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# Refugees in Uganda: (in)stability, conflict, and resilience

Rapid Literature Review

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## About this report

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## 1. Executive summary

This paper analyses the structural challenges, root causes and dynamics of conflict, (in)stability and resilience in Uganda, with a particular focus on their relation to recent refugee movements. The first section of the paper explores the national dynamics that shape conflict, (in)stability and resilience in Uganda. The second section analyses the refugee flows, policies, impacts, challenges and sources of resilience. The third and fourth sections focus on the conflict and (in)stability dynamics specific to the north-west/northern and south-west/western regions.

While conflicts in the great lakes region are increasingly pushing refugees into Uganda – particularly the northwest and southwest. Uganda's current situation is one of relative peace, compared to previous decades. As a recent ICG (2017) report explains, 'Uganda is not in danger of renewed civil war or rebel violence', but it does risk 'sliding into a political crisis that could eventually threaten the country's hard-won stability'. This slide towards a political crisis is being fuelled by the top-down, repressive, clinging to power of President Museveni and his circle, combined with the grassroots dissatisfaction of a young population with limited economic prospects and environmental vulnerability.<sup>1</sup>

The unprecedented numbers of refugees flowing into Uganda are putting a significant strain on the government, its development partners, on host communities and on the refugees. This is even more concerning as conflict in the countries of origin (particularly South Sudan and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)) look likely to continue, and more refugees are expected to arrive. There is a large funding shortfall for the refugee response, and thus food rations have been cut, and some refugee settlements are close to full.

No recent literature finds widespread conflict related to refugees, but small-scale conflict over natural resources (especially water and timber) is reported, plus sporadic small-scale protests (Khadka, 2017, p.5). Most of the literature reports of heightened tensions between refugees and host communities, usually based on the overall poverty and vulnerability of both groups, combined with increased competition over resources, basic services, land and livelihoods. Older literature on refugees in southwest Uganda finds a more mixed picture – with reports of localised conflicts over land, and of negative attitudes towards refugees. With increasingly scarce land, environmental degradation, an increasing population and a funding shortfall, the sustainability of Uganda's progressive refugee policy is at risk. The public feelings of discontent could be mobilised by political actors at some point, however, Museveni's regime is in favour of the current policy.

### *National dynamics*

Uganda has experienced political violence and conflict over many decades, with a large number of armed rebel groups and insurgencies in different parts of the country fighting successive regimes. These conflicts are complex and deeply intertwined with conflicts and alliances in the Great Lakes Region. The manipulation of ethnic and regional identities by elites is a common factor across Uganda's conflicts, and is rooted in its colonial history. Uganda's north-south divide was exacerbated by successive governments after independence in 1962, along with other regional divides. Yet while Uganda's conflicts are often framed as ethnic conflicts, this distracts attention from the underlying historical, socio-economic and political conflict dynamics. While there has been a rise in local insecurity and crime, including disputes over land and sexual and gender based violence. 'Uganda is not in danger of renewed civil war or rebel violence', but it does risk 'sliding into a political crisis that could eventually threaten the country's hard-won stability' (ICG, 2017).

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<sup>1</sup> Taylor, M. (2016) <https://www.crisisgroup.org/africa/horn-africa/uganda/museveni-post-election-politics-keeping-lid-ugandas-opposition>

Uganda's political system is characterised by patronage politics and repression, dominated by the autocratic President Yoweri Kaguta Museveni and his inner circle. While Museveni aimed to establish a new "broad-based" political settlement with a commitment to development, his record has been mixed. Despite increasing public criticisms, his regime appears stable, especially while there is no process or candidate for succession. Yet their challenge is in how to manage public discontent. The 2016 national elections saw violent incidences across the country. The regime's repression of political opposition and civil society has increased over time.

Uganda made significant reductions in poverty from 1993 to 2006, yet progress has been mixed since due to slower economic growth. Poverty is still high and is spatially unequal. Conflict is a precipitating cause of slower poverty reduction in the northern regions together with other factors such as lack of incomes and assets to meet basic needs, and also in the western Rwenzori region. Poverty is particularly acute in rural areas, and women and refugees are more likely to be economically marginalised and affected by changing livelihood patterns, conflict, natural disasters and climate change. A youth bulge, combined with high fertility rates, mean that population pressure is set to increase. While the economic forecast looks set to improve in 2018, macro-economic and household dependence on agriculture makes environmental variability and climate change particular risk factors.

### *Refugees in Uganda*

**Uganda hosts over 1.4 million refugees and asylum-seekers**, making it the largest refugee-hosting country in Africa, and the top third in the world. The past few years have seen unprecedented levels of refugees enter Uganda due to instability in neighbouring countries – particularly South Sudan, DRC and Burundi. With a massive influx of South Sudanese refugees since July 2016 into northern Uganda, and from the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) in 2018 into the southwest/west of Uganda. The risk of further displacement is high.

**Uganda's policy on refugees is extremely progressive**, relative to other countries' policies, and refugees have significant rights. Refugees are not kept in separate camps, but are based in "settlements" that are integrated with host communities. Host communities also benefit from the refugee response by the government and by international actors

**The literature reports mixed impacts from the refugees in Uganda.** There are particular challenges resulting from refugee "influxes" (the unexpected arrival of lots of refugees in a short period), particularly in the straining of Uganda's resources, particularly public services, local infrastructure and land, firewood and water. The wellbeing of the refugees arriving is often low, and there have been recent outbreaks of cholera in the Congolese refugee settlements and in the host communities. Local markets have been severely disrupted in north-western Uganda – e.g. with shortages of basic goods leading to inflation.

**In the medium-term, the socio-economic impacts are mixed.** Despite the initial disruptive effects on local markets, refugee influxes have considerable potential to stimulate the local economy – e.g. in the Nakivale and Kyangwali settlements, refugees are found to have strengthened and created local economies. And those living near refugee settlements benefit in terms of consumption and public service provisions. While these studies often find macro-economic gains (e.g. in consumption) this conceals the inequality of impacts and the winners and losers. And overall, as Uganda is a poor country, both refugees and their host communities remain vulnerable due to underlying poverty and vulnerabilities exacerbated by weak basic social services delivery, poor infrastructure, and limited market opportunities. Urban refugees are more vulnerable to poverty, exploitation and violence as they chose to self-settle outside of the refugee settlements, and thus lose the right to humanitarian assistance.

**Despite the stated benefits for host communities, some research finds that host communities' attitudes are negative towards refugees.** There is sometimes a suspicion that the government favours the refugees at the expense of its own citizens, and competition over now scarce land poses one of the

biggest challenge. A study finds that while host communities near the southwestern Nakivale refugee settlement were initially hospitable, they soon became xenophobic against refugees, calling for them to repatriate, as it became clear that many would not be able to return “home”, and as competition for land and livelihoods heightened.

**(Potential) drivers of conflict include:** Land - as it becomes scarcer, and as populations increase; competition for scarce natural resources is already generating tensions in the north-west (particularly timber and water); strains on basic services; increased competition for casual labour and pressure on livelihoods; and the outnumbering of locals by refugees and the political backlash this could precipitate. The potential for the refugee crises to precipitate wide-scale conflict in Uganda is not explored much in the literature, but is most relevant to the north. In northern Uganda there are already rising tensions between refugees and host communities, as well as inter-ethnic clashes among refugees. In the southwest, while it is clear that conflict has driven refugees into Uganda, there are few links in the literature that suggest refugees are or will contribute to conflict in the south-west/western region of Uganda.

**Many challenges to the settlement approach remain.** Major funding shortfalls are ‘the most significant challenge to Uganda’s refugee response’ (Amnesty, 2017). Many refugees are facing food poverty, due to cuts in funding and unprecedented demand. The lack of funding increases the pressure on the Ugandan government, and is leading to rising tensions between refugees and host communities. Whether Uganda can cope with increasing numbers of refugees is questionable. The protracted refugee situation of the Rwandans highlights the long-term difficulty for refugees that cannot (or do not want to) return home. Ultimately, Uganda’s settlement policy can be considered a source of resilience for the refugees in its creation of agricultural livelihoods and in its contribution to refugees’ food security. Yet it can only continue if the funding is available, and if the government and the people remain in favour.

**Yet sources of resilience include:** Opportunities to link development and humanitarian aid in generally underserved areas could spur development. The Refugee and Host Population Empowerment (ReHoPE) framework aims to benefit both refugees and host populations, and is a key component of the new Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (CRRP). Through initiatives such as those under ReHoPE, there has been increased investment – e.g. in health and education services in the northern region. However, significant support and investment is needed for these positive development impacts to materialise.

### *North-west Uganda*

**History of Conflict in West Nile:** This dates back to the 1971 overthrow of Milton Obote’s government by army chief, Idi Amin, who came from West Nile. Amin targeted Acholi and Lango soldiers and civilians, but upon his ousting in 1979 West Nile came in for revenge killings by Obote’s United National Liberation Army (UNLA). This prompted the formation of a number of West Nile rebel groups: the United National Rescue Front (UNRF I), the West Nile Bank Front (WNBF) and UNRF II. Over the course of conflict with these various groups, large numbers of civilians were killed or displaced, and both the groups and the army carried out serious human rights violations. A peace agreement was reached between UNRF II and the Museveni government in 2002, under which ex-combatants received demobilization packages and infrastructure and development were to be promoted in West Nile.

**Root causes:** The colonial divisions of north-south and other ethnic divisions were exacerbated by successive governments after independence in 1962. Thus Obote, a native Lango, first targeted the southern Baganda monarchy, and later West Nile; Amin targeted the Acholi and Lango, as well as other groups; Museveni targeted Acholiland, leading to the formation of the Lord’s Resistance Army (LRA), which waged a 21-year civil war with the government, and so on, with each cycle of conflict leading to more.

**There are several long-term structural challenges in West Nile and northern Uganda as a whole**, which contribute to an environment conducive to conflict. One is the marginalization of the north, and the persistent development lag in Uganda between north and south. West Nile is one of the most disadvantaged areas in the whole country with very poor development indicators. Local government capacity is weak, and service delivery is further undermined by central decision-making, and the creation of new districts. The development and new infrastructure promised under the 2002 peace agreement materialised to some extent, but since the 2006 cessation of hostilities with the LRA the focus of development efforts has shifted from West Nile to Acholiland and north-central Uganda. A major issue is the lack of transitional justice and reconciliation in West Nile, and the complete sidelining of civilian war victims: while both ex-combatants and the government have made gains through the peace, the victims have received nothing – not even public acknowledgement of their suffering. While they have generally accepted this as ‘the price for peace’ there is resentment. In addition, not all pledges to ex-combatants have been kept, leading to frustration and anger on their part. West Nile (and Uganda as a whole) also faces significant environmental problems, notably drought, deforestation and soil erosion, which have contributed to increasing food insecurity.

**With regard to immediate conflict drivers**, the persistent under-development of the north (lagging behind the rest of the country in key development indicators) promotes a perception of marginalisation and neglect among local people. Competition for land, timber, water and other natural resources is a leading source of disputes, and there are growing clashes between farmers in West Nile and pastoralists from other parts of Uganda as well as South Sudan. Young people, especially males, face significant challenges as low levels of education and limited opportunities make it hard for them to access work. Some former child soldiers with UNRF II have even talked of returning to the bush, because they see their situation as hopeless.

### *South-west Uganda*

The main focus of the recent literature in this region is on the volatile Rwenzori region, some literature looks at the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) rebel group, while older literature looks at the Rwandan refugees in Uganda.

**The volatile southwestern Rwenzori region has a long history of armed conflict**, with its first rebellion during the colonial period; the low-intensity Rwenzururu rebellion from 1962-1982 (with a splinter group fighting until 1993); the violent destabilization of the region by the ADF between 1996 and 2000, before fleeing to DRC; and sporadic violent incidents and tensions since. The root causes of the instability and conflict in the Rwenzori region include: the mobilization of ethnic cleavages; Longstanding perceptions of marginalisation and resentment; weak economic development; the recent reintroduction and recognition of cultural leadership; the government’s decentralisation policy; competition over the use and ownership of land; The lack of substantive transitional justice or reconciliation efforts despite historical injustices.

**The ADF conflict is an example of a national conflict that has over-spilled into the Great Lakes Region.** The ADF rebel group emerged in the Rwenzori region but was defeated by the Ugandan army and fled to the DRC in 2000. They have continued to cause conflict and instability in the DRC, sometimes crossing into Uganda. Meanwhile, the Ugandan military have launched many military offensives against them in the DRC. The Great Lakes Region has a complex history of conflicts and alliances that have over-spilled national borders and have involved governments backing coups and militias in neighbouring countries.

### *Literature base*

**This paper is based on a rapid literature review**, and is thus illustrative of the key issues and is not comprehensive of every issue. Uganda’s ‘conflict narrative’ has mainly focused on the conflict between Government and the LRA, therefore, there is a large amount of literature focussing on the central-north (Avocats Sans Frontières, 2013). There is a medium body of literature that focuses on northwest Uganda (specifically the West Nile) and the many varied issues that can be understood to drive conflict,

instability, risk and resilience in the current day. There is little literature that analyses the “western region” or the “south-west” as regions, therefore this report mostly draws on literature focused on specific areas in those zones. This literature review draws from a mix of academic texts, practitioner papers and reports, as well as media articles, blogs and press releases for more recent events.

**This paper draws on the concepts of “conflict analysis” and “resilience”** within international development policy and practitioner literature. “Conflict analysis” is a structured process of analysis to understand conflict that focuses on the conflict profile, the actors involved and their perspectives, the causes of conflict, and the dynamics of how these elements interact (Conflict Sensitivity Consortium, 2012; Herbert, 2017). Resilience is understood as ‘the ability of countries, communities and households to manage change, by maintaining or transforming living standards in the face of shocks or stresses - such as earthquakes, drought or violent conflict – without compromising their long-term prospects’ (DFID, 2011, p.6).

