

## Theorie und Praxis

Wissenschaftliche Reihe zur Entwicklungszusammenarbeit,  
Humanitären Hilfe und entwicklungspolitischen Anwaltschaftsarbeit



**Leonore Merck**

## **South Sudanese Refugees in Uganda and Ethiopia**

The effect of refugee-housing on the  
protection of refugee children against  
physical and sexual violence



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herausgegeben vom  
World Vision Institut

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against physical and sexual violence

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# South Sudanese Refugees in Uganda and Ethiopia

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of refugee children against physical and sexual  
violence

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**5/1/2018**

**In cooperation with World Vision Germany**

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## **Executive Summary**

The crisis in South Sudan has led to a high number of South Sudanese fleeing the country. Uganda and Ethiopia are among the countries in the region which have taken in the highest numbers of refugees from South Sudan. The two countries differ substantially in their refugee policies and their strategies of how to house the high number of refugees in the country. While Uganda is making use of an out-of-camp settlement and follows the principle of self-reliance for refugees, Ethiopia houses refugees in camps. Among the high number of refugees from South Sudan children make up the significant part in both countries. This thesis looks at the two cases of Uganda and Ethiopia under the focus of physical and sexual violence against refugee children from South Sudan and how they are protected. Are the camps in Ethiopia or the out-of-camp settlements in Uganda more useful for the protection of the refugee children? According to existing literature on the comparison between camps and alternative settlements, out-of-camp solutions are regarded as the more desirable strategy. This thesis shows, however, that for the particular aspect of refugee children's protection both Ethiopia's camps and Uganda's settlements have the potential to provide sufficient protection. Different factors have an impact on the effectiveness of the protection. Especially the structure and organisation of the refugee areas and appropriate measures adjusted to the camps respectively settlement are essential.



## List of Abbreviations

ARRA	Administration for Refugee and Returnee Affairs
CAAC	Children Affected by Armed Conflict
CRRF	Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
OPM	Office of the Prime Minister
RADO	Rehabilitation and Development Organization
ReHoPe	Refugee and Host Population Empowerment strategy
SGBV	Sexual and Gender Based Violence
SPLA	Sudan People's Liberation Army
SPLM	Sudan People's Liberation Movement (-in Opposition)
UASC	Unaccompanied And Separated Minor
UNCRC	UN Convention on the Rights of Children
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees/The UN Refugee Agency
WHO	World Health Organisation

## 1. Introduction

*“With already more than 3.5 million displaced within and outside the borders of South Sudan and thousands more driven to neighbouring countries every day, the United Nations refugee agency has appealed for an urgent peaceful resolution to what has now become Africa's worst refugee crisis.”*

(UN News, 2017)

The crisis in South Sudan has erupted in 2013 and is still going on today, with no foreseeable end in sight. Life-threatening circumstances within South Sudan, including famine, violent fighting and the danger of being kidnapped, raped and attacked by armed groups, are forcing millions of people to flee the country. The conflict in South Sudan is the world's third-worst crisis after Syria and Afghanistan with, as of 2017, around 1.87 million people internally displaced and close to 2.5 million South Sudanese refugees have fled the country. The six host countries of the South Sudanese refugees are the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia, Uganda, Kenya and Sudan (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) spokesperson William Spindler, 2017; UNHCR, 2017a).

Even though the crisis in South Sudan is no less pressing than the crises in Syria and Afghanistan, it is getting far less global attention. Whether it is due to the world being caught up with other topics, like the rise of populist parties and new world leaders such as Donald Trump, other crises like in Syria and Afghanistan affecting especially Europe in a more direct way, or whether the crisis in South Sudan is already going on for too long as to really attract attention, the result is the same: lacking awareness and not enough financial resources to bear the crisis in South Sudan and to support the neighbouring host countries to the extent they would need (Diehl, 2017). To counter the lacking media and general global attention, World Vision has launched a new campaign in 2017: “It takes a world to end violence against children”. As stated by World Vision International, the campaign aims “to relentlessly advocate for an end to violence against children. To highlight it when it occurs and hold those responsible to account. To work with survivors to amplify their stories and voices” (World Vision International, n.d.). In line with the international campaign,

World Vision Germany has set its focus on children affected by armed conflict (CAAC) and on the move (World Vision Deutschland, n.d.).

This master thesis has been written in cooperation with World Vision Germany and aims at shedding light on physical and sexual violence experienced by refugee children from South Sudan who fled to Ethiopia and Uganda. Both Uganda and Ethiopia are currently hosting a high number of South Sudanese refugees and are facing great challenges on how to support the refugees and how to provide the much needed humanitarian assistance in the best possible way. Especially the protection of the refugee children plays an important role in both countries, as they are the most vulnerable among the high number of refugees from South Sudan. Ethiopia is hosting its refugees in camps, while Uganda follows an out-of-camp approach in which refugees are self-reliant, and located in allocated districts.

Uganda's refugee policies, including the out-of-camps settlements, have been praised by the international community as "one of the most progressive in the world", as it fosters the independence of refugees within Uganda (World Bank, 2016, p. vii). Refugee camps, on the other hand, as stated by Idris, may facilitate the provision of protection mechanisms for refugees. They are at the same time criticised as dangerous for refugees and as less effective than out-of-camp settlements (Idris, 2017). But is Uganda's approach also more effective when it comes to the protection of refugee children against physical and sexual violence, or is the out-of-camp principle maybe even fostering the risks of acts of physical and sexual violence against refugee children? Are refugee camps a better way to protect refugee children?

The literature addresses the question of refugee camps versus out-of-camp-settlements. Specific case studies, however, appear to be a gap in the literature. Both Uganda and Ethiopia are currently hosting a high number of refugees from South Sudan, of which children make up a major part. As they are following different approaches regarding their refugee settlements and refugee policies, however, they allow for a direct comparison. In line with World Vision's campaign, the thesis aims at analysing and portraying the differences between Uganda's and Ethiopia's approaches in particular for refugee children from South Sudan, and how the political frameworks (refugee rights and how

they are housed) are affecting their protection against physical and sexual violence. The focus on physical and sexual violence against refugee children from South Sudan and the refugee children's protection presents a new angle in the analysis of refugee settlements. As such it may bring about new results which challenge the assumption that out-of-camp settlements are more effective for refugees (at least for this particular aspect of the refugee response in the two countries).

## **Methodology**

This thesis is constructed as a qualitative thesis and uses the methodology of a comparative study based on literature research and interviews.

In a first step, I will portray and analyse the political frameworks for refugees and refugee children from South Sudan in the two countries, and how they are housed in Uganda and Ethiopia.

A next step is an investigation of the forms of physical and sexual violence committed against refugee children in Ethiopia and Uganda and by whom these are committed. Initiatives and measures to protect refugee children implemented by the two countries' governments and by international organisations on the ground, will be portrayed.

The last step is a comparison of the two countries' approaches as to how efficient they are regarding the protection of refugee children. Based on the result policy recommendations will be presented at the end of the thesis.

The thesis focuses on case studies from Uganda and Ethiopia. No conclusions can be drawn for other countries as the number of refugees, the refugee's ethnic backgrounds, and other factors influence the result of the analysis.

Regarding the literature and sources for the thesis, grey literature, in the form of reports from international organisations, and semi-structured interviews are the major sources for information. The interviews were done with experts working with South Sudanese refugees on the ground in Uganda and Ethiopia and one interview was done with an expert from Germany responsible for World Vision Germany's projects for children in Uganda. Especially for the investigation of the effect of refugee settlements on protection against physical and sexual

violence, the interviews were a fundamental source. The interviews have been conducted by me in April 2018, via Skype or, in case of bad internet connectivity, in written form. Some of the interviewees preferred to stay anonymous, and no names appear in the references. Primary sources, like the governments' national plans and refugee policies, are used as well, but play a minor role in this thesis, as few relevant primary sources appear to exist.

