated social system (DED 2006: 2-4).

Using the Madi as an example, the patriarchal and patrilineal social systems reveal that clans are male- and age-oriented. The male elders make decisions and are to be respected by all younger members of the community. Due to the patrilocal marriage structure, women are practically owned by men and children belonging to the husbands' family. Possessions and assets are omitted patrilineally; fathers pass down their properties to their sons while their daughters and wives are only allowed to use it. This is also the case with land; it is given to the sons while women — sisters, daughters and wives — merely have the right to use it. Women are expected to be submissive. Elder wives have greater responsibilities and power over younger ones and co-wives. Girls and boys grow up and are socialized by learning about the gender role expectations (Mulumba 2005: 175-182).

Insights of the Policies
The protection and assistance operations at Rhino Camp settlement are shaped by national Refugee Act of 1960 and two main national policies: the Self-Reliance Strategy and the following policy about Development Assistance for Refugee Hosting Areas.

The Self-Reliance Strategy pursued two overall aims: On the one hand, the strategy targeted to promote and empower refugees to become self-sufficient and therefore prevent the dependency of refugees on aid structures such as food delivery. On the other hand, the strategy emphasized to integrate services and service structures, such as education and health facilities, for refugees into national schemes. By means of that, nationals could access these services and the government could maintain the established structures after refugees repatriate. In order to achieve this, the strategy included the following key elements:

1) allocation of land to refugees in designated "settlements" (for both homestead and agricultural purposes), to enable refugees to become self-sufficient in food production;
2) relatively free access of refugees (registered or self-settled) to education, health and other facilities built by the government;
3) the openness and generosity of local communities – related to the fact that many Ugandans had been refugees once and the cultural and ethnic affinities between Ugandans and many of the refugees – which has been a major factor in facilitating refugee integration into Ugandan society. (RLSS Mission Report 2004/03: V).

Despite the reference to integration in the strategy, it only referred to the integration of service structures and not permanent local integration of refugees into Ugandan communities. Based on the Self-Reliance Strategy of 1999, the following policy called Development Assistance for Refugees-Hosting Areas was adopted in 2003. The latter especially considered the under-developed region in which all refugee settlements were located and therefore aimed to improve the developmental stage of the region as well as living conditions of refugees and local communities by means of

− Burden sharing with the host country
− Development of the host community
− Gender equality, dignity and improved quality of life of both refugees and host communities

- Empowerment and enhancement of productive capacities and self-reliance of refugees, particularly of women, pending durable solutions (RLSS/ DOS Mission Report 2003: 6).

The concept contained a particular link to gender and women's empowerment, which was missing in the previous strategy. The two strategies also differ due to implementation region: While the Self-Reliance Strategy was implemented within the areas of refugee settlements, Development Assistance for Refugees-Hosting Areas reached a wider scope and included projects outside of the refugee settlement boundaries. Both strategies contributed to reaching a development-oriented refugee assistance approach in Uganda.

The legal framework called the Control of Alien Refugees Act of 1960[10] contained the rights and duties of refugees in Uganda, and therefore outlined basic principles of refugee protection and assistance in Uganda. According to the act, refugees had to live in allocated settlements (articles 6, 7, 8) and were not allowed to move freely in the country (articles 20 4, 19). If refugees were to leave the settlement without permission, they faced charges including imprisonment (article 17). Although refugees were allowed to work according to article 15, employment opportunities were, however, rare due to the remote location of refugee settlements. These restrictions and limitations severely impacted on the life of refugees. "In practice, refugees do not enjoy their right to freedom of movement, and this has consequences for their enjoyment of socioeconomic and political rights too" (Kaiser 2005: 354).

Insights of the Care and Maintenance Programs and the Integration of Women
The care and maintenance programs at Rhino Camp settlement fall under the mandate of UNHCR and were implemented by the German Development Service during the research period. As a basic principle, the analyses reveal that the policies and the act are translated into operations. UNHCR has recorded the demographics of the refugee population through standardized procedures by age and sex.

In accordance with the self-reliance strategy, each refugee households received two plots of land for residence and agricultural cultivation. The land for agriculture encompassed 0.3 hectare with no regard to the size of the household and therefore single persons had the same size of land as single or parent-headed households with children. Refugees were encouraged to engage in agriculture. The aim was to obtain yields to self-sustain themselves and to become independent from external aid delivery. For that, seedlings were handed out and agricultural trainings conducted. This aim was not achieved during the research period because the soil conditions were poor and sandy which prevented agricultural yields.