## 2. National dynamics

### Historic conflict and instability dynamics

**Uganda has experienced political violence and conflict over many decades, with a large number of armed rebel groups** and insurgencies in different parts of the country fighting successive regimes.<sup>2</sup> The ‘conflict narrative’ has tended to focus on the conflict between the Government and the LRA (Avocats Sans Frontières, 2013, p.30), however, other important conflicts include: ‘the 1964 Lost Counties dispute, the Obote-Kabaka 1966 crisis, the 1979 War that ousted Idi Amin, the war in Toro/Kasese, the war in Teso district under the Uganda Peoples’ Army, the Allied Defense Forces (ADF) war on both sides of the Uganda–Congo border’ and the National Resistance Movement (NRM) – Luwero Triangle war (Kibanja, et al., 2012, p.404).

**Conflicts in Uganda and in the wider region are complex and deeply intertwined.** The Ugandan government has been ‘deeply involved’ in conflicts in the region – e.g. through direct military interventions during the Second Congo War and its occupation of the northeastern DRC; arms supplies;<sup>3</sup> supporting militias in other countries; and more recently through military attacks on the ADF rebel group based in the DRC (HRW, 2001; Rufanges & Aspa, 2016; Williams, 2013). While some rebel groups in Uganda have received support from neighbouring countries (e.g. Sudan’s support to the LRA, ADF and West Nile Bank Liberation Front) (Williams, 2013). Within the region, the ‘popular strategy of sponsoring rebel movements to destabilize enemy nations [has] led to growing insecurity’ and militarisation in the region (Williams, 2013, p.85).

**The manipulation of ethnic and regional identities by elites is a common factor across Uganda’s conflicts, and is rooted in its colonial history.**<sup>4</sup> The British “divide and rule” approach saw people in northern Uganda (particularly the Acholi) recruited into the armed forces/police and used as migrant labour, while civil servants were recruited from the south and other regions (ASF, 2013). Colonial policy also favoured greater economic development of the southern regions, which produced a regional economic imbalance (Atkinson, 2010). Thus ethnic and regional identities became embedded in systems of political power and control, and the politicisation of ethnicity and region has been employed by every post-colonial government (Atkinson, 2010; Kibanja, et al., 2012). Ethnic perceptions and stereotyping are central to social relations, especially in accessing and controlling resources (KRC & RFPJ, 2012).

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<sup>2</sup> Uppsala Conflict Data Program, Government of Uganda page, <http://ucdp.uu.se/#/conflict/314> Accessed 26 March 2018

<sup>3</sup> Ibid

<sup>4</sup> Ibid

**Uganda's north-south divide was exacerbated by successive governments after independence** in 1962, along with other regional divides (e.g. between the West Nile and the rest of northern Uganda). The country's first president, Obote, was a Lango from northern Uganda. He favoured northern groups, notably the Lango and Acholi, and promoted these in government and the army, and targeted the southern Baganda monarchy (ASF, 2013). Obote was ousted by his army chief, Amin, in 1971. Amin came from the West Nile region of northern Uganda, and promptly purged the army of Lango and Acholi officers, later targeting civilians from those ethnic groups as well. Amin was in turn ousted in 1979 by a coalition of Tanzanian and exiled (Acholi and Lango) Ugandan soldiers, the Ugandan National Liberation Army (UNLA), and in 1980 Obote returned to power following a disputed election. Under Obote the UNLA carried out reprisal killings in West Nile. Obote faced armed opposition from the National Resistance Army (NRA) under Yoweri Museveni. Museveni came from Luwero, an ethnically heterogeneous region which included people from the Baganda tribe – targeted by Obote in his first period in office. Museveni eventually succeeded in overthrowing Obote and becoming president in 1985 – he has remained in power ever since.

**Yet while Uganda's conflicts are often framed as ethnic conflicts, this distracts attention from the underlying historical, social-economic and political conflict dynamics.** 'The range of conflict drivers [in the western Rwenzori region] is similar to those plaguing communities across Uganda: they revolve around competition over the use and ownership of land, access to public office, natural resource exploitation, and a burgeoning youth population in the face of development challenges' these drivers are exacerbated 'securitisation, and patronage politics, especially in the context of electoral contests' (Reuss & Titeca, 2017, p.1).

## Current conflict and instability dynamics

**'Uganda is not in danger of renewed civil war or rebel violence', but it does risk 'sliding into a political crisis** that could eventually threaten the country's hard-won stability' (ICG, 2017). This slide towards a political crisis is being fuelled by the top-down clinging to power of President Museveni and his circle, combined with the grassroots dissatisfaction of a young population with limited economic prospects.<sup>5</sup> In terms of rebel group violence, 'only two rebel groups were active for most of the 2000s: LRA, presently not active in Uganda, but in DR Congo, South Sudan and the CAR and ADF, active in DR Congo'.<sup>6</sup>

**There has been a rise in local insecurity and crime, including disputes over land and sexual and gender based violence** (Amnesty, 2017). Disputes over land are the source of much violence (ICG, 2017), for varying reasons: e.g. the drawing of new district boundaries, individual land tenure disputes (including land issued to refugees), potential resource extraction (e.g. oil), and clashes between animals and people as livelihoods comes under environmental pressure and shrink. Land issues intersect with gender and inequality. Ultimately, with a rapidly increasing population, land is increasingly scarce (KRC & RFPJ, 2012).

## Political drivers of (in)stability, conflict and resilience

**Uganda's political system is characterised by patronage politics and repression**, dominated by the autocratic Museveni and his inner circle.<sup>7</sup> Patronage networks operate through buying votes or MPs

<sup>5</sup> Taylor, M. (2016) <https://www.crisisgroup.org/africa/horn-africa/uganda/musevenis-post-election-politics-keeping-lid-ugandas-opposition>

<sup>6</sup> Uppsala Conflict Data Program, Government of Uganda page, <http://ucdp.uu.se/#/conflict/314> Accessed 26 March 2018

<sup>7</sup> Museveni's National Resistance Movement (NRM) party dominates all levels of the state, including the army and police (ICG, 2017). And all government decision-making powers ultimately rest with Museveni, although his immediate family can influence him (especially his son Muhoozi and his wife Janet) (ibid). Museveni's ruling coalition is comprised of: (1) an inner core - including his family, party member, and military figures, among others; (2) A wider circle of key players - including

support,<sup>8</sup> creating new administrative districts and traditional kingdoms, and distributing resources via development programmes (ICG, 2017). Uganda has a hybrid regime ‘characterised by the rhetorical adoption of liberal democratic discourses and the implementation of some liberal institutions – such as the organisation of elections – while at the same time keeping in place authoritarian practices and informalised and personalised systems of governance’ (Arnould, 2015, p.359).

**While Museveni aimed to establish a new “broad-based” political settlement with a commitment to development, his record has been mixed:** “On the one hand, a mixture of elite commitment, pockets of bureaucratic excellence and external support has enabled impressive levels of economic growth, macroeconomic stability and social expenditure. However, the current settlement – characterised by deepening levels of competitive clientelism, highly personalised forms of public bureaucracy, collusive state–business relations, and a ruling coalition that is (expensively) inclusive at the lower levels while becoming narrower and more nepotistic at the pinnacle – has failed to provide the basis for tackling the more difficult challenges of achieving structural transformation, delivering high-quality public services and challenging social inequalities’ (Golooba-Mutebi & Hickey, 2013, p.3).

**Despite increasing public criticisms of Museveni’s government, his regime appears stable.** Uganda has held three national multi-party elections, and Museveni has “won” each election, despite widespread allegations of election rigging and vote fraud. The political opposition are fragmented, and lack organisation, money and political space (ICG, 2017).<sup>9</sup> The only real opposition to Museveni at the moment would come from within his NRM party, yet with Museveni’s control of the NRM, and his apparent desire to stay indefinitely, there are no real contenders.<sup>10</sup> With 73-years, the question of succession is pressing, especially as his death would lead to a destabilising power vacuum.<sup>11</sup> Uganda has never had a democratic transfer of power, nor a peaceful transfer of power.<sup>12</sup>

**The NRM’s challenge is how to manage public discontent.** Most ‘Ugandans appear more concerned about poverty, unemployment and food shortages than the uncertain political transition’ (ICG, 2017). The large youth population are particularly aggrieved by limited economic and employment opportunities. As economic development has slowed<sup>13</sup> since its high between 2000 and 2011, Museveni has had to resort to coercion more than patronage (ICG, 2017). Public political discord and protest, although still fairly muted in Uganda, has increased, with recent protests against the constitutional amendment that eliminates the presidential age limit (previously set at 75 years). This amendment effectively allows Museveni to run for Presidency indefinitely (ICG, 2017). Police and military forces were recently deployed at a parliamentary debate of the amendment, where MPs were injured, with some in hospital (USAID, 2017b). A number of protests and conflict events occurred across the country against the amendment,

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regional political actors; and (3) a broader more localised network of elites (Golooba-Mutebi & Hickey, 2013, p.16).

Museveni has had an antagonistic relationship with opposition leaders especially around the 2016 election.

<https://www.crisisgroup.org/africa/horn-africa/uganda/musevenis-post-election-politics-keeping-lid-ugandas-opposition>

<sup>8</sup> E.g. Opposition MPs received payments for consultations over the constitutional amendment to eliminate the Presidential age limit, an amendment they had initially opposed.

<http://www.monitor.co.ug/Magazines/PeoplePower/Shs29m-facilitation-break-coalition-removing-age-limit/689844-4160078-ce22xg/index.html>

<sup>9</sup> The political opposition is fragmented and lacks resources. ‘Recent attempts to form an opposition coalition, as occurred prior to the 2016 election, have run aground over disagreements regarding who should lead it’ (ICG, 2017). The Forum for Democratic Change (FDC) is the largest opposition party, power within the FDC is divided between rival leaders Besigye and Muntu. Another opposition figure emerged for the 2016 elections - Museveni’s former Prime Minister - Mbabazi - ran as an independent candidate and has called for ‘regime change’. <http://www.monitor.co.ug/News/National/Expect-regime-change-soon---Mbabazi-/688334-4310318-s7c6auz/index.html>

<sup>10</sup> See - <https://theconversation.com/after-mugabe-all-eyes-are-on-museveni-how-long-can-he-cling-to-power-87964>

<sup>11</sup> Recent changes in leadership in Zimbabwe and South Africa also raise the possibility of challenging the reign of long-term liberation leaders in Africa, as pointed out by Mbabazi.

<sup>12</sup> See - <http://www.newsweek.com/uganda-elections-2016-yoweri-museveni-437049>

<sup>13</sup> See - <http://www.worldbank.org/en/country/uganda/overview>

and against another amendment that would allow the government to acquire private land for infrastructure projects without providing compensation (Amnesty, 2017; HRW, 2017; USAID, 2017b). 'Throw into the mix uncertainty over succession in the NRM and you have a recipe for a politics that is fractious at the grassroots and authoritarian at the top', argues Taylor.<sup>14</sup>

**The 2016 national elections saw violent incidences across the country** in the run-up to the election, and protests after, as opposition leaders contested the result (ICG, 2017). Mostly, this led to casualties, arrests, displacement and damage to public property (ICRC, 2017). But in some areas it escalated, e.g. in the volatile Rwenzori sub-region (see section 5) (USAID, 2016c). 'Excessive use of force' by security officers around the elections – including violence and deaths - 'contributed to an environment of fear' and mistrust (FHRI, 2016, p.6). As did the use of 11 million "crime preventers" (ibid). A range of other violent and intimidating actions around the 2016 elections included: disenfranchisement of voters (through late delivery of election materials, registration issues related to those recently turned 18, voter bribery, multiple voting, stuffing of ballot boxes and altering of results); restrictions on freedom of media expression (through attacks and arrests on journalists and social media activists; state interference in media programming and in closing radio stations); restrictions on freedom of assembly (through the arrest of a presidential candidate, widespread intimidation at opposition rallies, and banning demonstrations after the election).

**While Museveni "won" the election, it was by a smaller margin than before, with urban areas and the young particularly voting for opposition candidates.** Whether this dissent will lead to the emergence of new political actors that can effectively challenge Museveni remains to be seen, notes ICG (2017). Thus, elections and political amendments can be considered triggers for increasing tension, but not for significant instability or widespread violent conflict.<sup>15</sup>

**The military (the Uganda People's Defence Forces (UPDF)), has a disproportionate role in politics, economics and has a near monopoly over violence** (Arnould, 2015). While Museveni has 'worked to reduce the security forces' predatory behaviour and ethnic and regional factionalism', he has 'continued to rely on them to enforce his political power' (Arnould, 2015, p.360).

**The regime's repression of political opposition and civil society has increased recently,** and the police have reportedly been acting unlawfully and with impunity (ICG, 2017). At the 2016 elections, opposition candidates were arrested and detained, and the police blocked access to media and public meetings for some candidates (HRW, 2017). The government blocked access to all social media websites and money transferring websites during the election, causing widespread concern (Freedom House, 2017). Journalists, activists and some NGO organisations have been unlawfully arrested, detained and harassed (Amnesty, 2017; HRW, 2017). There have also been increasing government attacks on organizations focusing on politically sensitive issues such as: oil revenue transparency, land acquisition compensation, legal and governance reform, and protection of human rights (especially lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people) (HRW, 2012). Women human rights defenders are often attacked by communities who do not agree with their human rights ideas, including their own communities, families, clan leaders, traditional leaders and religious leaders, and 'their rights are often violated by the authorities including security agencies such as the police and other government officials' (The Human Rights Centre Uganda, 2017, p.16).