## **2. Literature Review**

This thesis aims at analysing the effects of Uganda's and Ethiopia's policy frameworks for refugees, i.e. their refugee-settlement approaches, on the protection of refugee children from South Sudan against physical and sexual violence. Are they possibly hindering or fostering the protection of the refugee children in Uganda and Ethiopia and if so, how?

### **Different kinds of settlements for refugees**

Regarding possible settlement approaches for refugees in host countries, the literature differentiates between refugee camps, organised settlements and self-reliance settlements (Idris, 2017). Characteristic of refugee camps is that they are constructed as temporary settlements for refugees without, in most cases, any form of self-reliance or self-governance. Refugees are not allowed or able to move freely within the country or region of the camp, and camps generally have to cope with a very high number of refugees as compared to other settlement approaches.

Organised or formal settlements in most cases allow refugees to integrate into the local population of the host country, to earn their income, to some extent to move freely and to have some voice in governing the settlement. In contrast to refugee camps, organised settlements aim at a long-term or even permanent stay of the refugees, and in some cases allow refugees to own land.

In the strongest contrast to refugee camps stands the refugee settlement approach of self-reliance. Here, refugees are allowed to move completely freely within the region or country they are settled in, and they are integrated into local communities rather than sticking together with other refugees. In most cases, they can govern their settlement themselves. They own land, are allowed to work and thus rely (mostly) on themselves rather than on the host country. Like organised settlements, the concept of self-reliance is an approach aimed at refugees staying long-term or permanently in the host country (Schmidt, 2003; Idris, 2017).

About the two countries analysed and compared in this paper, Ethiopia has been relying in most areas on refugee camps (OECD, 2017), while the

Ugandan government has for years been following the concept of self-reliance for its refugees (World Bank, 2016; Clements, Shoffner, Zamore, 2016).

### **Physical and sexual violence against refugee children**

Physical and sexual violence may be a threat for refugee children in both refugee camps and local refugee-settlements (organised or self-reliance) (Idris, 2017). Forms of violence in refugee camps and settlements outside closed camps appear to be the same: according to studies from other countries, violence appears in the form of military or non-military attacks (Crisp, 2000). Non-military attacks include child abuse, domestic and community violence or even murder. Sexual violence respectively Sexual and Gender Based Violence (SGBV) is among the most frequent forms of violence and defined by the World Health Organisation (WHO) as “not only rape and attempted rape, but also sexual abuse, sexual exploitation, forced early marriage, domestic violence, marital rape, trafficking and female genital mutilation” (WHO, n.d.; Crisp, 2000; UNHCR, 2005; Pinheiro, 2004). Such acts of violence may occur among refugees or between refugees and locals, and they may occur on a community or domestic level. People involved and committing the crimes may range from family members to other refugees, up to people in an authoritarian position and aid workers who may take advantage of their position. Also here sexual violence, e.g. refugee children selling sex in return for aid, appears to play an important role (Pinheiro, 2004; Crisp, 2003; UNHCR, 2005).

Forms of physical and sexual violence appear not to differ for camps and other settlements. But the circumstances which (may) facilitate or hinder acts of physical and sexual violence against refugee children are different: in camps, characteristics like “unsafe physical surroundings (...) and patriarchal governing structures” may foster physical and sexual violence against women and children. Protracted refugee situations, i.e. in which refugees are unlikely to return to their home country in the foreseeable future, facilitate such violence due to “the combination of scarce resources and male-dominated camp leadership and distribution structures” (Idris, 2017, p. 5). Weak rules of law and insufficient possibilities to have one’s rights respected increase the danger of physical and sexual violence in refugee camps (Crisp, 2003).

Other settlements outside closed camps, i.e. organised or self-reliance settlements, may facilitate physical and sexual violence when refugees are “vulnerable to exploitation” and frequently become “victims of physical violence at the hands of local populations” and, similar to camps, with insufficient juridical protection (Idris, 2017, pp. 5 & 6). According to Crisp, physical and sexual violence appears to be more frequent and severe in refugee camps than in other refugee-settlements (Crisp, 2003; Crisp 2000).

Physical and sexual violence against refugees, between refugees and local people, inside and outside of camps, all are obviously a most severe threat to their well-being and welfare and lead to mistrust and hatred between refugees and the local population (Crisp, 2000).

### **The effectiveness of the protection of refugee children against physical and sexual violence in camps vs out-of-camp-settlements**

Refugee camps are regarded as less effective to warrant the welfare of refugees and the local population than alternative settlements outside closed camps. This is especially due to higher dependency on relief aid and a higher burden on the host country (Idris, 2017; Crisp 2003). On the other hand, camps may make it easier to monitor and target recipients, to provide protection services and safeguard refugees’ rights as all refugees are in one place (Idris, 2017; Schmidt 2003). This is especially effective in well-constructed and well-organised camps (Fowler, Dugan, Bolton, 2000). Refugees settling down freely in the country and moving around freely are obviously more difficult to reach by the government or international aid organisations (Idris, 2017).

The literature agrees that refugee camps present some advantages, but are less effective than settlements outside camps regarding protection effectiveness. The negative effects of camps, those which facilitate physical and sexual violence, outweigh the advantages (Jacobson, 2001; Crisp, 2003). As a consequence, we experience a “growing shift away from camps to alternatives” (Idris, 2017, p. 14).



## **Empirical Gap and Hypothesis**

The pros and cons of refugee settlement-approaches for the welfare of refugees and local population as well as for the protection of refugee children against physical and sexual violence have been addressed in the literature. Precise comparative studies, however, as confirmed by Idris, are not yet presented in the literature. An empirical gap exists in the investigation of refugee settlement approaches and their effectiveness (Idris, 2017). Uganda and Ethiopia are both highly affected by influxes of refugees from South Sudan, but differ in the housing of refugees and thus allow for a comparison of their settlement approaches. The present thesis, with its focus on the protection of refugee children against physical and sexual violence, aims to investigate the effects of settlement approaches for refugees, i.e. camp or no camp: how effective are initiatives and programs in protecting refugee children against physical and sexual violence in Ethiopia and Uganda. This comparative study may not allow conclusions about other countries. It aims to shed light on some details of the refugee situations in the two given countries. But a clear portrayal and analysis of the country's settlement approach and its effects on the refugees appear to be missing in particular for Ethiopia.

Based on the findings from the given literature on the topic of refugee camps versus other settlements, it can be expected that physical and sexual violence against refugee children is more of a problem in Ethiopia's refugee camps alongside mostly ineffective protection of refugee children against such forms of violence. In Uganda's refugee settlements outside of camps it can be expected, also in comparison to Ethiopia, that physical and sexual violence is less of a problem and protection appears to be more effective.

## **The Conceptual Framework**

This paper will analyse Uganda's and Ethiopia's refugee settlement approaches and their effects on the protection of refugee children (from South Sudan) against physical and sexual violence. The variables to be assessed and analysed are the countries' settlement approaches and refugee policies for South Sudanese refugee children and the effect of the settlement approaches on the effectiveness of the protection of the South Sudanese refugee children

against physical and sexual violence. Measures and initiatives implemented by the two countries' governments and international aid organisations may have an influence beyond these two countries' housing approaches and are thus included as a possible intervening variable with an additional effect on the protection against physical and sexual violence.

For this thesis' analysis, a definition of the term "physical violence against children" is required. Article 19 of the UN Convention on the Rights of Children (UNCRC) defines it as "all forms of physical or mental violence, injury or abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, maltreatment or exploitation, including sexual abuse" (UNCRC, 1989). From all these forms of violence, any child needs to be protected by "State parties". This paper will not deal with all these forms, but rather focus on "physical (...) violence, injury or abuse" and "sexual abuse". UNCRC's General comment No.13 "The right of the child to freedom from all forms of violence" from 2011 further clarifies the term "physical violence". Here, Article 19 of the UN Convention on the Rights of Children is further specified in that physical violence means "fatal and non-fatal physical violence" and includes "all corporal punishment and all other forms of torture, cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment; and physical bullying and hazing by adults and by other children". Sexual violence, i.e. sexual abuse and exploitation, includes "the inducement or coercion of a child to engage in any unlawful or psychologically harmful sexual activity" as well as child prostitution, sexual slavery or any other form of "sexual exploitation" (UNCRC, 2011, pp. 9, 10).