In addition to agricultural trainings, vocational trainings were conducted for refugees and nationals. An average of 65 trainings was offered in fields of such as bricklaying and concrete practice, carpentry, tailoring, tin and blacksmithing, woodcarving, agriculture and domestic science. Both refugees and nationals attended the trainings, which resulted in a ratio of three refugees to one Ugandan trainee. The gender breakdown shows that approximately 35 percent of all participants were women. While these figures refer to a conflict- and gender-sensitive proceeding due to the integration of both sexes and both communities, 65 trainings per year are found to be insufficient for a maximum population of 40 000 persons including refugees and nationals in Rhino Camp settlement. In addition, the impact of the trainings was not monitored which is why there is no evidence how effective the trainings were and if participants received employment.

Education was offered to all children who lived in the area of Rhino Camp settlement. There were four permanent and nine temporary primary schools as well as one secondary

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[10] It is to note that Uganda adopted a new refugee policy that, however, is factored out because the focus of the research in Uganda was prior to that.

school. The enrolment and attendance statistics reveal that more boys than girls attended school. Of all boys, the between 75 and 93 percent were enrolled while the data about girls' enrollment ranged between 41 percent and 83 percent and the drop-out rates of girls fluctuated between 16 and 78 percent. According to the reports, the tremendous drop-out rates of girls were caused by daily family assignments including babysitting, the lack of family support, long distances to schools, poor performance, early marriages and pregnancy, and language barriers. Interventions to counteract included home visits, stay-in-school and girl-child education campaigns, and recreational sports activities. However, the impacts of these interventions appear to have been limited because the ratio between enrolled girls and boys ranged between three boys to one girl and 1.4 boys to one girl throughout the research period.

Political participation was promoted by means of committees' establishment. A number of different committees existed in Rhino Camp settlement, for example for boreholes, food, health and sanitation. To promote involvement, ownership and self-reliance, refugees were encouraged to form and participate in these community-based committees with the aim to have equal numbers of male and female representatives. In an interview with the Program Coordinator, it was revealed that

> [t]he participation of women in community life/activities was always actively promoted although the numbers aimed for were often not achieved. This was in part due to the fact that a large percentage of women still lack the required formal education for leadership positions on the various committees. Participation of women in skills training was very encouraging though (Interview Peter; 01.12.2010).

Using the borehole committees as an example, it was found that for each of the 69 boreholes at Rhino Camp settlement, a committee was established and tasked to maintain the functionality and access to water. For that, all committee members were regularly trained in maintenance techniques. The committees were also in charge of communicating possible issues to the camp management in order to repair them. The representation of women ranges between five to 32 percent, and thus, the equal representation of women and men was not achieved.

Continuous efforts on environmental protection and reforestation were traceable; while seedlings were grown and trees planted, the impact of firewood collection was targeted to be minimum. Trees are planted around and inside of Rhino Camp settlement as well as on residential plots, at schools, health facilities and religious places. Refugee women and men were equally involved in these activities. In addition, environmental awareness campaigns were realized in schools and homesteads and energy-saving stoves are installed in households, which require less firewood and produce less smoke. In an interview, the energy-saving stoves were noted to have had an impact on gender relations as men started to enter the cooking areas due to the reduction of smoke.

Through gender-responsive planning, specific women's needs were considered in the sectors of health and nutrition, education, food, water, sanitation, infrastructure and shelter, and community service. Sexual and gender-based violence was tackled by means of awareness campaigns, sensitization and information sessions, gender-responsive planning, and the establishment of community-based sexual and gender-based violence centers. According to the annual reports, the awareness and sensitization campaigns especially targeted to highlight the rights of women and the need for gender equality on all levels. The record of cases concerning sexual and gender-based violence fluctuated tremendously during the ten-year research focus as well as during annual program cycles. For example, in 2001, eight cases were reported in health units and 56 'minor cases' to other offices without a definition of 'minor' and information about treatment and follow-ups. While 24 cases were

reported in 2005, the number increased to 182 cases in the following year when the community-based sexual and gender-based violence centers were established. In 2006, the different forms of sexual and gender-based violence were categorized on for the first time in an annual report. They categories comprised the following types:

Table 1: Sexual and gender-based violence cases at Rhino Camp, 2006 [11]

Incident type	Male	Female	Total	# Assisted
Domestic violence	19	51	70	8
Psycho-social violence	6	20	26	--
Early marriage	4	14	18	--
Child abuse	5	12	17	3
Social economic violence	7	7	14	--
Early pregnancy	0	13	13	13
School drop outs	4	8	12	6
Sexual harassment	0	4	4	4
Defilement	0	3	3	3
Physical violence	2	0	3	--
Social tendency	0	1	1	1
Assault	0	1	1	--
Marital rape	0	1	1	--
Total	47	135	182	38

According to the report and the table, only 38 out of 182 cases are reported to be assisted; however, reasoning why not all cases received assistance and if the unassisted cases were followed up was not available. In addition, the strong fluctuations and inconsistencies in reports reveal insufficient means of monitoring and deficient reporting mechanisms as well as potentially inadequate support of victims and awareness rising beforehand.