**Transitional justice in Uganda involves:** truth telling, accountability, reparations, traditional justice, reconciliation, amnesty, institutional re-visioning and reform (Refugee Law Project (RLP), n.d., p.5). In regards to top-down official transitional justice mechanisms, the Government of Uganda has used peace negotiations, commissions of inquiry and implementation of policies like the Amnesty Act 2000. Yet these

<sup>14</sup> Taylor, M. (2016) <https://www.crisisgroup.org/africa/horn-africa/uganda/musevenis-post-election-politics-keeping-lid-ugandas-opposition>

<sup>15</sup> See - <http://rfpjuganda.net/situation-report-on-post-2016-general-elections-in-kasese-district-february-18th-2016-march-17th-2016-3/>

have been limited by ‘a lack of commitment and national strategy on how Uganda should address the past violations’ resulting in ‘a number of disconnected ad hoc transitional justice initiatives that have often led to transitional justice mechanisms clashing, which has consequently affected their capacity to operate effectively’ (Avocats Sans Frontières, 2013, p.36). The narrow national ‘conflict narrative’, that focusses particularly on the LRA, and its criminal elements, limits the ability of transitional justice to address all the other conflicts that have occurred in Uganda, and the complex root causes (Avocats Sans Frontières, 2013, p.30). E.g. the ADF conflict has mostly been framed as a radical religious conflict, denying its complex nature and causes (Arnould, 2015, p.17-18). ‘Criminal trials are used by the government as an instrument to defeat its (political) opponents and avoid addressing drivers of regime discontent. At the same time, it offers a means to divert international focus away from the government’s own misconduct and poor governance. This fits into a broader ‘image management’ strategy pursued by the Ugandan government to win donor support and contain international criticism of the regime’ argues Arnould (2015, p.17-18).

## Socio-economic drivers of (in)stability, conflict and resilience

**Uganda made significant reductions in poverty from 1993 to 2006, yet progress has been mixed since due to slower economic growth** (World Bank, 2016).<sup>16</sup> Figure 1 shows that while poverty decreased overall from 2005/6 to 2012/13, it then increased in 2016/2017. Income inequality increased in all regions between 2012/13 and 2016/17, as measured by the Gini index (Uganda Bureau of Statistics, 2018, p.80). And many of the non-poor are insecure – 43% in 2013 (FAO, 2016, p.1).

**Poverty is still high and spatially unequal** (World Bank, 2016). Poverty is higher in the northern area (33% of households), compared to the western area (11% of households), yet poorest of all is the eastern region (36% of households) (Uganda Bureau of Statistics, 2018, p.89). Food poverty is also a big issue, with 37% of households classified as food poor across the country (p.79), with food poverty much worse in the northern area (43% of households) compared to the western area (24% of households) (Uganda Bureau of Statistics, 2018, p.80). The majority of refugees are dependent on food assistance (UNHCR, 2018f, p.74).

**‘Conflict is a precipitating cause of slower poverty reduction in the northern regions** together with other factors such as lack of incomes and assets to meet basic needs such as food, shelter, clothing, and acceptable levels of health and education’, finds FAO (2016, p.1). Furthermore, conflict in the north has undermined long-term resilience e.g. through the fragmentation of families and death of family members leading to female-headed households, widowed over a long period, or the casual labour and tilling of land in remote and infertile areas that rarely contributes to accumulation of assets (FAO, 2016, p.1). Persistent instability in the western Rwenzori region has also negatively impacted on social, economic and political development (KRC & RFPJ, 2012).

Figure 1: Poor persons in millions by year of survey

	2005/06	2009/10	2012/13	2016/17
<b>Uganda</b>	<b>8.4</b>	<b>7.5</b>	<b>6.7</b>	<b>8.0</b>
<b>Residence</b>				
Rural	7.9	7.1	6.0	7.1
Urban	0.6	0.4	0.7	0.9
<b>Region</b>				
Central	1.3	0.9	0.4	0.9
Eastern	2.5	2.2	2.5	3.6
Northern	3.5	2.8	3.1	2.3
Western	1.4	1.6	0.7	1.1

<sup>16</sup> See - <http://www.worldbank.org/en/country/uganda/overview>

Source: Uganda Bureau of Statistics, 2018, p.90.

**The events that made communities worse off** in the five years preceding the survey include: drought (77%); sharp changes in prices (62%); crop pests and diseases (61%); livestock diseases (50%); storms (24%); human epidemic diseases (21%); and floods (15%), among others. All the events mentioned were more prevalent among the rural areas except for sharp changes in prices of commodities that was highly ranked in the urban areas (Uganda Bureau of Statistics, 2018, p.103).

**Poverty is particularly acute in rural areas** where more than 85 % of households rely on farming as the main source of income (FAO, 2016, p.1). Particularly vulnerable are casual labourers and those only engaged in subsistence farming. 90% of all rural women work in agriculture, compared to 53% of rural men, this makes women more likely to be economically marginalised, and affected by changing livelihood patterns, conflict, natural disasters and climate change (Republic of Uganda, 2016, p.21). Refugee women may adopt livelihood strategies which place them at risk of gender-based violence (GBV), including sexual exploitation and abuse, rape and domestic violence, when there are no safe economic opportunities available (Ray & Heller, 2009, p.1).

**A youth bulge, combined with high fertility rates, mean that population pressure is set to increase.** Uganda's population in 2017 was approximately 43 million (UNDESA, 2017, p.27), and it was largely young with: 48% of people under 15 years; 21% aged 15-25; 50% aged 15-64; and 2% aged over 65 (UNDESA, 2017b, p.785). Based on its high levels of fertility, UN population projections forecast Uganda's population will increase to 64 million in 2030, 106 million in 2050, and 214 million in 2100 (UNDESA, 2017, p.27). Youth unemployment is high, and Uganda faces a shortage of skilled workers, indicating the limitations of the education system (Youth Coalition on Electoral Democracy, n.d.).

**The economic forecast looks set to improve in 2018.** AFDB analysis identifies potential opportunities for growth in 2018 including: 'increased agricultural production due to better weather conditions [relative to 2017]; higher foreign direct investment (FDI) flows following the recent issuance of oil exploration licenses; and the expected decision by the government to invest in oil infrastructure development'. And risks for growth including: 'low commodity prices and demand for the country's exports in major markets, appreciation of the U.S. dollar due to expected monetary tightening by the United States, tightening of global financing conditions that could discourage FDI and development assistance, adverse spillover shocks from fragile regional neighbours, and adverse environmental shocks. Major internal risks include reduced domestic revenue mobilization and higher public spending on contingencies, poor institutional capacity and governance, and weak public financial and investment management systems'.<sup>17</sup>

## Environmental drivers of (in)stability, conflict and resilience

**Uganda is experiencing changing weather patterns.** 'The average temperature in semi-arid areas in Uganda is rising, especially in the southwest. The frequency of hot days has increased while the frequency of cold days has decreased. As a result, the malaria parasite is spreading into new areas of the country and the ice caps on the Rwenzori Mountains have shrunk significantly. Changing temperature patterns in Uganda have been linked to more frequent and longer lasting droughts and consequent increased cattle death. Rainfall has decreased, become less predictable and less evenly distributed. Floods, landslides, droughts and other extreme weather events are increasing in frequency and intensity....[and] Droughts have significantly affected water resources, hydroelectricity production and agriculture, among many others' (Republic of Uganda, 2015, p.vi).

**Macro-economic and household dependence on agriculture makes Uganda particularly vulnerable to environmental variability and climate change.** Agriculture provides two thirds of Ugandans' employment and around one fourth of GDP. While the ecological conditions – such as soil conditions - are good,

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<sup>17</sup> See - <https://www.afdb.org/en/countries/east-africa/uganda/uganda-economic-outlook/>

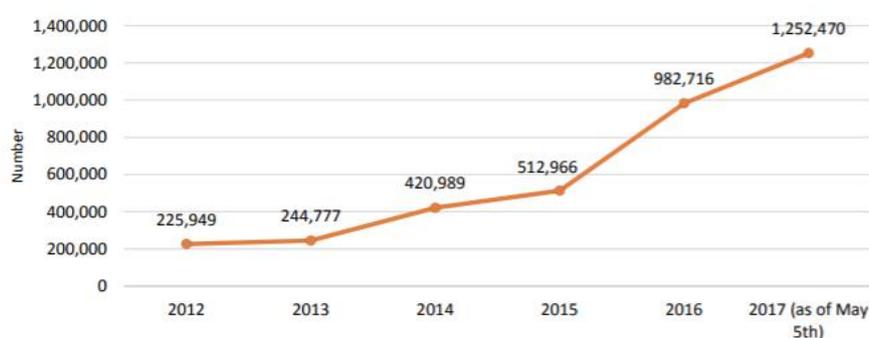
flooding, drought and other extreme climate events make families particularly vulnerable to food insecurity (FAO, 2016, p.1; AAH, 2017). The influx of refugees – particularly in the north - has exacerbated these challenges (FAO, 2017h), and the majority of refugees in Uganda have not yet attained sustainable livelihoods (Vemuru et al., 2016: p.41).

### 3. Refugees in Uganda

Uganda hosts over 1.4 million refugees and asylum-seekers,<sup>18</sup> making it the largest refugee-hosting country in Africa, and the top third in the world (FAO, 2017, p.1; UNDP, 2018g).<sup>19</sup> Uganda has a long history of receiving refugees and providing asylum, with people arriving after the second world war from Eastern and Southern Europe; in the 1950s from Sudan, Kenya, the DRC and Rwanda; increased flows in the 1990s from Rwanda, DRC and South Sudan; and smaller movements from other countries including Burundi, Somalia and Eritrea (Ilcan, et al., 2015, p.2; IBRD, 2016). From 1959 to present, it has hosted an average of over 160,000 refugees per year, and some refugees have been living in Uganda for decades (UNDP, 2017f, p.1).

The past few years have seen unprecedented levels of refugees enter Uganda due to instability in neighbouring countries – particularly South Sudan, DRC and Burundi (UNDP, 2017g) (figure 2 shows the increase in refugee numbers from 2012 to 2017). Refugees are mostly located in refugee settlements in the northern, southern, and southwestern regions of the country (figure 3 shows the distribution of refugees across the country, note that the map is illustrative and does not include the latest refugee figures). 61% of refugees are children under 18-years (UNHCR, 2018g).

**Figure 2: Number of refugees in Uganda per year (2012-2017)**



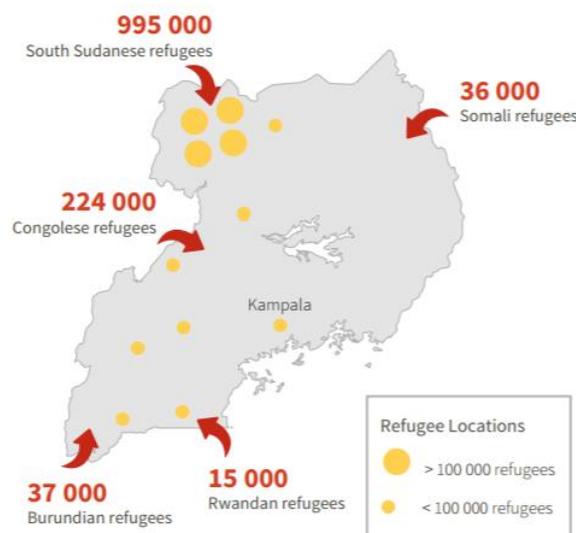
Data sources: Geodata: UNHCR, UNCS, UBOS. Statistics provided by Government (OPM), registered in (RIMS) and UNHCR Field Offices. Data for 2017 provided by the Government of Uganda (OPM).

Source: UNDP, 2017g, p.3 (updated May 2017)

**Figure 3: Location and nationality of refugees in Uganda**

<sup>18</sup> As of 28 February 2018

<sup>19</sup> While there is data on refugees, the nature of emergency crises means that situations change quickly, and data needs to be updated frequently. This paper uses the most recent data published, unless older data used in a graphic is more useful to illustrate the point. All data used in this paper should therefore be considered impressionistic rather than absolute.



FAO (2017) (updated August 2017)

### *Refugees in the north-west*

**There has been a massive influx of South Sudanese refugees since July 2016.** The outbreak of renewed fighting in South Sudan in July 2016 between the SPLM<sup>20</sup> government of President Salva Kiir and his former Vice President Riek Mahar led to a massive exodus of people from the country into neighbouring Uganda, predominantly the West Nile sub-region of northern Uganda. Refugees have been fleeing to Uganda from South Sudan since relations between Kiir and Mahar broke down in December 2013, but numbers were manageable then: between January and April 2016 29,000 South Sudanese arrived in Uganda; for the same period in 2017 the number was 227,000.<sup>21</sup> As of August 2017 Uganda was hosting around one million South Sudanese refugees (AAH, 2017, p. 2).

### *Refugees in the south-west/west*

**A recent flare up in conflict in the DRC has pushed almost 60,000 Congolese refugees and asylum seekers into Uganda this year,**<sup>22</sup> making a total of 276,000 Congolese refugees and asylum-seekers in Uganda (UNHCR, 2018g).<sup>23</sup> This makes up about half of all Congolese refugee population, with the other half exiled in Angola, Zambia, Tanzania, Burundi, the Republic of Congo and Rwanda, and beyond (UNHCR, 2018g, p.3).<sup>24</sup> And around 5 million Congolese are internally displaced. Previous conflict in the DRC's Ituri Djugu territory in 1999 to the early 2000s also led to large scale internal displacement and refugee movements to Uganda.<sup>25</sup>

**The risk of further displacement is high,** 'with militia activities widespread, and unrest and violence fuelled by ethnic and political conflict affecting many areas within the DRC (UNHCR, 2018g, p.4). February 2018 saw a particularly large number of refugees arrive in Uganda (see Figure 4), with most arriving via Lake Albert, and also into the districts of Kisoro, Kanunga and Ntoroko (UNHCR, 2018m, p.1).