With the focus on Uganda and Ethiopia, this paper aims at presenting which forms of physical and sexual violence occur against South Sudanese refugee children in Uganda and Ethiopia, by whom and whether refugee settlement approaches are affecting both the occurrence of physical and sexual violence and the effectiveness of the protection of refugee children against physical and sexual violence.

This paper will investigate the situation of both refugee children who have fled from South Sudan with their families and unaccompanied children, who in the literature are mostly referred to as "unaccompanied and separated minors (UASCs)" (UNHCR, 2017a, p.23). Geographically, only physical and sexual

violence taking place Uganda and Ethiopia will be analysed, not the violence in South Sudan or on the children's routes to Uganda or Ethiopia.

Article 1 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child defines children as “[e]very human being below the age of eighteen years unless, under the law applicable to the child, majority is attained earlier” (UNCRC, 1989). Both Uganda and Ethiopia equally define children as people under the age of 18 and this paper adheres to this definition (Federal Negarit Gazetta of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, 2000; Ugandan Ministry of Gender, 1997).

The current crisis in South Sudan started in 2013 and thus the years from 2013 up until today are the time frame of this thesis, and only reports from international organisations dated after 2013 are used. The governments' national plans, measurements, legal texts as well as basic research, e.g. on the different forms of refugee settlements, are an exception, as they may have been implemented before 2013, but are still valid.

### **3. The crisis in South Sudan and the consequences for Uganda and Ethiopia**

#### **3.1 The crisis in South Sudan**

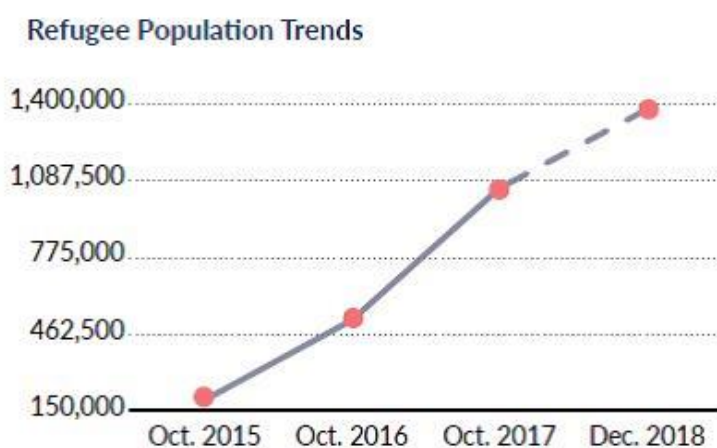
The region of South Sudan has been a conflict-ridden region for a long period. A long civil war between Sudan and the South Sudanese region, after which South Sudan gained independence from Sudan in 2011, has influenced the country's instability just like internal conflicts and rivalries between the two ethnic groups of Dinka and Nuer (Knopf, 2016). These internal ethnic conflicts intensified a civil war within South Sudan which had broken out in 2013, two years after independence, and which is still going on today. When then Vice-President Riek Machar was accused of organising a coup against President Salva Kiir, a violent conflict emerged. With Machar, coming from the Nuer ethnic group, siding with Nuer rebels and becoming their leader, and President Kiir from the Dinka ethnic group, the conflict quickly spread from the capital Juba across the country (Mawadza, Carciotto, 2017). Machar fled the capital, but the fighting continued (Knopf, 2016). In 2015, Machar and Kiir signed a "power-sharing agreement" mediated by the international community (Knopf, 2016, p. 5). The agreement involved a ceasefire for the country and allowed Machar to return. The deal, however, turned out to be unstable, and after the ceasefire had been violated by both sides several times, widespread violence broke out again in 2016 (Knopf, 2016). Machar fled again, and both the agreement and the transitional government collapsed. The conflict experienced a new climax when Kiir's Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) tried to kill Machar and his Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM) -in Opposition party in the Western region of South Sudan where Machar had fled to. The operation involved ground troops and a bombing campaign (Knopf, 2016). According to Knopf, the conflict is continuing due to both sides only regarding a military win as a way to gain peace which is unlikely to happen in the foreseeable future (Knopf, 2016).

With no end in sight for the violent crisis, especially the South Sudanese population continues to suffer. Both the SPLA and SPLM-in Opposition are guilty of committing crimes up to the forms of so-called war crimes and crimes

against humanity (Human Rights Watch, 2017). The crimes faced by the civilian population include beatings and torture, (gang) rape, extrajudicial executions, recruiting of child soldiers and other forms of violence (Human Rights Watch, 2017). The UN has classified the South Sudan crisis as a “Level 3” humanitarian emergency, which is the highest level possible (Mawadza, Carciotto, 2017). The ongoing violence has turned South Sudan into “one of the world’s most dangerous places for aid workers”, making it especially challenging to deliver essential relief aid to regions in need (Human Rights Watch, 2017, p. 503).

Since the start of the conflict in 2013, almost 2 million people have been internally displaced, and around 7.6 million are in need of humanitarian assistance within South Sudan (UNHCR, 2017a). Additionally, over 2 million people have fled the country, with the number still increasing (Human Rights Watch, 2017; UNHCR, 2017a). According to UNHCR, the crisis in South Sudan is “the fastest growing and largest refugee situation on the African continent” today, and it is expected that the number of refugees from South Sudan will rise to over 3 million at the end of 2018 (UNHCR, 2017a, p. 7).

### 3.2 South Sudanese refugees in Uganda and Uganda’s refugee policies



©UNHCR, 2017a

Out of the almost 2.5 million refugees from South Sudan, almost half have fled to Uganda with a total of around 1 million by October 2017 (UNHCR, 2017a). Together with refugees from the Democratic Republic of Congo, Burundi and

Somalia and others, Uganda is currently hosting almost 1.5 million refugees (UNHCR, 2018). As a consequence, Uganda is already now “one of the largest asylum countries worldwide and the largest in Africa”, and the number of refugees from South Sudan is expected to rise even further up to 1.38 million by the end of 2018 (UNHCR, 2017a, p. 21). Among the high number of refugees, women and children make up a major part, especially among South Sudanese refugees who have entered Uganda in the recent past and are still crossing the border (OECD, 2017).

Once the refugees arrive in the country, they need to register with settlement commandants before they are granted their official refugee status (World Bank, 2016). Refugees do not live in refugee camps, but by the majority in out-of-camp settlements, which means that they are either self-settled, i.e. settle down independently from any refugee districts, or are located and settled in districts assigned by the government (World Bank, 2016). If located within such a district, they are provided with relief assistance and are allowed to move freely within the area but may need permission to move into other parts of the country (Interview UGA1, 3rd April 2018). These permissions, alongside an identification they need to carry with them, make it possible for government officials to track the refugees and keep an overview over their settlement (Interview UGA2, 9th April 2018). Refugees who are self-settled may likewise be tracked and bound to movement-restrictions based on reasons of “national security or public order” but are generally allowed to move freely (World Bank, 2016, p. 14). According to the World Bank, Uganda is the only country in the Horn of Africa, including Ethiopia, which allows its refugees to move freely within the host country (World Bank, 2016).