Critical Reviews of Findings: Women's Empowerment without Men?
The Self-Reliance Strategy and the following policy on Development Assistance for Refugee Hosting Areas along with the Refugee Act of 1960 provide the foundation for refugee protection and assistance at Rhino Camp settlement during the research period. The different interventions reveal a clear intention to empower women. Refugee women were encouraged to participate politically in sectoral committees; girls were encouraged and supported to stay in school; awareness campaigns revealed women's rights; gender responsive planning targeted the integration and respect of the particular needs of women. This refers to a range of interventions that pursued the aim of creating a positive impact on refugee women.

The approach and orientation towards women appears to be based on the assumption that women obtain a vulnerable position and inferior social status. In order to improve women's position as well as the roles of and relations between women and men within communities, the program approach aimed at women, while also highlighting why women are to be seen as equal to men through awareness campaigns. Granting equal access to resources and services theoretically enables women to advance their social roles; it simultaneously infers to counteracting structural inequality of women and men.

The structurally equal access to land reveals a positive impact on women. Women in South Sudan's patrilocal social structures had fewer rights than men and were practically owned by them. They were allowed to cultivate yet not to possess land. Due to displacement and asylum in Uganda, this changes. At Rhino Camp settlement, women and men are given two plots of land of the same size. Both of them could cultivate the land and maintain their households. Women perceive the element of temporarily owning the agricultural and

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[11] The table is stated in the 2006 report about LS/403 care and maintenance program delivered at Rhino Camp settlement; see Krause 2013: 196.

residential land while being in the refugee settlement as empowering because they structurally obtain a similar social status to men. The perception of women is noted although the land revealed to be insufficient for agriculture.

Apart from that, other program activities such as awareness raising campaigns, girl child education interventions and gender responsive planning seemed to have had little positive effects on women. These interventions enabled women and especially single female-headed households to receive prioritized assistance because they were understood to be disadvantaged and in need of increased support. However, according to the research, the outcome and impact of these interventions did not lead to improved social positions of women within communities. On the contrary, developments such as continuously high drop-out rates of girls from schools and consistently reported sexual and gender-based violence cases indicate that women struggled and continued to obtain lower social roles compared to men. Why did these interventions not yield the intended results?

The programs implemented at Rhino Camp settlement reveal a clear focus on meeting women's needs and achieving positive impacts on women. Due to the concentration on women, four tendencies arise: (1) the term 'gender' becomes equated with 'women', (2) refugee women receive an imposed identity of homogenized victims in need of support, (3) the empowerment approach is based on western ideas, and (4) men with their needs are largely disregarded and excluded. Equating gender with women is revealed because the so-called 'gender'-related projects – including the gender-responsive planning – merely focus on women. The process of homogenizing and victimizing refugee women is caused by assuming the vulnerability of women, which appears to lack a differentiated view on needs and opportunities. The strategic approach towards women's empowerment was about political participation and sensitization, which are Western or Eurocentric[12] ideas about empowerment. These ideas were imposed on the refugee communities with apparently little reflection whether this was suitable for the communities. The exclusion of men is apparent due to the strict focus on women's vulnerability and women's empowerment. For example, single *female*-headed households receive prioritized assistance while single *male*-headed households are not regarded as in particular need of additional support.

Since contexts are found to shape relations among and between human beings, the life and living conditions of all refugees are affected by camp and settlement structures. At Rhino Camp, not only the settlement context is found to impact on gender relations but also the type of refugee assistance delivered. While refugee women and men undergo changes as they are unable to live independent and autonomous lives due to encampment and severe movement and work restrictions, power is reversely distributed between women and men by aid agencies. In contrast to the patrilineal structures in while most South Sudanese refugees grew up in, the strategic approach at Rhino camp was about a systematically promotion of women. This provided gave external support and power to women but disregarded men. The partial shift towards women is perceived as degradation by men as they lost their traditional status, power and influence.