<sup>20</sup> Sudan People's Liberation Movement.

<sup>21</sup> Summers, H. (2017). 'Tensions rise as Uganda neighbourly refugee policy starts to feel the strain'. *The Guardian*, 21 May 2017. <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2017/may/21/uganda-refugee-policy-breaking-point>

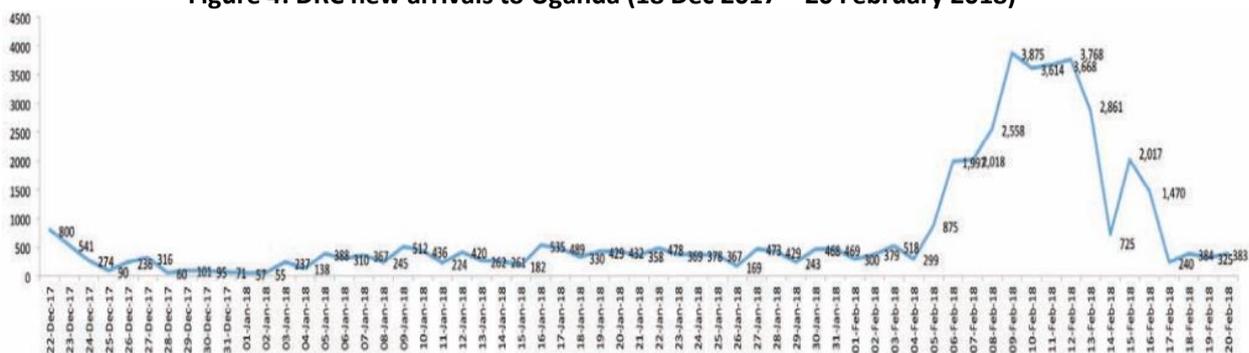
<sup>22</sup> From 1 Jan 2018 - 15 Mar 2018

<sup>23</sup> As of 28 February 2018

<sup>24</sup> See - <http://www.unhcr.org/uk/news/stories/2018/2/5a81779e4/refugees-flee-fresh-fighting-congo-uganda.html>

<sup>25</sup> See - <http://www.unhcr.org/news/briefing/2018/2/5a7971494/unhcr-sounds-alert-fresh-violence-dr-congos-ituri-province-displaces-thousands.html>

Figure 4: DRC new arrivals to Uganda (18 Dec 2017 – 20 February 2018)



Source: UNHCR (2018m, p.2)

**The political crisis in Burundi and related security and humanitarian conditions has also pushed more than 400,000 Burundi refugees to flee to neighbouring countries and beyond since 2015 (UNHCR, 2018f).** Arrivals in Uganda peaked in March 2016, but continue and are expected to rise to 55,000 by the end of 2018 (ibid). No significant returns to Burundi from Uganda are projected at this stage. The Burundi refugees enter mainly through Rwanda and Tanzania, and in smaller numbers through DRC, through the border entry points at Mirama Hills, Mutukula and Bunagana.

**Rwandan refugees experience a protracted refugee situation, rather than an emergency, as most have been in Uganda for many years,** and are settled in Nakivale, Oruchinga, Kyaka II and Kyangwali settlements (Ahimbisibwe, 2017). In 2003, an agreement<sup>26</sup> was signed to repatriate 25,000 Rwandan refugees, yet only 850 of them accepted to return and many came back almost immediately ‘claiming insecurity and human rights violations in Rwanda’ (Ahimbisibwe, 2017). Likewise, the forced repatriation of Rwandan refugees from Tanzania and DRC led some to flee to Uganda. Persecution in Rwanda means that some Rwandans still arrive as asylum seekers (Ahimbisibwe, 2017).

## Uganda’s policy approach

**Uganda’s policy on refugees is extremely progressive,** relative to other countries’ policies, and refugees have significant rights. It has often been heralded as a success story of how to manage refugees. The 2006 Refugees Act allows refugees freedom to work, freedom of movement and provides plots of land for home construction and farming. Uganda’s liberal refugee policy provides livelihood and settlement opportunities for refugees, but implementing this is difficult due to the vast numbers of refugees and the gaps in support. The management of refugee settlements is led by the Office of the Prime Minister (OPM), with local governments in the refugee hosting districts and other government departments. The UNHCR is the main support to the Government of Uganda in managing the refugee situation (alongside 12 other UN agencies, 75 local and international NGOs and international aid donors).<sup>27</sup>

**Refugees are not kept in separate camps, but are based in “settlements” that are integrated with host communities.** Refugees can choose whether to move to settlements or to self-settle, and whether to repatriate to their home country, if security improves. While most move to settlements, many choose to self-settle in urban areas. An estimated 80,000 refugees have settled in the capital Kampala, most are from the DRC, and have been there for decades, while others arrive from more recent conflicts in Rwanda, Burundi, DRC, Sudan, Somalia, Ethiopia, and Eritrea (Rosenberg, 2016).

**Host communities also benefit from the refugee response.** This is a direct response to previous tensions in Uganda and many other countries, as previously humanitarian response funding and services tended to

<sup>26</sup> Signed by the Government of Rwanda, the Government of the Republic of Uganda and the Office of UNHCR for the voluntary repatriation of Rwandan refugees in Uganda

<sup>27</sup> See <https://ugandarefugees.org/>

benefit only the refugees. In Nakivale refugee settlement in the 2000s, host communities did not have access to UNHCR social services, and this was ‘a cause xenophobia against refugees’ who were ‘seen as more privileged by the local population’ (Kalyango, 2006, p.3). However, it will always be a challenge to ensure both communities benefit from the humanitarian resources provided – e.g. a recent FAO (2017c, p.13) study found while both refugees and host communities in northern Uganda use the same sources of water, there is a considerable difference in how long it takes to reach the water source (with host communities walking much further).

## Impacts

### *Impact of Influxes*

**There are particular challenges resulting from refugee “influxes”** (the unexpected arrival of lots of refugees in a short period) – e.g. related to the timeframe (short-term, medium-term and long-term), and the specific characteristics of the people, the crisis, and the host context. The recent influxes have strained Uganda’s resources, particularly public services, local infrastructure and land, firewood and water (ICRC, 2017; USAID, 2017e).

**In the south-west, the recent influx of Congolese refugees arriving over a short period, without adequate funding, has strained services.** The refugees have experienced outbreaks of acute watery diarrhea and cholera (UNHCR, 2018m). Cholera outbreaks were declared in the refugee settlements - Kyangwali and Kyaka II - and in the hosting districts of Hoima and Kyegegwa, leaving 29 people dead and over 986 suspected cases.<sup>28</sup>

**The recent influx of Congolese refugees in Uganda is found to have contributed to environmental degradation in settlement areas.** ‘Cutting trees for firewood and construction, lack of or inappropriate wastewater treatment systems, and the negative effects of extensive water extraction on groundwater levels’ has affected crop yields, along with Uganda’s variable weather (UNHCR, 2018f, p.74). Increased refugee numbers exacerbates these trends.

**Disruption of markets:** The conflict in South Sudan has halted cross-border sale of Ugandan goods and services, affecting many local businesses that depended on cross-border trade (Komakech, 2014). The large influx of refugees after July 2016 severely disrupted local markets in north-western Uganda, with shortages leading to inflation of basic goods including food, fuel and housing (AAH, 2017). Markets were further disrupted by the initial emergency response of in-kind aid. In-kind assistance was often sold at market by refugees so they could buy other supplies that they deemed more important (AAH, 2017). In addition, there have been some complaints from local communities of traders leaving to move to refugee areas and take advantage of opportunities there – making it more difficult for locals to access markets and goods (AAH, 2017).

### *Socio-economic impacts*

**Impact on markets:** Despite the initial disruptive effects on local markets, refugee influxes have considerable potential to stimulate the local economy. As the government and donor partners have moved from in-kind assistance to cash transfers, and as refugees have settled into more permanent living situations, markets have already stabilised, adapted and evolved to meet new needs (AAH, 2017). Markets with previously limited access have grown and are offering both more goods and greater diversity of goods to both host and refugee communities, and traders have seen their income grow. This growth has benefited not only local traders, but those further afield as well, leading to the growth of ‘feeder markets’ in major towns (e.g. in the northwest in Yumbe and Gulu), and to some rehabilitation and improvement of roads linking growing markets. The growth in market activity has also led to

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<sup>28</sup> See - <https://reliefweb.int/report/uganda/uganda-red-cross-responds-drc-refugee-influx-amidst-cholera-outbreak>

increased tax revenue (AAH, 2017). The increased population carries potential for expansion in a number of private sector enterprises including telecoms, solar, financial services, agricultural products and construction. However, again, realizing this potential requires sustained political and financial support.

**An assessment of the economic impacts**, by the IBRD (2016, p.ix) found that: ‘The economic opportunities for refugees in terms of employment (formal and informal) and access to productive capital varies in rural and urban areas in Uganda. Over 78 % of refugees in rural settlements are engaged in agricultural activities compared with 5 % in urban areas’ (p.x). The refugee labour force participation rate averages 38 %, compared with Uganda’s 74 % (p.x). ‘Refugees are mainly engaged in occupations that provide little income, social protection, or job security’ (p.xi). ‘There is economic interdependence among refugees and between refugees and host communities’ (p.xi). While studies find macro-economic gains (e.g. in consumption) this conceals the inequality of impacts and the winners and losers (Kreibaum, 2016a).

**In the Nakivale and Kyangwali settlements, refugees are found to have strengthened and created local economies** due to: refugees linking settlements to wider national and transnational economic networks; by increasing the volume of economic exchange; and by creating employment opportunities for Ugandan nationals (Betts et al., 2014, p.5). Kreibaum (2016a) also found that the Ugandan population living near refugee settlements benefit in terms of consumption and public service provisions. Contrary to stereotypes, Betts et al., (2014, p.5) found refugees in Nakivale and Kyangwali to have a range of different livelihood activities with some being successful entrepreneurs, and some creators of technology. In general, they found the refugees to have higher levels of internet use than the general population, and that although many refugees do receive humanitarian assistance, in many cases they create sustainable livelihood opportunities for themselves’ (ibid).

### *Socio-cultural impacts*

**An assessment of the social impacts** of this policy and practice in four areas of Uganda by the IBRD (2016, p.ix) found that: ‘Refugees and their host communities remain vulnerable due to underlying poverty and vulnerabilities exacerbated by weak basic social services delivery, poor infrastructure, and limited market opportunities. However, refugees located in rural settlements, whether on community-owned or gazetted lands, are able to access basic services, receive physical protection, and are provided land to cultivate for self-sustenance. Refugees with some income or ability to fend for themselves are self-settled in urban centers, where they rent lodging. A commendable level of peaceful coexistence is evident between refugees and host communities in all of the settlements, an observation...[confirmed by a range of actors]... Intermarriages are reported in many settlements, contributing to improved relationships’. The integration of settlements with host communities ‘has improved access to services, especially to host community areas neighboring the settlements, contributing to improved relationships among refugees and host communities’ (p.x). ‘One cause of hostility between the communities is the suspicion that the government favors the refugees at the expense of its own citizens. Land management in settlements poses the biggest challenge to authorities with respect to host populations and refugees (p.x). The generally tolerant public attitudes towards refugees is a source of resilience.

**Yet other research finds that attitudes are often negative towards refugees**, and that this is a ‘decisive factor’ in whether integration is successful (Kreibaum, 2016b, p.3). Both the refugees and host communities tend to be poor and poorly educated, yet when environmental shocks hit, the refugees have social safety nets (provided by humanitarian aid) that the host communities do not have (ibid). Also, districts with refugees tend to see the consumption levels of host communities drop, and so does less government funding, as humanitarian actors are assumed to fill the gaps (ibid). In a study of urban refugees, Rosenberg (2016, p.141) finds that Ugandan attitudes towards refugees are ‘generally negative’ and suspicious, with refugees viewed as an economic burden or as collaborators with hostile foreign governments.

**While initially hospitable, host communities near the southwestern Nakivale refugee settlement soon became xenophobic** against refugees, calling for them to repatriate, as it became clear that many would not be able to return “home” for a long time (Kalyango, 2006). Uganda’s settlement approach was designed with the view that the refugees would eventually return to their home countries, however prolonged conflict in the region has led more refugees to arrive, and few to return. This has heightened competition for agricultural and grazing land, water and forests, resources that host communities depend on for their livelihoods (ibid).

**This competition for land and livelihoods around the Nakivale settlement has been exacerbated by:** the exceeding of field or residential boundaries (encroachment of land); the acquisition of land by nationals (sometimes as land loans); the shrinking of land settlement and grazing in surrounding areas; out migration from neighbouring districts (Bushenyi and Ntugamo); population increases; the advent of a cash economy increasing the value of land; the lack of clear refugee settlement boundaries; and weak land administration systems that have been prone to abuse (Kalyango, 2006). And domestic land problems in Rwanda have exacerbated this further as: high population density in Rwanda means many are landless, and many lost land during the conflicts and for politically and ethnically motivated reasons (ibid). This has made repatriation from Uganda less attractive for Rwandans, and have led some repatriated Rwandans to return to Uganda to repossess their land in the refugee settlement (Kalyango, 2006, p.5). These issues have particularly affected refugee women, and their livelihoods. Increased competition for land has meant women refugees have had to pursue other survival strategies, including marriage (Kalyango, 2006).