Regarding refugees from South Sudan, they are, according to interviews with World Vision experts, by majority settled in the Northern region of the country. Most of them live in the West Nile region in allocated districts like Bidi Bidi, currently the biggest refugee settlement in the world (Interview EXP1, 25th April 2018). South Sudanese refugees are settled there because the settlement regions in this part of the country were “open” during the time of the influx of South Sudanese refugees coming to Uganda and are close to the South Sudanese border (Interview UGA1, 3rd April 2018; Interview UGA2, 9th April

2018). Within the districts, the refugees live mostly in little huts structured in villages (Interview EXP1, 25th April 2018). While refugees from South Sudan are primarily treated in Uganda as one, ethnic clashes between the refugees may occur (e.g. between Dinkas and Nuers), so that in some cases the refugees are separated by their ethnicity to prevent conflicts from happening. These separations may be done by e.g. villages or zones within the districts (Interview UGA1, 3rd April 2018). Refugee children from South Sudan, both UASCs and children with families, are similarly settled mostly in Northern Uganda and likewise by a majority in assigned districts (Interview UGA1, 3rd April 2018). The refugees' villages are structured in a similar way to the communities of the local population, but the refugees live separated from them in a kind of parallel society with little interaction (Interview EXP1, 25th April 2018).

The Ugandan government follows the approach of self-reliance for refugees in the country which supports refugees to rely on themselves rather than relying entirely on humanitarian assistance provided by the government. According to the UNHCR Global Strategy for Livelihoods, self-reliance means “the ability of an individual, household or community to meet essential needs and to enjoy social and economic rights in a sustainable manner and with dignity” (as cited in OECD, 2017, p. 1). It can furthermore “assist in ensuring that persons of concern are better protected by strengthening their capacity to claim their civil, cultural, economic, political and social rights” (as cited in OECD, 2017, p. 1). As determined by Uganda’s “National Development Plan II 2016-2020”, Uganda’s refugee policies and its self-reliance strategy are implemented in its national policies and national development plans securing it a political and legal basis (The Republic of Uganda, 2015). Different national plans and refugee policies define the approach of self-reliance and grant refugees a number of rights (World Bank, 2016). The “Settlement Transformative Agenda” defines the goal of self-reliance as a sustainable refugee policy and based on the 2006 Refugees Act and the 2010 Refugee Regulation, Uganda is open to everyone who seeks asylum, allows refugees to work, to achieve education and to be protected before the law without discrimination (UNHCR, 2016a; World Bank, 2016). Additionally, refugees are allowed to move relatively freely within the country, and every refugee family has access to a piece of land for their use (World Bank, 2016). According to Clements, Shoffner, and Zamore, only 1% of

the refugees (as of 2016) who live in rural areas in Uganda, depend solely on humanitarian aid. Both in rural areas and cities, some refugees own their own business and even employ Ugandans. Rather than stealing jobs, they are creating positions for refugees and Ugandans alike, pay taxes and bring their skills into the country (Clements, Shoffner, Zamore, 2016). Even though the costs of such a self-reliance approach may be higher than refugee camps in the short-run, the refugees who are contributing to the country benefit the country in the long-run (Betts, Bloom, Kaplan, Omata, 2017; UNHCR, 2017a). One significant restriction in Uganda's refugee policy is, however, that refugees will never be able to become Ugandan citizens but must keep their refugees status as long as they stay in Uganda (World Bank, 2016).

The attitude of the host population towards the refugees appears to be overall positive. As stated by the interviewees, the relationship between refugees and host communities is "70% positive" with "small disagreements" (Interview UGA2, 9th April 2018) respectively "positive to a very, very large extent" as "they see the need to host them" and look at the "positive things for the local population" (Interview UGA1, 3rd April 2018). According to the World Bank's assessment of the refugee situation in Uganda, the overall "openness and generosity of local Ugandan communities toward refugees is partly related to the fact that many Ugandans have themselves been refugees or internally displaced at one time" and that Ugandans share many cultural factors with the refugees from neighbouring countries (World Bank, 2016, p. 16). Also, national plans and initiatives, such as the 1998 Self-Reliance Strategy and the newly adopted Refugee and Host Population Empowerment (ReHoPe) strategy, aim at ensuring that both local population and refugees benefit from implemented aid initiatives (Clements, Shoffner, Zamore, 2016). As such, the ReHoPe strategy states that refugees have access to the same services as locals and, where practical, refugee aid initiatives follow the 70:30-principle in which 70% of the benefits are aimed at the refugees while 30% is aimed at the host communities (UNHCR, 2017a; Interview UGA1, 3rd April 2018; UNHCR, ReHoPe Strategic Framework, n.d.).

Problems within the districts and between refugees and the local population still exist: as especially Northern Uganda is an impoverished region within Uganda,



the living conditions in the area appear to be very poor for both refugees and locals with a lack of basic services in many districts. Other structural problems like high unemployment rates lead to difficulties in finding jobs even though both refugees and locals are legally allowed to work. As a consequence, many locals feel that 30% of the aid initiatives are not enough to support the local population which is, like the refugees, suffering from the bad circumstances in the region (Interview EXP1, 25th April 2018).

Problems exist especially in Northern Uganda where most refugees live, but overall, Uganda’s approach of self-reliance is still being praised by my interview partners and by the international communities as one of the “most progressive in the world”. It is judged to foster a positive and peaceful settlement of refugees into the country, support the independence of refugees, benefit both refugees and locals, and presents overall a well-structured and organised refugee response especially in comparison to refugee camps (World Bank, 2016, p. vii; Interview EXP1, 25th April 2018).

### 3.3 South Sudanese refugees in Ethiopia and Ethiopia’s refugee policies

Refugee Population Trends



©UNHCR, 2017a

Ethiopia is like Uganda one of the countries most affected by South Sudanese refugees fleeing from their country: with over 400,000 refugees from South Sudan by October 2017, Ethiopia is the country with the third highest number of refugees from South Sudan after Uganda and Sudan. Together with refugees from especially Somalia, Eritrea and Sudan, Ethiopia is currently hosting over

800,000 refugees. Like Uganda, the number of refugees from South Sudan is expected to rise further up to almost 500,000 by the end of 2018, and with a proportion of 65%, children likewise make up the main part of the refugees (UNHCR, 2017a).

Ethiopia welcomes all refugees to the country based on its open border principle for everyone fleeing from life-threatening circumstances in his or her home country (UNHCR, South Sudan Regional Refugee Response, 2017). Regarding its refugee settlement, Ethiopia relies on refugee camps with currently 26 camps in the country. The number of refugees varies within the camps and may lie between 2,000 and 90,000 people. The majority hold 60,000 refugees and more (Interview ETH1, 12th April 2018). The camps are divided internally by zones and constructed with humanitarian services centred within the camps to provide refugees with basic humanitarian assistance (Interview ETH2, 23rd April 2018; UNHCR, 2017a).

After the refugees enter the country, they register at transit/registration centres with basic information on age, health status etc. and are transferred to the different refugee camps (Interview ETH1, 12th April 2018). According to World Vision experts working in Ethiopia, there are some cases in which refugees live with relatives outside of the camps, but there are no exact numbers as they are not in contact with the international organisations on the ground (Interview ETH2, 23rd April 2018). Generally, however, refugees are not allowed to integrate into the local population and to live outside refugee camps so that of the South Sudanese refugees “almost 99% are living in refugee camps” (Interview ETH1, 12th April 2018). This includes refugee children and UASCs, who, like the rest of the South Sudanese refugees, live by the majority in seven refugee camps in the Gambella regional state close to the capital Gambella and the South Sudanese border (Interview ETH1, 12th April 2018).

According to UNHCR, the camps overall only provide “limited services and opportunities and depend largely on humanitarian assistance” (UNHCR, 2017a). Evaluations of Ethiopia’s refugee policies paint a similar picture with particular deficiencies regarding the living conditions within the refugee camps. According to an OECD evaluation from 2017, malnutrition rates are around 30% in the older and established camps and at 50% in new camps, while the

“mortality rates (are) far above emergency thresholds” (OECD, 2017, p. 4). In Ethiopia’s biggest refugee camp in the Gambella region, where the majority of the South Sudanese refugees are located, in 2017 around 52% of the refugees still had not received sufficient transitional shelter assistance (UNHCR, 2017a). The interviewees likewise regard the living conditions especially in the newer camps as insufficient. Within the camps which have been implemented some years ago “most of the basic facilities like the education, the health, the shelter facilities are provided (...) and almost we can say it is within the UN standards”. Still, in the new camps, “the facilities are not fulfilled because still influx is coming in and all basic services (...) are not enough” (Interview ETH1, 12th April 2018).