The analyses shows that counteracting inequality between women and men by means of a focus on the empowerment of women factors out that gender inequality constitutes disparities and power imbalances between women and men. This can only be tackled by taking roles and relations of men and women into consideration. Hence, women's position in societies cannot be seen detached from men's positions as gender relations consist of both.

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[12] In the context of women's empowerment, the striving for political participation can be referred to women's suffrage in Europe and the USA in the 19th century. Using political participation and sensitization as a form of awareness building in refugee aid can therefore be based on these developments in the global North and defined as Eurocentric or Western. In the refugee context, Euro-centrism is understood to incorporate norms and values of in refugee pro-text and assistance.

Discussion of Results: Empowering Women in Refugee Camps and Settlements?

What do these results mean for women's empowerment? What inferences can be made for the empowerment of women in refugee camps and settlements? As mentioned above, women's empowerment is understood according UNHCR's definition as

> [a] process through which women [...] in disadvantaged positions increase their access to knowledge, resources, and decision-making power, and raise their awareness of participation in their communities, in order to reach a level of control over their own environment (UNHCR 2001b: 3).

Based on the research about Rhino Camp settlement and other research studies, five inferences can be made: (1) dislocation, the new living contexts and refugee assistance impact on gender relations and the social status of women; (2) women's empowerment is more likely to be achieved in settlements than in camps; (3) structurally equal access to resources can lead to women's empowerment while cultural change requires self-initiative and ownership; (4) the social role and status of women is always connected with men; (5) all interventions are to be gender-sensitive in refugee camps and settlement.

Since forced displacement means to leave familiar community structures behind, it was assumed that gender relations change due to dislocation and the changing living context and are to be renegotiated and redefined refugee camps and settlements. In the case of Rhino Camp settlement, the majority of refugees originated from cultures with patrilineal social structures in which women had fewer rights and lower roles than men. While living at Rhino Camp settlement, it was observed that external structures reversely distributed power to women and that some women were subordinated through sexual and gender-based violence. However, women also took over additional responsibilities to traditional ones, headed households and participated politically which implies that the social status of women as well as the relations between women and men changed. Women had more choices over their lives and decisions than before displacement and therefore gained power, which reveals their empowerment. In turn, the factors of dislocation, confined spaces, operational programs, and imposed hierarchy and power structures are understood to be interdependent impacting on the renegotiation of the changing gender relations. Women's empowerment can therefore neither be seen detached from the process of dislocation nor from refugee protection and assistance programs or the context of refugee camps and settlements.

Refugee camps are characterized as isolated and poly-hierarchical spaces with strongly restricted livelihood conditions and intense security challenges while rural local settlements provide more livelihood opportunities aiming for self-reliance from aid structures. Rhino Camp settlement is a rural local settlement and has shown to provide a number of livelihood operations to improve conditions during protracted displacement such as agriculture, vocational trainings and political participation. Especially equal access to land has shown to positively impact on women's social status. The changing nature of gender relations and improved social status of women at the rural settlement of Rhino Camp suggests women gained and used the livelihood opportunities for their advantages. Thus, women's empowerment is more likely to be achieved in rural settlements than in strongly limited refugee camp structures because of the self-reliance aim in settlements.

The analyses of Rhino Camp settlement revealed that interventions targeted structural and cultural change. While both structural and cultural interventions are imposed by the external (aid) structures at camps and settlements, the structural intervention provide a platform for refugees to act on while cultural interventions aim to change identities and mindsets. On the one hand, adjusting program and aid delivery structures in a way that they provide women and men with equal access to resources appeared to have influenced gender

relations positively. The example of the structurally equal access to land for men and women is reported to be largely perceived as empowering by women.[13] Having access to the same resources as men does not mean that women are automatically equal to men as it is only a piece in the social puzzle of gender relations; however, the liberating experience of women shows that structurally equal access to resources supports the process towards empowering women. On the other hand, cultural interventions such as girl child education campaigns and women's political participation have shown to lack success at Rhino Camp settlement. This suggests that imposing western ideas to change refugees' mindsets and gender relations appear to be hardly possible, and thus, cultural change and processes require self-initiative and refugees' freedom to decide about processes.[14] For refugee protection and assistance in refugee camps and settlements, it means refugee women and men should be able to voice their opinions and pursue their ideas which reveals their ownership.