### *Wellbeing of refugees*

**The refugees in settlements face a range of challenges to their wellbeing.** A paper from 2002 on the Kyangwali settlement in Hoima District (western Uganda) found that refugees faced a number of restrictions on their economic freedoms. ‘Limitations on movement and employment exclude the refugees from external goods and labour markets. The isolation of the settlement contributes to a weak internal market and unfavourable terms of trade for the refugees. Furthermore, the refugees face welfare-reducing taxes, and are politically unable to lobby for more economic freedoms (Werker, 2002, p.1). In the education sector, a key challenge is how to integrate a transient refugee population with psychosocial and language barriers and low literacy rates (UNICEF, 2014, p.5). Refugee settlements ‘are plagued with crime and violence’, finds the IBRD (2016, p.39). However, relative to refugees in most countries, the Ugandan system is very progressive for refugees as it allows them to work.

**Urban refugees, that self-settle, and choose not to live in settlements are not eligible for support,** as the government seeks to discourage refugees’ urban migration, making urban refugees particularly vulnerable to poverty, exploitation and violence. In Kampala, refugees ‘face many of the same barriers as the Ugandan poor in accessing services, finding employment, and staying safe. However, they also face additional constraints, such as language barriers, discrimination, lack of legal documentation, and limited access to credit and formal sector employment’ (Rosenberg, 2016, p.141). These refugees face the ‘added burden of an unwelcome reception in cities’ and discrimination, which negatively affects their psychosocial wellbeing, and can lead to greater risks of experiencing violence (including gender-based violence) (Stark, et al., 2015, p.173; Rosenberg, 2016).

### **(Potential) conflict drivers**

**Land is a particular source of conflict as it becomes scarcer,** and as the host communities and refugee populations have both grown substantially (Kreibaum, 2016b, p.3). Disputed boundaries for land have led to conflict between host communities and refugees (ibid). The perception that refugees do better than host communities, and that they are in competition for scarce resources, threatens Uganda’s integration approach, as ‘Ugandans in areas with a high refugee presence assess their own economic situation as poorer than those in other parts of the country’ (ibid).

Early refugees from South Sudan were given plots of land to cultivate and build their homes which were as large as 100m x 100m, but as numbers have increased plot sizes have shrunk to 30m x 30m in some settlements (AAH, 2017, p.12).<sup>29</sup> Most of the land given out is government land or communal land rented from host communities. Fertile land is scarce and legal titling and documentation of land ownership unclear. Thus 'the long-term implications present a minefield of potential conflict as refugee communities have very few enumerated rights around a very, very valuable asset in an area where subsistence agriculture is the main source of livelihoods' (AAH, 2017, p. 12). The depletion of natural resources has put pressure on the limited land available and has reduced productivity in Kiryandongo, Adjumani and Rhino refugee settlements (Khadka, 2017)

**Competition for scarce natural resources is generating tensions in the north-west, particularly timber and water** (World Vision, 2017; World Vision, 2018). Small-scale conflict over natural resources especially water is reported in the Kiryandongo, Adjumani and Rhino refugee settlements in the northwest (Khadka, 2017, p.5). Nearly every household in West Nile, especially in rural areas, uses firewood or charcoal for cooking. But trees are being cut down at an unsustainable rate, and the need for wood is driving low-level community conflict and tensions between refugees and host communities. Moreover, loss of tree cover has knock on effects on soil fertility, flooding, silting of waterways and water quality (AAH, 2017, p. 11). Access to clean water is another contentious issue exacerbated by recent drought.<sup>30</sup> There are questions over groundwater sustainability with the refugee influx, but trucking or piping water in from the Nile is expensive (AAH, 2017).

**Strain on basic services:** Services in Uganda were already overburdened and lacking proper investment. The refugee influxes have put them under even greater strain (WVI, 2018; UNICEF, 2017). This has led to some refugee protests – e.g. recent tensions over poor living conditions in the southwest Nakivale settlement – following floods destroying housing - prompted a section of the refugees to storm the UNHCR offices in protest (USAID, 2017b, p.5). The added strain could lead to worsening development indicators, particularly for malnutrition, child and maternal mortality and literacy (AAH, 2017).

**Impact on livelihoods:** Traditional sources of livelihood in northern Uganda revolve around subsistence agriculture but, as seen, opportunities are limited and shrinking. The arrival of large numbers of South Sudanese in West Nile will increase competition for casual labour in the sub-region, and could cause anger and resentment among host communities, especially those in larger towns or big cities who already had little opportunity for regular work. Further conflict potential exists in the scale-up of humanitarian and development programming, which will necessitate hiring of new workers. Since these are generally jobs requiring higher qualification levels, those hired could come from other parts of Uganda outside West Nile, or even other countries in East Africa. This could fuel resentment among locals, and strengthen perceptions of marginalisation (AAH, 2017).

**Locals outnumbered by refugees and political backlash against refugees:** Population density in the West Nile sub-region was low, and the influx of large numbers of South Sudanese has led to locals being outnumbered by refugees. Adjumani district, for example, had a population of 225,251 in the 2014 Ugandan population census, but as of 4 August 2017 was hosting 227,857 refugees (AAH, 2017, p. 6). This could cause resentment among host communities, particularly when refugees speak different languages and have a very different culture. Local cooperation to help settle refugees, e.g. giving up communal land, is premised in part on government promises of investment in infrastructure (e.g. roads) and development. But when such promises are delayed/not kept this could generate local anger (KAS, 2017). A further risk is that local politicians could use the refugee issue as a political hammer to mobilise support, particularly given the government's moves to introduce decentralization and the forthcoming

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<sup>29</sup> Summers, op. cit.

<sup>30</sup> Summers, op. cit.

elections in 2021. The Tanzanian example is highly pertinent: Tanzania's open door refugee policy was reversed in part by democratic elections in the mid-1990s.<sup>31</sup>

**The potential for the refugee crises to precipitate wide-scale conflict in Uganda is not explored much in the literature**, but is most relevant to the north. In northern Uganda there are rising tensions between refugees and host communities, as well as inter-ethnic clashes among refugees – reflecting the conflict in South Sudan itself. The huge scale of the recent refugee influx from South Sudan, against the context of existing conflict drivers in northern Uganda (see section 4), could potentially lead to conflict. This is particularly risky as there are few prospects of an early return of refugees to South Sudan, as more refugees are expected to arrive, and as there is a funding shortfall to manage the influx (AAH, 2017).

**In the southwest, while it is clear that conflict has driven refugees into Uganda**, there are few links in the literature that suggest refugees are or will contribute to conflict in the south-west/western region of Uganda. One potential link is a recent report that military activity by the Ugandan army against the ADF rebel group had contributed to flows of Congolese refugees entering Uganda.<sup>32</sup> Otherwise there have been cases of refugees in Uganda's south-west causing conflict in other countries – namely the Rwandan Tutsi refugees in Uganda (“Banyarwanda”) who launched attacks on Rwanda from Uganda, in 1961, 1962 (destabilizing the southwest of Uganda) and in 1990 (see section 5).

**Some inter-ethnic conflict among refugees is reported in the north.** South Sudanese refugees come from ethnic groups on both sides of the civil war in that country and identify as such: there is no unified ‘refugee’ identity (AAH, 2017). Moreover, through social media refugees have access to information about what is happening in South Sudan, and this impacts refugee relations. There have already been cases of inter-tribal conflict among refugees, notably between Dinka and Nuer people (Komakech, 2014; AAH, 2017; World Vision, 2017). Referring to the civil war along ethnic lines in South Sudan, an EU official noted: ‘You can’t just leave those grievances at the border so there are going to be increasing security challenges.’<sup>33</sup>

## Challenges and sources of resilience

**Major funding shortfalls are ‘the most significant challenge to Uganda’s refugee response’**, finds Amnesty (2017). The cost of providing for refugees is very high, recent estimates are that the Government of Uganda and local communities spent over US\$ 323 million in 2016/17 on the protection and management of refugees, and the provision of essential services, which is equivalent to 46 % of the education budget for the year or 62 % of the health budget (UNDP, 2017g). In June 2017 the Ugandan government hosted a Refugee Solidarity Summit hoping to secure funding commitments of US\$ 2 billion per annum – it did not succeed.

**Many refugees are facing food poverty, due to cuts in funding and unprecedented demand.** In May 2017 the World Food Programme was forced to cut rations to refugees by 50% due to severe funding shortages: the agency needed an estimated US\$ 167 million to provide aid to the end of the year, but donors had contributed only US\$ 30 million as of September (Okiror, 2017<sup>34</sup>). The reduced ration size

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<sup>31</sup> The open door policy was introduced by Julius Nyerere based on pan-African ideals. He stepped down from power in 1985, around the time that austerity measures (structural adjustment policies imposed by the IMF) began to bite. Anti-refugee rhetoric was a feature of the 1995 election campaign; the victor Benjamin Mkapa began in office by expelling refugees and the 1998 Refugee Act officially ended the open door policy, removing many of the rights enjoyed by refugees under that policy (AAH, 2017, pp. 4-5).

<sup>32</sup> See - [https://www.newvision.co.ug/new\\_vision/news/1468069/congolese-refugees-enter-uganda-updf-clash-adf-drc](https://www.newvision.co.ug/new_vision/news/1468069/congolese-refugees-enter-uganda-updf-clash-adf-drc)

<sup>33</sup> Cited in - Summers, op. cit.

<sup>34</sup> See - <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2017/oct/09/tensions-flare-as-food-rations-to-refugees-slashed-by-half-in-uganda>

means that an active adult female now receives the recommended amount of cereal for an active three-year-old child.<sup>35</sup> While full rations are only given to new arrivals and the particularly vulnerable.

**The lack of funding increases the pressure on the Ugandan government, and is leading to rising tensions between refugees and host communities.** ‘The chronic lack of sufficient resources requires a constant re-prioritization of immediate short-term life-saving measures, such as emergency reception of refugees, emergency shelter, NFIs, and life-saving water provision through water trucking’ (UNHCR, 2018f, p.74).<sup>36</sup> When funding is given, it tends to be short-term and insufficient to provide real change or meaningful strategies of self-reliance (Ilcan et al., 2015, p.5). Meanwhile, the increased competition for jobs, natural resources, food and services within Uganda is a potential driver of conflict. Given that the crisis is likely to be a protracted one, the funding shortfall is likely to have a significant negative impact on peace and stability.

**The sustainability of Uganda’s model is questionable, especially in regards to the unprecedented flows that look set to continue.** At least one settlement for Congolese refugees was already almost at full capacity in February this year.<sup>37</sup> And in northern Uganda, ‘as the number of arrivals outstripped available land, the government has temporarily stopped systematically allocating refugees plots’.<sup>38</sup>

**The Rwandan experience highlights the long-term difficulty for refugees** – while voluntary repatriation is thought to be the best solution, in practice it is difficult when persecution is still likely at “home” and when instability looks like a long-term feature (Ahimbisibwe, 2017). Meanwhile in Uganda, Rwandans have lost the right to have land for cultivation, and thus many are food insecure and have had to resort to coping mechanisms that increased their vulnerability (Ahimbisibwe, 2017). The popularity of repatriation as a strategy to manage refugee situations also reflects geopolitical concerns – e.g. Rwandan refugees became involved in and scapegoats of ethnic conflicts within Uganda, which eventually lead to the refugee military invasion of Rwanda from Uganda in 1990 (Van der Meeren, 1996).

**Another key challenge is safeguarding** – recent allegations have emerged that government and donor officials have been inflating refugee numbers to steal aid, other alleged offenses include bribery and trafficking of girl refugees. UNHCR has said it will withhold funding until refugee numbers are verified using UNHCR biometric systems.<sup>39</sup>

**Ultimately, despite the vast challenges, Uganda’s settlement policy can be considered a source of resilience for the refugees** in its creation of agricultural livelihoods, in its contribution to refugees’ food security, and in its rights to work and move freely (Crawford et al., 2015, p.69; UNDP, 2017f, p.2). In this sense, it could also be considered a source of resilience for the wider East Africa region, the source of many refugees. Yet this can only continue if the funding is available, and if the government and the people remain in favour.

**Uganda’s community level institutional structures are sources of resilience** for most types of dispute or conflict resolution that are within the community structures’ jurisdiction, finds a study of northwestern refugee settlements Kiryandongo, Adjumani and Rhino (Khadka, 2017). The study also finds that ‘ongoing community level engagements by [the Danish Refugee Council] DRC appears to have caused refugee communities to host more collective behaviour’ (Khadka, 2017, p.59).

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<sup>35</sup> See - <https://www.worldvision.org/about-us/media-center/government-uganda-world-food-program-forced-reduce-food-rations-nearly-800000-refugees>

<sup>36</sup> See - <https://www.irinnews.org/analysis/2017/07/25/refugee-scandal-unfolding-uganda>

<sup>37</sup> See - <https://www.care.org/newsroom/press/press-releases/refugee-influx-uganda-worrying-warns-care>

<sup>38</sup> See - <https://www.newsdeeply.com/refugees/articles/2017/11/22/what-ugandas-struggling-policy-means-for-future-of-refugee-response>

<sup>39</sup> See - <https://uk.reuters.com/article/uk-uganda-refugees/u-n-refugee-agency-says-donors-withhold-funds-until-uganda-numbers-checked-idUKKCN1G42FA>

**Opportunities to link development and humanitarian aid in generally underserved areas could spur development** – particularly in the region’s agricultural sector, improve services and boost infrastructure, while creating opportunities for the private sector and boosting host communities’ tax base (e.g. from increased market activity) (AAH, 2017).

**The Refugee and Host Population Empowerment (ReHoPE) framework aims to benefit both refugees and host populations**, in an integrated approach to the refugee crisis. The core elements of ReHoPE include: multi-year and multi-sectoral area-based interventions to support both host communities and refugees; coordinated delivery under government leadership, with local government and communities as key partners; and enhanced resilience and sustainability at three levels – household, community and systems. Investments under ReHoPE are shared in a 70-30 split between refugees and host communities. Developmental benefits are coming to otherwise very marginal communities as a result of the stipulation that 30% of funds go to the host population. ReHoPE aims to bridge the gap between humanitarian and development approaches and actors (UNCT & WB, 2017).