Based on Ethiopia’s Refugee Proclamation of 2004, refugees and their families in Ethiopia have the same rights as non-citizens. As a consequence, refugees have no freedom of movement, are only allowed to work under specific conditions and have only limited access to land for agricultural production (OECD, 2017). While some exceptions are being made regarding the work permits, in practice refugees are not able and allowed to work or may only be able to work under terms of cheap, unskilled workforce and oftentimes in the form of casual labour in informal economies, according to the evaluations of Ethiopia’s refugee policies (World Bank, 2016). Movements outside the refugee camps are likewise only allowed in special cases and with “pass permits from the government (while) otherwise in principle it is for refugees not allowed to move freely from place to place” even though some informal exceptions seem to exist (Interview ETH1, 12th April 2018; Interview ETH2, 23rd April 2018).

The Ethiopians’ attitude towards the continuing influx of refugees is mixed and appears to depend on the local population’s ethnic backgrounds. Most of the Ethiopians in the Gambella region are from the Nuer and Anuak ethnic groups and as a consequence almost exclusively South Sudanese refugees who are Nuer are fleeing to Ethiopia. The Nuer local population in the Gambella region welcomes South Sudanese (Nuer) refugees entering the country, while Ethiopians who are Anuak are more sceptical (Interview ETH2, 23rd April 2018). With currently more Nuer than Anuak living in the Gambella region, “the Nuer are now at the upper hand”. The Anuak feel threatened, especially in

regard to the land they have to share with the rising number of South Sudanese refugees and the humanitarian assistance mainly benefitting the refugees (Interview ETH1, 12th April 2018; Interview ETH2, 23rd April 2018). The increasing number of South Sudanese refugees is also a challenge for the Ethiopian government: a relocation of the South Sudanese refugees as a means to counter the rising number of refugees in the region, has so far failed due to the refugees refusing to be relocated from the Gambella region (Interview ETH1, 12th April 2018). As a consequence, the Ethiopian government has threatened not to take in any more South Sudanese refugees if they continue to refuse to relocate to other regions (Interview ETH1, 12th April 2018).

Even though Ethiopia still relies on refugee camps in most parts, some steps in the direction of self-reliance for the refugees, especially regarding the integration into the local structures, have been made. In cooperation with international aid organisations, in some camps projects have been implemented which aim at bringing together refugees and locals: in the Jijiga area, a refugee area where mostly Somali refugees live, refugees and host communities are brought together in activities by UNHCR (OECD, 2017). In line with such projects, the Ethiopian government has in 2010 adopted an Out-Of-Camp policy which defines regulations in which refugees can live in out-of-camp areas. This policy, however, has been established almost entirely for Eritrean refugees i.e. disregards refugees from South Sudan (UNHCR, 2017b). During the Leaders' Summit on the Global Refugee Crisis in 2016, however, the Ethiopian government has made some pledges for further steps towards self-reliance and out-of-camp settlements for the refugees within the country. In more detail, the Ethiopian government has stated that it plans to “progressively expand” its out-of-camp policies “if resources (would) allow (it)”, to allow refugees to work and cultivate land, to access improved education and even be legally integrated into the country and population if they have lived in Ethiopia for more than 20 years (UNHCR, 2017b; UNHCR, 2016b). Furthermore, especially for South Sudanese refugees, who are entering the country in ever-increasing numbers, the Out-Of-Camp policy is to be expanded. As refugees are travelling back and forth the South Sudanese border or want to stay as close as possible to their home country, the restrictions on them to remain in the camps are to be lifted or at

least eased during the following years, as pledged by the Ethiopian government (UNHCR, 2017b; Interview ETH2, 23rd April 2018).

Important steps in that direction, however, still need to be taken and, according to UNHCR and OECD, the goal of expanding the principle of self-reliance for refugees still needs to be defined in a more widespread and in particular more official way, e.g. by implementing these goals in Ethiopia's national plans and agendas (UNHCR, 2017b). Some changes can be observed, overall still very few tangible steps towards self-reliance have been made, and the vast majority of refugees still lives in refugee camps depending highly on aid assistance (OECD, 2017).

#### **4. Physical and sexual violence against refugee children from South Sudan in Uganda and Ethiopia**

##### **4.1 Physical and sexual violence against refugee children from South Sudan in Uganda and their protection**

In 2017, 65% of the South Sudanese refugees in Uganda were children. Among this vulnerable group, especially the so-called “unaccompanied and separated minors (UASCs)” are in need of assistance and protection (UNHCR, 2017a, p. 23). As stated before, refugee children from South Sudan live by the majority in the Western and Northern region of Uganda, close to the South Sudanese border in assigned districts (Interview UGA1, 3rd April 2018). The living conditions for refugees in Uganda, including the South Sudanese refugee children, have not been judged as violent by the World Vision experts. According to them, factors like the welcoming attitude of the local population, the provision of aid services for both the refugees and host communities, as well as measures to ensure security within the refugee settlements, create an environment which cannot be described as hostile or violent (Interview UGA1, 3rd April 2018; Interview UGA2, 9th April 2018; Interview EXP1, 25th April 2018). Nevertheless, violence does occur, even if there may be less of it compared to other countries, as assumed by one interview partner (Interview EXP1, 25th April 2018). Still, “refugee situations probably always bring about violence”. So physical and sexual violence against refugee children is an issue also in Uganda (Interview EXP1, 25th April 2018). There appears to be no one

specific form of physical abuse that is committed most frequently against refugee children. But Sexual and Gender Based Violence (SGBV) including early child marriage, child labour, neglect, physical torture and battering are the most common forms. These observations by my interview partners are confirmed by UNHCR, which regards physical violence and in particular SGBV and early child marriage as significant risks for refugee children in Uganda (UNHCR, 2017a). The children's background, i.e. home country, does not seem to play a role for the forms of violence committed against them, but children with disabilities appear to be a particularly marginalised group facing higher risks of physical and sexual violence. Stigmatisation and facilities and services careless of disabilities can lead to the exclusion of these children; with their physical disabilities, like blindness or deafness, they may be in disadvantage in protecting themselves or in reporting crimes (Interview UGA1, 3rd April 2018; Interview UGA2, 9th April 2018; Interview EXP1, 25th April 2018). SGBV is among the most common forms of violence but girls have not been named as an especially marginalised group in risk of physical and sexual violence by the interviewees.

The children's relatives, mostly immediate family members, appear to be the most common perpetrators of the named acts of physical and sexual violence. The need for money seems to be a motivation for the commitment of crimes like marrying off a child as well as sending a child to work, as this may bring in much-needed cash (Interview UGA1, 3rd April 2018; Interview UGA2, 9th April 2018). Also, factors like frustration, alcohol abuse or traumata foster violence (Interview EXP1, 25th April 2018). Aid workers have also been named as perpetrators. This appears to be a problem occurring in crisis areas around the globe (e.g. aid workers have been found out to be guilty of sexual misconduct during Oxfam's response program in Haiti; Oxfam, 2011).

To protect refugee children against such crimes, several measures have been implemented in Uganda, mostly in cooperation between the government and UNHCR alongside other international aid organisations (UNHCR, 2016a; UNHCR, 2017a). Within the Ugandan government, the Office of the Prime Minister (OPM) is responsible for the refugees, while UNHCR functions as a co-leader and co-coordinator of most initiatives. As such, UNHCR has developed

the South Sudan Regional Refugee Response Plan which includes a special section for every country affected by the South Sudanese crisis and is updated annually. The Regional Response Plan functions as a roadmap for all 74 international partners working in the region and thus presents probably the most crucial strategy paper on the issue (UNHCR, 2017a). The protection of refugees and refugee children is an essential priority in the response plan with a particular focus on UASCs as well as SGBV (UNHCR, 2017a).