At Rhino Camp settlement, refugee protection and assistance programs focus on women's empowerment while the role of men was widely excluded which men perceived as degrading from their former position of decision-makers of higher ranks than women. In spite of the above outline number of empowerment measures that were implemented at Rhino Camp, sexual and gender-based violence against women existed. This suggest that the mere focus on women and their empowerment can cause men to feel left out and degraded which can lead to the possible consequence of them attempting to regain power, even with physical force.[15] In turn, it is to infer that women's empowerment cannot be seen detached from men because the social status of women and men is defined upon each other; reaching an empowering process of women in a social context of therefore requires women and men to renegotiate and redefine their roles, identities and relations.

Finally, in addition to including men and women in programs, the findings at Rhino Camp settlement reveal that all sectors in refugee protection and assistance are to be gender-sensitive. By means of that, possible impacts on men and women are regarded and equal opportunities provided. While data on sexual and gender-based violence in refugee settlements at Rhino Camp and worldwide indicate the security challenges directed especially against women, the unreported number of cases of male victims and contextual challenges should not be disregarded. Hence, in the context of sexual and gender-based violence as well as all the operational sectors, women and men should be integrated, their respective needs regarded and voices heard.

Conclusion

The aim of the article was to discuss the potential of women's empowerment in refugee camps and settlements, which has been largely neglected in research. The academic discourse of refugees and their identity revealed a clear trend of homogenization, objectification and victimization of refugees in the past, which recent studies have criticized intensively and introduced a more differentiated perception of refugees, including femininity and masculinity as well as gender relations. In spite of that, especially refugee women remain to be perceived as vulnerable and in need of support. While acknowledging the possible security threats for

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[13] This is in line with findings of the Women's Refugee Commission highlighting that structural access to vocational trainings for trade impact on women's empowerment (Women's Refugee Commission 2013: 16).

[14] Bloom provides similar results (Bloom 2013a and Bloom 2013b).

[15] A number of studies indicate the correlation between sexual and gender-based violence and emasculation. Other research studies reveal that these findings are not a unique phenomenon only noted at Rhino Camp settlement: Being unable to provide for the family, losing the role of head of household and having only equal rights to women is found to negatively impact on men (Dolan 2002: 60-67). As a result of losing power, men suffer from social emasculation (Turner 2010: 20, 59-60) and refer to UNHCR as the "better husband" taking the role of the patriarch and reducing the position of men to the status of "children" and "women" (Turner 2004: 94, 98). Lukunka (2011) argues that the perceived emasculation can provoke men using violence against women to regain dominance and Mulumba notes that "the refugee experience increases the tasks and activities for the women and lessens men's" (Mulumba 2005: 195).

women in refugee camps, the paper pursued an additional point of view by analyzing whether the changing contexts, co-existences and gender relations in refugee camps and settlements can lead to the empowerment of women.

Refugee camps and settlements have become today's prevailing form of shelter in refugee protection and assistance. While refugee settlements offer more opportunities for refugees than strongly restricted tent-structured camps, the living conditions in camps and settlements continue to constitute a mainly remote, isolated and poly-hierarchical space with limited livelihood perspectives and security challenges. Due to the dislocation and new living environment, gender relations are renegotiated, redefined and manifested in cases of protracted situations. It was found that renegotiations require self-initiative while the program side can only play a supportive role. UNHCR assumes that exclusion and disregard of women can cause disempowerment whereas promotion and support can contribute to women's empowerment. In the case of Rhino Camp settlement, several operational interventions were initiated to promote and empower refugee women. However, the operations were revealed to equate 'gender' with 'women', to victimize women and to exclude men.

Based on the case study analyses as well as additional research studies, it is to conclude that women can experiences lives in refugee settlements as empowering, which, however, cannot be imposed by means of external aid structures. Five inferences are identified: (1) dislocation, the new living contexts and refugee assistance impact on gender relations and the social status of women; (2) women's empowerment is more likely to work in settlements than in camps; (3) structurally equal access to resources can lead to women's empowerment while cultural change requires self-initiative and ownership; (4) the social role and status of women is always connected with men; (5) all interventions are to be gender-sensitive in refugee camps and settlement.

The research findings provoke the three questions: How lasting is the possibly empowering impact on women is upon refugees' repatriation to the country of origin? How do gendered processes develop in camps and settlements with refugees of different origins and cultural backgrounds? How can self-initiative to women's empowerment be supported in a way that men includes rather than excludes? The latter question links with research findings that suggest a correlation between women's empowerment projects and increased sexual and gender-based violence against women. All of these questions are found to require additional research.

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