**ReHoPe is a key component in the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (CRRP)**, which mandates UNHCR to develop and initiate a comprehensive refugee response. CRRP’s five mutually reinforcing pillars provides support to refugees, host communities, the government and the countries of origin in: (1) Admission and Rights, (2) Emergency Response and Ongoing Needs, (3) Resilience and Self-reliance, (4) Expanded Solution and (5) Voluntary Repatriation. These pillars aim to ensure protection throughout the cycle of displacement.<sup>40</sup> Uganda’s policies were in many ways the inspiration for the CRRP.<sup>41</sup>

**Through initiatives such as those under ReHoPE, there has been increased investment in health and education services** in the northern region, potentially leading to improved development indicators. A 2006 study of West Nile’s policy of integrating refugee and health services reported that this had led to the reorganization of refugee and host health services into a unitary health system (Orach & De Brouwere, 2006). In general, it found the integrated refugee and host health system had contributed to improved geographic and temporal accessibility of health services, particularly for the rural host population. A further benefit was a more harmonious relationship between refugee and host populations in the refugee-affected areas. Already the current emergency response to refugees has pushed services to improve via a rush of emergency funding to schools and clinics. Facilities that were previously derelict are being refurbished, and drugs and medical supplies being sent to health centres that previously had none (AAH, 2017). Improvements in roads, bridges, water points and other infrastructure can have further positive effects, providing synergy to market access and livelihoods. However, significant support and investment is needed for these positive development impacts to materialise – without this the risk is of increased tensions and conflict, as well as deteriorating services.

**Yet the government faces many administrative challenges in implementing its approach.** Despite the government’s push to promote decentralization, district governments have no control over the refugee settlements, including basic decision making such as where refugees will be settled and how their settlements will impact on local communities. Decisions regarding refugees and cross-border issues are still taken in Kampala through the Office of the Prime Minister, reducing the level of autonomy within local governments (AAH, 2017, p. 7).

**And ultimately some argue that the self-reliance approach to humanitarianism is often unconnected from the political, economic and social realities that the refugees face** (Ilcan, et al., 2015). E.g. the variable quality of the land given under the policy has meant that most people have not been able to achieve self-reliance through their agricultural labour alone (Crawford et al., 2015, p.58). Some

<sup>40</sup> See the CRRP Uganda note from 2017 - [https://ugandarefugees.org/wp-content/uploads/CRRF-Uganda-Note\\_5-May-2017.pdf](https://ugandarefugees.org/wp-content/uploads/CRRF-Uganda-Note_5-May-2017.pdf)

<sup>41</sup> See - <https://www.newsdeeply.com/refugees/articles/2017/11/22/what-ugandas-struggling-policy-means-for-future-of-refugee-response>

settlements are based very far from host communities, restricting their “integration”. There is a lack of support for non-agricultural livelihoods – e.g. for those that choose to self-settle in urban areas, and are at greater risk of poverty and vulnerability (Crawford et al., 2015), or for those without agricultural backgrounds. Ultimately, refugees and their children in Uganda can never become citizens, limiting the ability for this policy to represent a long-term solution for the refugees, despite the likelihood that their displacement will be long-term (Vemuru et al, 2016, p.viii).

## 4. North-west/northern region

### History of conflict in north-west

The conflict with the LRA in northern Uganda has attracted much attention, but the north-western region of West Nile has also seen prolonged periods of conflict. While there has been peace there for many years, unresolved issues persist with regard to ex-combatants, victims of war crimes, and justice and reconciliation.

**Idi Amin’s promotion of West Nile:** Army chief Idi Amin seized power from Uganda’s first president, Milton Obote, in 1971. As president Amin appointed high ranking army officers from West Nile, his home region. Amin’s rule was notorious for widespread human rights violations – including against Acholi and Lango soldiers and civilians, due to their association with Obote (a native Lango) (Atkinson, 2010; ASF, 2013). Because of the prevalence of soldiers and officers from West Nile, the army came to be seen as a West Nile institution and was collectively blamed for the atrocities. Hence, upon Amin’s ousting in 1979 by a joint force of Tanzanians and exiled Ugandan (Acholi and Lango) soldiers – the United National Liberation Army (UNLA) - the army was ousted too and many soldiers fled to West Nile. The UNLA carried out large-scale revenge killings against both former army soldiers and the civilian population in West Nile, forcing both to flee across the border into Sudan and the DRC. The brutal treatment of West Nile by the UNLA stimulated the formation of armed opposition groups. Related to this was the fact that almost the entire Ugandan army fled following the collapse of Idi Amin’s regime, creating in effect an army in exile with few options (RLP, 2004, p. 5).

**United National Rescue Front I:** Remnants of Idi Amin’s army reorganised and launched attacks on UNLA garrisons in 1980. In 1981 they split into two factions: FUNA and the United National Rescue Front (UNRF I) under Moses Ali. The latter fought from West Nile against the Obote government (Obote returned to power in 1980 following a disputed election). By contrast FUNA operated from Sudan and the DRC, and was far less active in attacking the regime than UNRF I. Both FUNA and UNRF I appeared to enjoy some support from the civilian population, who were enduring the hardship of displacement to Sudan and the DRC because of UNLA brutality, but this dissipated later as the groups themselves engaged in looting and abuse of West Nile civilians. Obote was ousted by Tito Okello and the National Resistance Army/Movement (NRA/M) in 1985; Okello then called on all fighting factions in West Nile to join his government and bring peace to Uganda. However, Okello was himself overthrown in January 1986 by Yoweri Museveni. The UNRF I effectively ended in 1986/87 when Museveni was able to co-opt its most important leaders into his government.

**West Bank Nile Front:** Not all insurgents supported the alliance with the government, and some left after a short time because of disagreements and growing distrust in relation to the government. These formed new armed groups. The West Bank Nile Front (WBNF) was formed around 1994 under the leadership of former FUNA member Juna Oris. WBNF appeared to capitalise in particular on the lack of development opportunities in the region in order to recruit members: many joined simply because of offers of remuneration (RLP, 2004, p. 14). These promises were often not kept, and WBNF then turned to forced recruitment. In many ways it adopted the tactics of the LRA in neighbouring Acholiland. Its increasingly brutal tactics alienated the local population (Both & Reis, 2014), and this was one factor in ending the WBNF insurgency. The other was efforts by the Ugandan People’s Defence Force (UPDF), the army, to

work with civilians and create an atmosphere of mutual trust and confidence. Community leaders then played a critical role in persuading WBNF fighters to give up arms and reintegrate, supported by UPDF promises that there would be no retribution against former rebels. Related to this was the increasing pressure WBNF was coming under from rebels in South Sudan (who were supported by Museveni). The final military defeat of WBNF came at a battle in Kaya, Sudan, in 1996 in which the SPLA<sup>42</sup>, Congolese factions and the UPDF took part. By 1997 the WBNF rebellion was all but over, but without any official peace agreement being reached.

**United National Rescue Front II:** UNRF II was formally established in 1989, but only began military operations in 1996. The formation of UNRF II was due to three factors: one, apparent breaches of the government's agreement with UNRF I (e.g. instead of retaining their ranks as promised, many UNRF officers were demoted); two, growing arrests and killings without trial of people in West Nile – perceived as repetition of the revenge wreaked by the UNLA when it seized power; and three, the lack of development in West Nile and the widespread perception by former combatants and civilians alike of marginalization – being left behind the south, where development programmes were concentrated (RFP, 2004, p. 13). UNRF II recruited largely from the Muslim enclave corresponding to Yumbe district (at the time the area was part of Arua district): this too was a source of grievance, as people in Yumbe felt marginalized by the Arua administration.

Initially the group was able to count on civilian support, but this waned as violent attacks, looting, rape and forceful recruitment in the region increased – both by rebels and the army. In addition UNRF II lost an important place of retreat in southern Sudan, as South Sudanese rebels had military success – they were supported by the Museveni government. UNRF II continued fighting for some years, but reached a peace agreement with the government in 2002. The peace agreement came about because of a number of factors: loss of Sudanese support for the rebels; defeat of WBNF leaving the army free to concentrate on countering UNRF II; and the influence on rebels of local communities and elders from their home villages – this was a crucial element both in the 'homecoming' of former WBNF fighters and in peace negotiations between UNRF II and the government (Bogner & Neubert, 2013).

## 2002 Peace agreement

**Terms of 2002 peace agreement:** The peace agreement negotiated between UNRF II and the government referred in very general terms to the long-lasting 'instability' in the West Nile region and the resulting standstill in 'development' which needed to be ended and compensated for (Bogner & Neubert, 2013, p. 66). It contained promises for both ex-combatants and to promote development in the region. In relation to the former, they would receive demobilization packages (financial and material aid) as well as for some vocational training; there was a specific promise to facilitate school education for 135 child soldiers (see below). With regard to the latter, a list of infrastructural measures was promised for the area (focused on the newly created district of Yumbe). 'Ending the region's "backwardness" was presented in the public discourse and the text of the peace accord as the main aim of the rebel movement, and as one of the main aims of the agreement' (Bogner & Neubert, 2013, p. 66).

**Neglect of civilian victims:** However, the peace agreement contained nothing about providing support for civilian war victims, war-disabled persons or the victims of war crimes, and nothing about prosecution of the perpetrators. This is despite the fact that the concept of transitional justice was a familiar one in Uganda: a truth commission was set up in 1986, for example, shortly after Yoweri Museveni seized power (Bogner & Neubert, 2013). This is also despite evidence that people of West Nile demanded some form of reparation, and that some locals wanted an investigation into war crimes. Because of this the elders did not convene a general peace ceremony (though a few healing ceremonies were conducted at local level). 'They argued that a genuine reconciliation would have needed a detailed assessment of all atrocities that were committed during the different phases of the conflict' – an extremely difficult exercise given the

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<sup>42</sup> Sudan People's Liberation Army

length of time involved (Bogner & Neubert, 2013, p. 67). In addition the elders' failure to resolve the conflict, and their exclusion from formal peace negotiations, meant they had lost much of their authority. International development agencies and humanitarian organizations, who might have been expected to speak up for victims of collective violence, failed to do so: 'obviously their main concern was to bring the armed conflict to a peaceful end at all costs' – hence the promises of amnesty, demobilization packages, and development: in effect, 'a purchased peace' (Bogner & Neubert, 2013, p. 71).

## Wider conflict in northern Uganda

**21-year conflict with LRA:** The on-going conflict in West Nile took place against a context of an arguably even more devastating civil war centred on Acholiland in northern Uganda, between the government and a number of rebel groups, most notably the LRA. The LRA emerged in 1986 and fought a 21-year civil war with the government. It had its origins in Acholi resentment of the marginalisation of their region and the wider north (see below). The conflict led to large-scale loss of life, massive destruction of poverty, and the breakdown of social, economic and other infrastructure. The LRA was notorious for human rights violations. Children were particularly targeted, with many forced to fight for the group. During the course of the war around 1.8 million people (80% of the population of northern Uganda) were internally displaced, many living in IDP camps characterised by extreme overcrowding, limited water supply, inadequate food, poor sanitation and limited health services (Corbin & Hall, 2018, p. 2). It is important to stress that abuses, forced recruitment and forced displacement were carried out both by the LRA and by the armed forces (Ugandan People's Defence Force, UPDF) (Allen, 2006).

**West Nile distinct from rest of northern Uganda:** The West Nile is different from the rest of northern Uganda for three main, interlinked, reasons: (i) the people of the area are not of the same ethnic/tribal identities as those elsewhere in northern Uganda, and have had a very different political history, the main groups being the Lugbara, Madi, Kakwa and Alur. With the exception of the latter, these are speakers of Sudanic rather than Nilotic languages, and are agriculturalists not pastoralists, unlike those in other parts of northern Uganda, such as the Acholi and Langi peoples, or the Karamojong of the North-East; (ii) the political history of West Nile also differs considerably from the rest of the Ugandan North, especially in the early imperial period and the post-colonial era; (iii) the proximity to the Congo (formerly the Belgian Congo, then Zaire, now the DRC) has been as important as the Uganda/Sudan link, and has led to very different cross-border flows - both of people and of commodities - from those in other parts of the North (Leopold, 2009).

**Abuses carried out by all parties to conflict, fuelling further conflict:** Uganda's long history of conflicts is marked by abuses carried out by all parties. Abuses carried out by the LRA have been well-documented and acquired much notoriety. But under Obote's first presidency the army targeted the Baganda in Lowero, and under his second many more people were killed by the UNLA (notably in Luwero as well as West Nile, Karamoja and the South-west); Amin killed thousands of Acholi and Lango; the NRA carried out large-scale attacks against the Acholi and other groups in northern Uganda during its conflict with the LRA, and so on (Atkinson, 2010). Each cycle of violence and killing spurs further conflict.

## Long-term structural challenges

**Persistent under-development in the north:** The marginalisation of the north seen in the colonial era has to a large extent persisted in independent Uganda. Years of war and massive displacement destroyed infrastructure and denied access to key services to the majority of northern Ugandans. As a result, poverty figures and human development indicators (infant mortality, maternal mortality, incidence of HIV/AIDS, etc.) for the north have consistently been far worse than in the rest of the country (Lakwo et al, 2008). The government has acknowledged disparities between the north and south in terms of access to basic services and quality of infrastructure. Through various programmes under the Peace, Recovery and Development Plan for Northern Uganda (PRDP) and the Northern Uganda Social Action Fund (NUSAF) improvements have been made in infrastructure (particularly road construction) and in provision of

services. But there have been serious problems with implementation of these programmes, limiting their effectiveness (ACCS, 2013).