UNHCR's response plan is supported by the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (CRRF) which has been developed in 2016 and aims at ensuring an efficient and sustainable aid response worldwide, including a UNHCR-led response-approach in countries affected by refugee crises to support these host countries. The Ugandan government has already rolled out the CRRF in its state and with the help of the "CRRF Steering Group", the framework "is being mainstreamed across the response" (UNHCR, 2017a, pp. 22 & 12).

Based on UNHCR's Regional Refugee Response Plan, programs like the establishment and training of child protection committees and foster families for UASCs have been implemented in the past (UNHCR, 2016a). Examples of planned child protection responses for 2018 include improved registration of children with and without families, an increase in child friendly spaces and strengthened "community based child protection mechanisms" as well as an improvement of the infrastructure warranting security of women and children in danger of SGBV (UNHCR, 2017a, pp. 30 & 31).

The government itself is responsible for the enforcement of law and justice within the refugee settlements. As such, laws for the banishment of acts of physical and sexual violence against children, like the prohibition of early child marriages, have been implemented by the government. In Uganda, refugee children enjoy the same rights as Ugandan children, so they have the legal right to be provided with essential services like education and safety (Interview UGA1, 3rd April 2018). To enhance security in the districts, the government has deployed so-called probation officers and police forces in the settlements to ensure compliance and to arrest anyone who would break the law. These probation officers, in cooperation with international organisations, sensitise both

refugees and the local population on the topic of security, including children's rights and the protection of children. Also, the government, again in cooperation with international organisations, provides essential and fundamental facilities like schools and health centres in the refugee settlements and provides basic services to them (Interview UGA2, 9th April 2018).

One evaluation of UNHCR's refugee responses in Uganda and Ethiopia from 2016 rated the response and programs in Uganda in 2015 as overall effective but not sustainable enough. In regard to the protection of refugee children against physical and sexual violence in Uganda, initiatives are claimed to have achieved e.g. refugee registration and access to protection mechanisms, while SGBV responses appear as too weak mostly due to insufficient coordination between the actors involved (UNHCR Policy Development and Evaluation Service, 2016).

In contrast to the given evaluation, the interviewees paint a more positive picture: according to World Vision experts, the government is "very keen" on the "cooperation with international organisations" favourable for an overall peaceful environment for the refugees and is as such very effective (Interview UGA1, 3rd April 2018). Negotiations and close consultations between the OPM, UNHCR and other international organisations and NGOs before the implementation of any measures help to make the cooperation between the different actors as efficient as possible. The UN agencies set minimum standards for the refugee response in Uganda and thereby aim to ensure that the planned measures, including initiatives on child protection, turn out effectively (Interview UGA2, 9th April 2018). Measures and initiatives themselves have likewise been judged as "very effective" by the interviewees and are claimed to indeed reduce violence (Interview EXP1, 25th April 2018). Programs like on the prevention of early child marriage show a "slowly but surely" decrease in these, and over one half of the UASCs in Uganda are being taken care of by foster parents (Interview UGA1, 3rd April 2018; Interview UGA2, 9th April 2018).

## **4.2 Physical and sexual violence against refugee children in Ethiopia and their protection**

65% of the South Sudanese refugees in Ethiopia are children with an expected



average of 21% UASCs among the newly arriving refugees (UNHCR, 2017a). As reported above, their vast majority, adults and children, live in refugee camps in the Gambella region. One interview partner regards the living conditions as overall not violent, due to the “strong administration and protection (...) given by the Ethiopian government to all refugees” (Interview ETH1, 12th April 2018). But UNHCR judges the security situation, especially in the Gambella region, as overall unstable (UNHCR, 2017a). Both UNHCR and my interview partners agree that physical and sexual violence against refugee children in refugee camps do occur irrespective of the children’s backgrounds (Interview ETH1, 12th April 2018; Interview ETH2, 23rd April 2018; UNHCR, 2017a). The most frequent forms of violence appear to be SGBV and labour abuse in which children are forced into work or into physical activities like collecting firewood (Interview ETH1, 12th April 2018; Interview ETH2, 23rd April 2018). Family members have been stated as the most common perpetrators of these crimes. According to World Vision experts, unemployment and the abuse of alcohol frequently trigger acts of violence committed by family members of the children (Interview ETH1, 12th April 2018). South Sudanese refugees are in most areas members of the Nuer ethnic group, so not much marginalisation of the South Sudanese refugee children seems to occur; the shared ethnic background, according to an interview partner, creates a close community without discrimination (Interview ETH1, 12th April 2018). Children with disabilities are vulnerable towards acts of physical and sexual violence, though, according to one interviewee they are not a particularly marginalised group exposed to acts of physical or sexual violence, and that is due to the protection provided by NGOs present in the refugee camps (Interview ETH1, 12th April 2018). Girls have likewise not been named as an especially marginalised group.

In the Ethiopian government, the Administration for Refugee and Returnee Affairs (ARRA) is responsible for the refugee affairs in the country (UNHCR, 2017b). The ARRA cooperates with UNHCR and other aid organisations in the frame of UNHCR’s South Sudan Regional Response Plan for Ethiopia (UNHCR, 2017a). The UNHCR is co-chairing initiatives implemented in Ethiopia. One priority of the Ethiopia-section of the South Sudan Refugee Response Plan for 2018 is the protection of refugee children, in particular UASCs and children endangered by SGBV. Examples of the programs of the

2018 response plan (UNHCR, 2017a) are border monitoring, community-based committees and groups working on SGBV prevention, and child protection initiatives. “Temporary child-friendly spaces, youth centres and child protection helpdesks” as well as “emergency SGBV prevention and response services” are examples of programs which were implemented in the last years (UNHCR, 2016a, p. 34). Refugee children are identified and registered at the transit centres in Ethiopia, including UASCs and children with disabilities receiving services adapted to their needs by specialised NGOs like the “Rehabilitation and Development Organization” (RADO) (Interview ETH1, 12th April 2018).

The Ethiopian government has adopted the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (CRRF), but similar to the pledges made at the 2016 Leaders' Summit, the CRRF has not yet been rolled out (UNHCR, 2017a). Once implemented, UNHCR hopes that the CRRF will foster the inclusion of refugee issues into the national system, to combine humanitarian and national development plans more efficiently and to promote out-of-camp settlements (UNHCR, 2017a; Interview ETH2, 23rd April 2018).

The Ethiopian government is responsible for the protection of the refugees from the moment they are registered as refugees at the transit centres. Nobody can enter the refugee camps without work or pass permit except employees of humanitarian organisations. Protection officers, camp coordinators and camp officers have been deployed by the Ethiopian government to create awareness among refugees and to ensure punishments of those committing acts of physical and sexual violence and other crimes in the camps. A so-called refugee central committee and weekly coordination meetings led by the government, by UNHCR and by key actors like World Vision and Plan are tools which aim to ensure a secure environment through effective structures and efficient camp organisation. These groups and entities are involved in the set-up of new refugee camps, and they appear to work together well on structured responses to refugee issues in the camps (Interview ETH1, 12th April 2018).

The 2015 evaluation of UNHCR's refugee responses in Uganda and Ethiopia regards the protection mechanisms for refugees in Ethiopia as weak. This also refers to the protection of SGBV and community-based protection responses. The reason lies mainly in too little and too inefficient cooperation and

harmonisation between the actors involved (UNHCR Policy Development and Evaluation Service, 2016). The interviewees consider the collaboration between government and international organisations as more positive and as vital for the reduction of violence in the refugee camps. Some of my interview partners believe that measures for the protection of refugee children are “effective” or “very effective” (Interview ETH1, 12th April 2018; Interview ETH2, 23rd April 2018). With the refugees housed in camps, it is, according to one interviewee, relatively easy for the services provided to reach them all, to monitor and to prevent acts of violence from happening and to identify refugees with special needs (Interview ETH1, 12th April 2018).