**Weak development situation in West Nile:** West Nile is one of the disadvantaged areas in Uganda, and development indicators there are very weak. Health and education indicators in all districts of West Nile lag significantly behind national indicators (Lakwo et al, 2008). In 2017 West Nile's Multidimensional Poverty Index, an international measure of acute poverty, is 0.484, far above the national average (0.367) (AAH, 2017, p. 7). The MPI reflects multiple deprivations across health, education and living standards. West Nile region is the second lowest developed region in Uganda, after Karamoja, with 84.9% of people multidimensionally poor, according to the MPI (national: 69.9%) and 58.7% living in severe poverty (national: 37.2%) (AAH, 2017, p. 7).

**Ineffective local government system:** Weak human development in West Nile and other remote areas of Uganda is linked to weak economic growth compared to needs. This in turn is linked to systems of governance. Central government remittances to local governments in West Nile are seen as inadequate, leading to low morale to participate in local policy processes by grassroots communities, low responsiveness to local service needs, lack of accountability by local governments, and loss of trust in government (Lakwo et al, 2008, p. 8). Local government capacity is already weak: many local governments lack basic office facilities and equipment. Because of these issues, as well as poor living conditions and lack of social infrastructure, they struggle to attract and retain qualified staff (ACCS, 2013).

Decisions regarding governance and development are made in Kampala, far away from the cities and settlements in West Nile. The government has launched a drive to promote decentralization in order to improve accountability and allow local solutions for local problems. However, it is unclear how much the decentralization process can help when the region has a very small tax base and little opportunity to generate revenue internally, rather than relying on Kampala for budget disbursements. Without that tax base and financial independence, it is unlikely that the districts in West Nile, outside major towns like Arua, will be able to set their own development priorities (AAH, 2017). Also as part of the government's decentralization drive many new districts have been created – ostensibly to improve service provision, but also to gain popularity through the creation of new public sector jobs. However, lack of funding to pay for new administrative structures and staff means that the move has exacerbated existing problems and actually undermined local service provision (ICG, 2017).

**Limited implementation of 2002 peace agreement in West Nile:** Demobilization took place largely as planned in the 2002 peace agreement, and the government was able to quickly set up a functioning local administration in the whole of the region. The district of Yumbe was created in the area populated by the Aringa tribe, home to most members of the UNRF II. This represented the first time in the history of West Nile that the formal administrative apparatus the state penetrated the most remote parts of the region and offered opportunities for political participation at national and local level (Bogner & Neubert, 2013). Also as part of the implementation process, a considerable number of development organizations and CSOs appeared for the first time in Yumbe, the core area of the conflict. Their activities 'contributed significantly to the reconstruction of the region, including the building of schools, health centres and roads, and the improvements in access to clean water.....there have been sizeable advances in the infrastructure' (Bogner & Neubert, 2013, p. 68). However, while there has been local appreciation of these improvements, most changes have not reached the majority of Yumbe's population. It will take a long time to overcome the consequences of decades of civil war.

**Shift in external development focus from West Nile to Acholiland:** The cessation of hostilities with the LRA in nearby regions such as Acholiland, led to the focus of development activities shifting there. West Nile was considered peaceful, and many development partners withdrew their support from the region (Lakwo et al, 2008). 'Many ideas for projects in West Nile have therefore been shelved, and most development organizations have not fulfilled the expectations they created during the peace negotiations' (Bogner & Neubert, 2013, p. 68).

**Lack of transitional justice and reconciliation in West Nile:** While post-conflict governance and infrastructure development in West Nile were (at least initially) reasonably successful, reconciliation and justice with respect to the war victims were completely ignored. ‘War victims have no voice in the socio-political arrangement that has emerged in the wake of the peace accord’ (Bogner & Neubert, 2013). One factor hampering justice for victims is the dominance of ex-combatant “veterans’ societies” in post-conflict society and their establishment as important social and political actors. This can be gauged from the fact that, following a bus ambushing in 2007 and threats by ex-combatants to resume the armed struggle, the government responded by reinforcing security measures and approving funding for various projects put forward by ex-combatants. Veterans thus have a powerful position in West Nile. Their perception of themselves (and West Nile) is as victims of marginalization by the state. Recognition of the victims of collective acts of violence, many carried out by rebels from the region, would tarnish the image of the offenders, who form an important part of the socio-political elite of the province. ‘A differentiation of the population into perpetrators and victims would contradict this socially homogenized heroic self-image’ (Bogner & Neubert, 2013, p. 69). Yet effective transitional justice cannot take place in isolation in West Nile (or indeed, in Acholiland after the cessation of hostilities with the LRA). There is a much broader need for transitional justice in Uganda.

**Wider lack of transitional justice in Uganda:** Effective transitional justice cannot take place in isolation in West Nile (or indeed, in Acholiland after the cessation of hostilities with the LRA). It requires: one, national participation by all actors involved, notably the government; two, a comprehensive conflict analysis examining not just recent conflicts but also earlier ones; and three, a holistic approach that looks at deeper issues of governance and social marginalization and entails institutional reform, public criminal accountability, reparations and truth-telling on a national scale (ASF, 2013, p. 30; Okiror, 2016<sup>43</sup>). This holistic, national level focus on transitional justice is markedly absent in Uganda. Indeed, as of 2013, no prosecutions of war criminals had taken place in Uganda (ASF, 2013, p. 23).

**Victims main group missing out on direct peace dividends:** Bogner and Neubert conclude that both the government and ex-combatants have made gains through the peace: the former gaining military and administrative control over West Nile, the latter demobilization and reintegration packages as well as acceptance of their demands for development of the region – allowing them to see themselves as ‘successful fighters’. But civilian war victims have received neither compensation, nor public acknowledgement of their suffering: there has been no justice for the victims, who are simply ignored in public discourses, and no notable attempts at reconciliation. ‘The purchased peace shifts almost all of the weight onto the shoulders of the victims and rewards the fighters who were the perpetrators in the majority of cases’ (Bogner & Neubert, 2013, p. 72).

**Grudging acceptance of peace terms by civilians:** The civilian population appear to have accepted the situation: relief at having an end to conflict outweighs other considerations. ‘From the perspective of the civilian population, the overwhelming feeling was one of relief that the conflict had ended, and, at one level, reintegration (of ex-combatants) was seen as a small price to pay for peace’ (RLP, 2004, pp. 27-28). Nonetheless there has been resentment, and a strong feeling ‘that those who were victims of the war had not been adequately acknowledged in the dividends of the negotiated settlement’ (RLP, 2004, p. 28). This lack of resolution of issues stemming from the conflict means there is potential for renewed antagonism between ex-combatants and civilians.

**Issues with access to justice in West Nile:** As well as the lack of transitional justice in relation to historic conflicts in the West Nile region, people face significant challenges in accessing justice. A 2007 paper found that the majority of civilians in West Nile were living in something of a ‘justice vacuum’: on the one hand traditional or informal mechanisms of justice were being eroded (e.g. by urbanisation and

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<sup>43</sup> Okiror, S., ‘How the LRA still haunts northern Uganda: The appearance of an LRA commander at the ICC is stirring old memories’. Irin News, 17 February 2016. <http://www.irinnews.org/analysis/2016/02/17/how-lra-still-haunts-northern-uganda>

‘modernisation’), and on the other state controlled formal mechanisms of justice appeared chronically under-funded, misunderstood within communities, and susceptible to corruption (RLP, 2007). ‘Justice is seen to be accessible only to those with the money to buy it’ (RLP, 2007, p. ii). This commercialization of justice, and the inability of state structures to deliver justice, generates profound frustration within communities.

**Unfulfilled promises to ex-combatants:** A study of the group of 135 former child soldiers (FCSs) with UNRF II in Yumbe, referred to in the 2002 peace agreement, found that over ten years after its signing, virtually nothing had been done to support their reintegration (Both & Reis, 2014). Promises to continue in formal education or to be given vocational education, and to be registered under the Amnesty Act of 2000<sup>44</sup> (under which ex-combatants received an amnesty package of 263,000 Ugandan shillings along with various items to facilitate their reintegration) were not fulfilled (Both & Reis, 2014, pp. 346-347). The paper found that the FCSs expressed serious grievances about the lack of support and the broken promises; moreover, ‘the effect of these promises being broken and renewed, repeatedly, over an extended period of time has provoked a sense of helplessness and anger’ (Both & Reis, 2014, p. 344). Some even talked of ‘returning to the bush’ as a form of ‘desperate revenge for unjust treatment in the aftermath of the peace agreement’, and given the poor conditions in which they were living and the lack of opportunities for them (Both & Reis, 2014, p. 350).

**Environmental degradation and natural disasters:** Northern Uganda is projected to see increased volatility in seasonal rains, with increased rainfall between March and May but reduced rainfall between July and September (AAH, 2017). In 2017 West Nile had already had two years of poor rains, and rain-fed agriculture has suffered bad harvests (AAH, 2017). Moreover, army worm is already prevalent in Adjumani, with fears that this could lead to serious crop loss (AAH, 2017). Climate change and environmental challenges are likely to aggravate poverty in many areas (ACCS, 2013). Indeed, in the 2013 analysis by ACCS, communities in some sub-regions identified environmental degradation and natural disasters as a significant conflict driver in terms of their impact on food scarcity, livelihoods, competition for dwindling natural resources and changing climatic conditions (ACCS, 2013, p. 50). Environmental issues can fuel conflict both through increased competition over resources, as well as through anger at lack of disaster preparedness and inadequate disaster management by government in response to natural disasters.

**Food insecurity:** Food insecurity is a significant and growing problem across northern Uganda, manifested in persistent high rates of malnutrition and stunting in children under five years of age (NIRAS, 2017, p. 13). The north has two cropping seasons per year and high diversity of crops, which would indicate potentially sufficient access to food and dietary diversity. However, this is not the case. Food insecurity stems from (lack of) food availability, food access and/or food utilisation. Food availability is a persistent problem in West Nile, Eastern Acholi and Lango. Recurrent food shortages are caused by poor harvests, which in turn are caused by adverse weather conditions combined with production constraints at household level, such as land, labour and poor cultivation practices and storage problems (notably lack of cool storage facilities). High food prices coupled with low household incomes (rural households are solely dependent on agriculture for food and income) limit households’ access to food. Food utilisation is constrained by poor food preparation practices and poor hygiene practices (NIRAS, 2017; IPC, 2017).

Current peace and security dynamics and potential triggers

The previous section outlined long-term, structural challenges facing the north-west region and northern Uganda as a whole. Based on these, it is possible to identify a number of specific potential/actual conflict triggers:

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<sup>44</sup> The 2000 Amnesty Act granted an amnesty to any rebel who had taken up arms since 1986. It lapsed in 2012 but was re-enacted in May 2013. No prosecution of war criminals had taken place in Uganda as of 2013 (ASF, 2013, p. 23).

**Perceptions of neglect persist in the north:** The historic marginalisation of the north has contributed to a fundamental mistrust of government. As noted, several large-scale programmes have been/are being carried out to promote development in the north and these have brought about some improvements in infrastructure and services. Despite this ‘perceptions of neglect appear not to have shifted’ (ACCS, 2013, p. 40). A UNICEF study noted that in terms of driving conflict, ‘the perception of inequality may be as important as the reality’ (cited in ACCS, 2013, p. 47). People in individual sub-regions also feel marginalised in relation to others in the north (Shabdita & Odiya, 2015).

**Pervasive land disputes:** A number of surveys have identified land and boundary disputes as the most common source of disputes in northern Uganda and the most likely cause of a return to violent conflict in the region (ACCS, 2013; Gelsdorf et al, 2012). Hopwood notes a number of studies identifying massive levels of conflict over land in the wake of the long-term displacement of the entire rural population (Hopwood, 2017). Land disputes involve diverse parties: they can be inter-family/clan/community or between community members and district authorities/government institutions (e.g. National Forestry Authority) and/or private investors. Key issues include contested boundaries, contested ownership, illegal occupation, fraudulent transactions and competition over commercially valuable land. While in other parts of northern Uganda women-headed households are at particular risk of being denied access to land (Gelsdorf et al, 2012; ACCS, 2013), attitudes to women are less discriminatory in West Nile (AAH, 2017). However, they are still hampered by lack of access to credit or financial services (AAH, 2017).

**Disputes over natural resources:** Many conflicts over land are linked to natural resources, notably oil, forests and minerals. In the oil-rich sub-regions of West Nile, Bunyoro and Acholi, disputes over the sale and/or misappropriation of land are rife; the discovery of oil has sparked land scrambles as well as disputes over future revenue shares; tensions are fuelled by unfulfilled expectations of employment opportunities and income by communities in oil-rich areas, and by the lack of trust in government and its institutions. There is also palpable resentment amongst sub-regions in the north that do not have oil: they see oil-rich areas as receiving more attention and investment from government and private investors. The allocation of forest land for commercial exploitation has brought local communities into conflict with government bodies such as the NFA over lack of consultation and participation in a process that has a significant impact on livelihoods; encroachment of protected forests by local communities also leads to conflict. Northern Uganda has large deposits of valuable stones and minerals like gold, limestone, copper, tin and phosphate. While most remain unexploited, the potential wealth derived from extracting minerals has already sparked tensions. Such issues are particularly being seen in Karamoja, which is believed to have Uganda’s largest deposits of valuable minerals (ACCS, 2013). There is a lot of evidence to suggest that the UPDF is involved in land grabbing and regional warfare, both actual and proxy, in order to gain access to these resources (expert comment).