## **5. Comparison**

Uganda and Ethiopia are currently hosting over 1 million respectively 400,000 refugees from South Sudan and these numbers are expected to rise even further in the following months. In both countries, refugee children make up 65% of the refugees from South Sudan and a refugee response including the protection of refugee children against acts of physical and sexual violence are an urgent requirement (UNHCR, 2017a).

In Uganda, refugees are hosted in out-of-camp settlements and under the principle of self-reliance. Ethiopia is making use of refugee camps. The approach of self-reliance in Uganda means that the refugees live in allocated districts, are allowed to move freely within the given district, are allowed to work, to receive education and to own land for agricultural production. These rights all aim for the refugees to rely on themselves and their income rather than solely on assistance by the Ugandan government.

In contrast, refugees in Ethiopia are obliged to live in refugee camps and may not move freely, work or own land (OECD, 2017; Interview ETH1, 12th April 2018). Exceptions to these restrictions are minimal or have not yet progressed very far so that the vast majority of refugees live indeed in refugee camps and rely heavily on assistance by the Ethiopian government and international organisations situated on the ground in Ethiopia (UNHCR, 2017b; OECD, 2017).

Uganda's approach of self-reliance is being praised by international organisations as very progressive and effective for the refugees, in particular for protracted refugee situations (World Bank, 2016). Ethiopia's refugee camps spark more critique and especially the conditions in newly established refugee camps are criticised as insufficient (OECD, 2017; UNHCR, 2017a; Interview ETH1, 12th April 2018). An essential restriction in Uganda is, however, the fact that refugees are not allowed to become Ugandan citizens, while the Ethiopian government is planning to nationalise refugees who have lived in the country for more than 20 years (World Bank, 2016; UNHCR, 2016b). Also, some of the refugee districts, in particular in Northern Uganda, fail to meet essential basic needs, and both locals and refugees face deficient living conditions (Interview EXP1, 25th April 2018).

Local populations in both Uganda and Ethiopia appear to accept or even welcome the high number of refugees fleeing from South Sudan (Interview UGA1, 3rd April 2018; Interview UGA2, 9th April 2018; Interview ETH1, 12th April 2018; Interview EXP1, 25th April 2018). In Uganda, the local population benefits from initiatives implemented in the refugee areas based on the 70:30-principle by which host communities receive 30% of the aid and the rest is given to the refugees (UNHCR, 2017a; Interview UGA1, 3rd April 2018; UNHCR, ReHoPe Strategic Framework, n.d.). Also, many Ugandans were in the past refugees themselves (World Bank, 2016). In Ethiopia, most South Sudanese refugees are located in the Gambella region. A significant share of the local population there belongs to the ethnic group of Nuer, to which the South Sudanese refugees in Ethiopia belong as well. This fosters a welcoming attitude of locals towards refugees. Those Ethiopians in the Gambella region who are Anuaks, however, are more sceptical and rather hostile (Interview ETH1, 12th April 2018; Interview ETH2, 23rd April 2018). For both countries, however, drastic clashes between the local population and the South Sudanese refugees have not been observed.

According to World Vision experts, violence does not seem to be a particular issue in the refugee areas in both countries (Interview UGA1, 3rd April 2018; Interview UGA2, 9th April 2018; Interview ETH1, 12th April 2018). Still, physical and sexual violence against refugee children does occur, in both Uganda and

Ethiopia. Interestingly, the refugees in the two countries live under different circumstances, but the most common forms of violence appear to be the same: child labour and SGBV including especially early child marriage, committed in the majority by immediate family members. The background of the refugee children, i.e. where they come from, does not play an important role (Interview UGA1, 3rd April 2018; Interview UGA2, 9th April 2018; Interview ETH1, 12th April 2018). According to UNHCR, children with disabilities tend to be marginalised groups and, given their physical or mental restrictions are exposed to a higher risk of physical and sexual violence in both Uganda and Ethiopia (UNHCR, 2017a). For Uganda, children with disabilities were reported as a distinct marginalised group among refugee children. This has not been observed in Ethiopia; instead, such children seem to be protected due to the common ethnic background of the South Sudanese refugees (Interview UGA1, 3rd April 2018; Interview UGA2, 9th April 2018; Interview ETH1, 12th April 2018). Given the differences between UNHCR's and the interviews' assessment for refugee children with disabilities in Ethiopia, it appears that it cannot clearly be said whether children with disabilities in Ethiopia are experiencing more physical and sexual violence than other refugee children. SGBV is among the most common forms of violence against refugee children in both Uganda and Ethiopia, but girls have not been named as an especially marginalised group in either of the countries.

In both countries, the government is responsible for the enforcement of and compliance with laws in refugee settlements and camps. In Uganda, refugee children enjoy the same rights as any Ugandan child and thus have the rights to e.g. receive full education. In Ethiopia, refugee children are far less privileged. Acts of physical and sexual violence, however, are likewise prohibited in the refugee areas of both countries (Interview UGA1, 3rd April 2018; Interview ETH1, 12th April 2018). To enforce the laws for the protection of refugee children, the governments in both countries have implemented measures for the protection of refugees and refugee children: in both countries, refugees are obliged to wear identification documents which they receive when they register as refugees. This allows government officials to keep track of the number of refugees and where they are located. Also, similar tools like camp officers, camp coordinators and probation officers can be found to guarantee for security

within the refugee areas. They will arrest anyone violating the law in any way, they create awareness among refugees, and they deploy efficient structures in refugee areas (Interview UGA1, 3rd April 201; Interview UGA2, 9th April 2018; Interview ETH1, 12th April 2018). Here again it appears that similar tools are implemented, with similar efficiencies, in both countries - regardless of the fact that these countries' settlement policies and approaches are quite different.

Both governments work closely together with UNHCR and other international organisations in the implementation and provision of protection services and programs aimed at the protection of refugee children. The South Sudan Regional Refugee Response Plan functions in both countries as an important guideline and roadmap for these programs which follow again a similar line in which awareness projects appear to play an important role (UNHCR, 2016a; UNHCR, 2017a; Interview EXP1, 25th April 2018). Still, differences in measures and plans implemented for the protection and support of the refugee children's livelihood can be found: foster parents, e.g., play a vital role in refugee response in Uganda: over one half of the UASCs in Uganda are taken care of by foster parents (Interview UGA2, 9th April 2018). Such project types cannot be found in Ethiopia (Interview ETH1, 12th April 2018).

UNHCR's evaluation of refugee responses in Uganda and Ethiopia shows that there is, to some extent, criticism about their effectiveness (less for Uganda than for Ethiopia). Mainly the cooperation between the actors involved is criticised as inefficient and weak for both countries (UNHCR Policy Development and Evaluation Service, 2016). The evaluation has been published already two years ago and the World Vision experts in both countries are more positive and regard both the measures and the partnership as "effective" (in Ethiopia) respectively "very effective" (in Uganda) (Interview ETH1, 12th April 2018; Interview UGA1, 3rd April 2018; Interview EXP1, 25th April 2018). An important factor here appears to be, as stated by almost all my interview partners, whether or not these measures have been implemented in accordance with the given housing and/or settlement policies (Interview UGA1, 3rd April 2018; Interview UGA2, 9th April 2018; Interview ETH1, 12th April 2018). The structure of refugee areas must match with the implemented measures and vice versa. How important this is shows up from the comparison

between refugee camps on one hand, and the rare cases of refugees living outside of the camps on the other hand, in Ethiopia. As stated by one interview partner from Ethiopia, less violence occurs in refugee camps as compared to local communities in Ethiopia as the local communities fail to provide the same infrastructure and humanitarian assistance as in the camps: “if you go to the host community, it’s not like well-structured, not as such a well-structured humanitarian aid and such kinds of officials” (Interview ETH1, 12th April 2018).

Regarding the question of whether the refugee camps in Ethiopia or the out-of-camp-settlements in Uganda are more effective in protecting refugee children against physical and sexual violence, there appear to be arguments in favour of both refugee housing approaches. As stressed by my interview partners from Uganda, the out-of-camp settlements and the principle of self-reliance in Uganda allow refugees to “enjoy fullness of life” as they are provided with land and a spacious settlement. This “fullness of life”, especially space, privacy and employment, foster an environment among the refugees which prevents frustration and a feeling of uselessness from growing and, as a result, reduces the occurrence of violence (Interview UGA1, 3rd April 2018; Interview UGA2, 9th April 2018; Interview EXP1, 25th April 2018). In comparison to refugee camps, the out-of-camp settlements have been judged as more useful in providing an environment with better living conditions for refugees (Interview EXP1, 25th April 2018).

The camps, on the other hand, seem to make it easier to provide services to a high number of refugees, according to the interviews: “Yes, because they are living in one area and all organisations have offices and the structures and the system to manage such kinds of things. (...) When people are in camps, like 80,000 people are in one camp, it is easier to provide them with the basic services and to monitor issues related to violence and to structure the different community organisations” (Interview ETH1, 12th April 2018). This argument stands in line with a statement by two interview partners from Uganda, who pointed to a distinction between settlement districts in rural areas and those in more populated areas closer to cities. In rural areas, refugees may have to walk several kilometres to reach any particular services, e.g. health services in hospitals. In such cases, in comparison to refugee camps, these settlements

appear to be actually less effective for measures aimed at refugees and their protection (Interview UGA2, 9th April 2018; Interview EXP1, 25th April 2018).

In summary, there are a number of factors which, regarding the relative efficiency of the Ugandan and the Ethiopian settlement approaches and protection measures, do not make a great difference, e.g. the refugee children's home country, the forms of physical and sexual violence and the governments' protection tools. All these are not essential for the comparison and for a better protection of refugee children against physical and sexual violence. Other factors do make a difference: a common ethnical background, some successful projects, for which "foster parents" in Uganda are an example; and the governments' willingness to cooperate with the international aid organisations. These factors appear to be favourable for the refugee children's protection. In particular, the structure and organisation of the refugee areas seem to play an important role: Uganda's self-reliance approach can enhance the independence and quality of refugees' lives and as such supports the protection of the refugee children. When located in sparsely populated areas, however, it may still hinder refugees from reaching important services like camp officers who are supposed to protect refugees. The comparison between refugee camps and local communities within Ethiopia has also shown that refugee settlements tend to be effective only when they are in alignment with an efficient structure and organisation. Otherwise, the government has little chance to provide sufficient protection mechanisms for refugee children and the risk of physical and sexual violence may increase. In such a case, refugee camps may provide a more effective environment for the refugees' protection.

It appears that refugee camps and host communities both have a potential to protect refugee children from acts of physical and sexual abuse to a sufficient degree. But this only applies when organised and structured efficiently and when refugees can reach and receive the services provided. Only then the measures and initiatives have the potential to deploy their essential role in refugee children's protection, as reported by all my interviewees.

This efficiency and effectiveness has been achieved in both Uganda and Ethiopia under their different refugee housing approaches due to the fact that the protection mechanisms have been adjusted to given refugee areas. As a



consequence, according to the interviewees, the housing approaches of both Uganda and Ethiopia are indeed effective.

## **6. Conclusion**

When I started my investigation, having studied the literature, I assumed that the protection of refugee children against physical and sexual violence would be less effective in Ethiopia's refugee camps as compared to Uganda's out-of-camp settlements. This hypothesis has not been confirmed in this thesis.

In a first instance, the comparison between Uganda and Ethiopia has shown that in both countries, physical and sexual violence against refugee children from South Sudan does occur, and it happens in similar forms and by comparable perpetrators. These findings are in line with existing literature on the topic of violence in refugee camps and alternative settlements (Idris, 2017; Crisp, 2003; Crisp, 2000).

More importantly, the two different refugee housing approaches both appear to have the potential to provide adequate protection to refugee children. None of the countries has been able to prevent physical and sexual violence from happening, but in both countries, protection measures have been judged by my interview partners as effective with essential positive results.

Still, there are differences between Uganda and Ethiopia. But these do not simply relate to settlement policies as such but to other factors which appear to make the difference, as pointed out by one interviewee: "I don't think it is only about housing policy or self-reliance to improve the risks of violence against refugee children. It could be more complicated, and many factors (...) interact" (Interview ETH2, 23rd April 2018).

One of these factors is a shared ethnic and cultural background among refugees or between refugees and the local population. In Ethiopia, the common ethnical background of refugees and local people fosters a peaceful environment both between refugees and locals as well as among the refugees from South Sudan. In Uganda, the local people's own past as refugees leads to

a welcoming and peaceful attitude towards the South Sudanese refugees by the majority.

Another factor are key projects for the protection of refugee children which may likewise influence the children's security. In Uganda, over half of the UASCs from South Sudan are taken care of by foster parents who provide essential shelter for the children.

Also, close cooperation between the government and international aid organisation plays an essential role, and here, the government's willingness to collaborate is critical. Only if the government is interested in a collaboration or partnership, the international organisations' work can be successful as they highly depend on the government's support (Interview EXP1, 25th April 2018).

Most importantly, the structure, organisation and location of refugee areas and the way in which measures and initiatives are implemented appear to play quite an essential role. If the government and international organisations on the ground in the two countries can reach the refugees respectively refugee children and have means of controlling the refugee areas, they can protect the refugee children at least to a certain extent. Settlements and camps with little structure and insufficient organisation in, e.g. rural areas, however, appear to hinder adequate protection. The measures for protection need to be appropriate for a given refugee area and adjusted to the structure and characteristics of the camp, respectively out-of-camp settlement, only then they have the potential of being an intervening variable with significant influence.

To sum up, no generalised differentiation can be made between Ethiopia's refugee camps and Uganda's out-of-camp settlements regarding the effectiveness of the protection of refugee children against physical and sexual violence, in the sense that one settlement type would always be better than the other. A clear camp vs out-of-camp comparison appears to be too simple. Different factors have an impact on the effectiveness of protection. Especially the structure and organisation of the refugee areas and appropriate measures adjusted to the camps respectively settlement are an essential intervening

variable with the potential to enhance the effectiveness of protection significantly.

### **Policy Recommendations**

In summary, the literature on the topic of camps vs settlements suggests that out-of-camp settlements and the principle of self-reliance are overall more effective for refugees, as these support refugees in relying on themselves rather than on government support (Idris, 2017). As such, the approach of self-reliance is thought to have the potential to provide refugees with hope rather than being stuck in a camp without the prospect of improvement or change (Interview EXP1, 25th April 2018).

However, about the particular aspect of protection of refugee children against physical and sexual violence, this thesis has shown that both camps and settlements have similar potential to offer protection for refugee children. As such, it cannot be said that one or the other refugee housing approach provides more effective protection. There are other factors which make the difference.

The Ethiopian government has made some steps in the direction of out-of-camp settlements for refugees and stated at the end of 2017 that it plans to close all refugee camps within the next ten years to integrate refugees into local host communities (Frew, 2017). Here it will be crucial how the out-of-camp settlements are implemented. Locating refugees simply in out-of-camp settlements will not solve all problems. We have seen how different factors play an essential role for the settlements to be effective and the Ethiopian government would be well advised to consider all of these. The refugees' ethnic identification, appropriate measures and especially an effective structure, organisation and location may influence the success of the refugees' housing and as such should not be underestimated.

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