**Clashes between pastoralists and farmers:** Challenging environmental conditions, notably drought, is fuelling increased clashes between pastoralists and farmers in northern Uganda (and other parts of the country). Farmers accuse pastoralists of moving onto their land, letting their animals into their gardens and eating their crops, leading to food shortages. Pastoralists accuse the farming community of occupying land traditionally meant for grazing and hunting during the dry season (USAID, 2018). Clashes between pastoralists and farmers in northern Uganda date back a number of years. In January 2017 there were reports of locals in Moyo and Yumbe districts carrying spears, sticks, bows and arrows and evicting pastoralists in the area amidst violent scenes (USAID, 2018). Not all the pastoralists are Ugandan: some are cross-border migrants from South Sudan, motivated in part by the desire to keep their cattle safe by moving them away from conflict affected areas in southern Sudan. Conflict between nomadic pastoralists and residents in West Nile has got so bad that President Museveni issued a directive that the former be evicted from the sub-region and returned to their places of origin by mid-March 2018 (USAID, 2018).

**Youth exclusion and lack of opportunities:** Young people, especially males, face significant challenges. Low levels of education, high illiteracy rates and limited and ineffective opportunities to access technical and vocational skills make it hard for them to find work – opportunities for work are in any case very limited in northern Uganda (Shabdita & Odiya, 2015). Over 80 % of youth in northern Uganda are

unemployed or unemployable in the formal sector due to low qualification levels (ACCS, 2013, p. 26), and even for those with education, there are limited employment opportunities. In a 2013 survey, community representatives expressed concerns about ‘disenfranchised youth, many former combatants, with high illiteracy rates, and no hope for a future, turning to crime and anti-social behaviour’ (ACCS, 2013, p. 27). Such youth represent a major potential driver of conflict. In the 2014 study of former UNRF II child soldiers in Yumbe, West Nile, some informants ‘were explicit about the fact that it was the desperate situation of their families at home, the hunger and poverty faced, that would motivate them to rejoin a rebel group if such an opportunity would occur’ (Both & Reis, 2014, p. 350).

**There is an ‘education emergency’ in the West Nile** (Save the Children, 2017, p.17). Many Child refugees have already lost years of schooling, or may never have been to school. There is already a shortage of teachers across Uganda, and teacher deficits in the West Nile region are a major challenge in terms of recruitment and deployment to the remote areas where settlements are often based. Save the Children (2017, p.17) therefore recommends training up South Sudanese refugees as teachers and providing an accelerated certification scheme (ibid).

## 5. South-west/western region – conflict, (in)stability and resilience

This section summarises the varied issues that can be understood to drive conflict, instability, risk and resilience in the south-west/western region. As there is little literature focused exclusively on the south-west, this section draws on literature focused on the “western region” and the “south-west”, where it is available, plus literature focused on specific areas in those zones. The main focus of the recent literature in this region is on the volatile Rwenzori region, with some literature on the ADF. Older literature explores issues related to the Rwandan refugees in Uganda.

### The Rwenzori region

**The southwestern Rwenzori region<sup>45</sup> has a long history of armed resistance.** The roots of these conflicts lie in the pre-colonial period when the Tooro kingdom (the Batooro people) reigned over the Bakonzo, the Basongora and the Bamba. British divide-and-rule policies further entrenched these divisions. The Tooro were employed in clerical work, and Bakonzo as labourers, thus marking political, economic and social inequalities that fostered marginalization (both real and perceived) (KRC & RFPJ, 2012; Reuss & Titeca, 2017).

**The first armed rebellion in the region was during the colonial period,** pitting the Bakonzo against the Tooro rulers. Then in 1962, the Rwenzururu rebellion sought to establish a Rwenzururu kingdom, independent from the Tooro. The low-intensity rebellion was formally ended in 1982, in an agreement that gave the Rwenzururu some local autonomy and the integration of some of their leaders into governance structures. However, the violence continued as some combatants rejected the deal, forming a new rebel group - the National Army for the Liberation of Uganda (NALU) – which would later be defeated in 1993. The region then saw the emergence of another rebel group - the ADF. (KRC & RFPJ, 2012; Reuss & Titeca, 2017)

**The ADF violently destabilized the Rwenzori region between 1996 and 2000,** particularly the districts of Kasese Bundibugyo, Kabarole and Kyenjojo. Leading to the displacement of up to 85% of the population in Bundibugyo alone (Titeca & Vlassenroot, 2012). Its leaders mostly came from central Uganda, and were joined by members from the Rwenzori region. The military effort eventually forced the ADF that

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<sup>45</sup> In 2012, the Rwenzori region consisting of 7 districts: Kabarole, Kyenjojo, Kamwenge, Kasese, Kyegegwa, Ntoroko and Bundibugyo (KRC & RFPJ, 2012).

remained to flee to camps in DRC around 2000. Since 2000, the ADF has been ‘a continuous source of instability’ on the Congolese side of the Rwenzori Mountains and around the border area, becoming ‘part of the local and regional conflict complex’ (Titeca & Vlassenroot, 2012).<sup>46</sup> The UPDF and the Congolese Army (FARC) carried out joint operations against the ADF in December 2017,<sup>47</sup> and news reports state that countries in the Great Lakes Region recently have established joint operations mechanism to monitor the ADF’s operations.<sup>48</sup> There have been recent reports that UPDF military action against the ADF has contributed to the influx of refugees from the DRC.<sup>49</sup> The porous borders across this region have facilitated the complex web of regional conflicts and alliances between Uganda, DRC and Rwanda (Bøås & Jennings, 2008).

**The Ugandan Rwenzori region has also remained volatile**, with tension relations between the majority and the minority ethnic groups, and between groups in the region and the central Ugandan state (Reuss & Titeca, 2017, p.1). Since 2013, more than 300 people have been killed in different incidents, many more have been injured, houses, property and domestic livestock have been damaged, and state security agents have been attacked (USAID, 2016a; USAID, 2017f). Violence has flared up around cultural institutions – e.g. the possible succession of the kingdom from King Mumbere to his mother, and a longstanding dispute between King Oyo and Prince David Kaijanangoma (USAID, 2017c, 2016j; 2016i, 2017g, 2016h). And around the 2016 elections in Bundibugyo and Kasese districts, when skirmishes left more than 30 dead, and hundreds of homes destroyed, and thousands displaced. In the security response, the security forces reportedly killed an additional 17 people, yet there has been no investigation into this incident (HRW, 2016).

#### *Root causes and dynamics in the Rwenzori region*

**Longstanding perceptions of marginalisation and resentment underpin tensions in the region** – both in regards to local power-holders and to the central state. Museveni’s regime is seen to have neglected the region, leading to its underdevelopment, and the minority and majority ethnic groups perceive the other groups to have received preferential treatment, e.g. in the sharing and use of natural resources, especially land (Titeca & Vlassenroot, 2012; Reuss & Titeca, 2017; KRC & RFPJ, 2012). The constant recurrence of violent conflict has also fostered a culture of violence, underpinned by stereotypes

**The persistent conflicts in the region have negatively impacted on social, economic and political development** (KRC & RFPJ, 2012). Similar to other areas of Uganda, the region’s youth bulge combined with poor employment opportunities have contributed to a disaffected youth, rising levels of crime, and an erosion of respect for traditional politics and mechanisms of conflict resolution (Reuss & Titeca, 2017). Tuhaise finds there is ‘growing radicalisation’ in the region.<sup>50</sup>

‘The current conflicts between ethnic groups have been triggered by the recent reintroduction and recognition of cultural leadership, reawakening historical conflicts, perceptions of inequality and fears that natural resources will not be shared (including recently discovered oil and gas) (KRC & RFPJ, 2012, p.5). Meanwhile, as multiparty politics has returned, the creation of new institutions and districts has become part of the Museveni regime’s system of patronage politics (Reuss & Titeca, 2017). The leaders of cultural institutions gain certain benefits, with the creation of public jobs and guaranteed financial transfers from the national level (Reuss & Titeca, 2017). Meanwhile, those from minority communities have been marginalised in access to jobs, public resources and social services (KRC & RFPJ, 2012).

<sup>46</sup> For a summary of the Government of Uganda’s operations against ADF see - <http://ucdp.uu.se/#/statebased/689>

<sup>47</sup> See - <http://www.africanews.com/2017/12/27/ugandan-army-kills-100-adf-rebels-in-dr-congo/>

<sup>48</sup> See - <http://allafrica.com/stories/201803220189.html>

<sup>49</sup> See - [https://www.newvision.co.ug/new\\_vision/news/1468069/congolese-refugees-enter-uganda-updf-clash-adf-drc](https://www.newvision.co.ug/new_vision/news/1468069/congolese-refugees-enter-uganda-updf-clash-adf-drc)

<sup>50</sup> See - Tuhaise, F (2016) Growing Radicalization in the Rwenzori Region; what are the drivers? Blog. Rwenzori Forum for Peace and Justice <http://rfpjuganda.net/growing-radicalization-in-the-rwenzori-region-what-are-the-drivers/>

**This has spurred minority cultural communities to agitate for recognition as independent cultural institutions**, accentuating the wins and losses for those groups with/without cultural institutions (KRC & RFPJ, 2012). The creation of new cultural institutions has also led to conflicts within groups (e.g. regarding the Obusinga Bwa Rwenzururu (OBR) cultural institution) (KRC & RFPJ, 2012; Reuss & Titeca, 2017). Extending the patronage networks via cultural institutions has deepened ethnic identities and cleavages. Thus 'symbolic issues – such as royal visits or ceremonies – have become explosive' (Reuss & Titeca, 2017, p.4).

**The government's decentralisation policy has similarly contributed to the escalation of the conflicts in the region.** Following the ethnic tensions at the 2016 elections, the government created new districts along ethnic lines. However, rather than resolve, it has created new tensions and demands for more districts (KRC & RFPJ, 2012). It has also fuelled perceptions of domination and marginalisation, further deepening ethnic identities (Reuss & Titeca, 2017). Perceptions that have been exploited around elections, e.g. with reports of hate speeches on local radio stations around the 2016 elections.<sup>51</sup>

**Competition over the use and ownership of land has shaped tensions between the majority and minority ethnic groups** in the region (Reuss & Titeca, 2017). Issues include: historic tensions between cultivators and cattle-keepers; rapid population growth; the scarcity of habitable land; oil prospects leading to speculative land deals and a sharp rise in land-grabbing; forced displacement during the Rwenzururu war or Central Government programs without compensation; migration from other areas in Uganda; and an increasing number of Congolese moving into the district and buying land from locals (Reuss & Titeca, 2017, p.3; KRC & RFPJ, 2012).

**Despite the historical injustices and the many conflicts in the region, there have been no substantive transitional justice or reconciliation efforts** (Reuss & Titeca, 2017). The KRC and RFPJ (2012) call for the historical injustices to be 'documented and addressed by way of reparations, preferably physical compensation in case of lost property, sensitization on the legislations concerning cultural institutions, governance and natural resources, promotion of initiatives that foster attitude change for social cohesion, leadership commitment to promoting unity for development, and respect for cultural and other human rights' (KRC & RFPJ, 2012, p.5).

## ADF rebel group

**The ADF are one of the most organized and best-trained rebel groups in DRC**, yet they are probably the least known, with little analysis focusing on them (especially relative to other groups such as the LRA) (Scorgie-Porter, 2015). Little is known about the ADF's background, ideology, organisation, capacity, lines of supply and supporters (Titeca & Vlassenroot, 2012). While initially ADF leaders aimed to overthrow the Ugandan government and create an Islamic state, more recently 'their actions have not demonstrated a clear commitment to this goal beyond using it as a narrative to maintain cohesion among their members' (Titeca & Fahey, 2016). The ADF has also become more secretive, and appears to receive funding from unknown sources (Avocats Sans Frontières, 2013, p.35).

**The ADF has been extremely resilient** in surviving military offensives with the Ugandan and Congolese armies, and the UN peacekeeping mission. It also appears economically resilient, having developed cross-border trade, agriculture, and taxing of timber forests (Scorgie-Porter, 2015). A report from 2016 estimated it to have around 250 fighters, down from the 1200-1500 it initially had (Rufanges & Aspa, 2016). The Ugandan government's framing of the ADF as a terrorist group has served to justify its invasion and occupation of the DRC border area, to participate in the US-led 'war on terror', and to 'rationalize arrests and acts of torture, to assign blame for unsolved murders and to slander opposition politicians', all the while not eliminating the ADF (Titeca & Fahey, 2016). Rufanges and Aspa (2016, p.12)

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<sup>51</sup> See - <http://rfpj.uganda.net/situation-report-on-post-2016-general-elections-in-kasese-district-february-18th-2016-march-17th-2016-3/>

report that the ADF have contacts in the Ugandan army who ‘would have supplied them with weapons’. The ADF conflict is an example of a national conflict that has over-spilled into the Great Lakes Region.

## Conflicts in the Great Lakes Region

**The Great Lakes Region has a complex history of conflicts and alliances** that have over-spilled national borders and have involved governments backing coups and militias in neighboring countries. They have also pushed large numbers of refugees back and forth across different countries, which has had implications for political, stability and conflict. DRC, Rwanda and Burundi have experienced the worst of these regional conflicts. Incidents occurring in Uganda include:

### **Rwandan Tutsi refugees in Uganda (“Banyarwanda”) have launched attacks on Rwanda from Uganda.**

In 1961 and 1962, Tutsi refugee warriors invaded Rwanda from Uganda, generating political instability in Western Uganda (Bøås & Jennings, 2008). In 1987, the rebel group the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) was formed in the Tutsi refugee camps of Uganda. In 1990, they proceeded to invade Rwanda, which precipitated the Rwandan civil war and the genocide (Lischer, 2015, p.14).

**Some of the Banyarwanda supported Museveni’s armed struggle** for leadership of Uganda, following their oppression by the former Ugandan leaders Obote and Amin (Otunnu, 1999). ‘By the time Museveni took power in Kampala in January 1986, approximately one-third of his more than 16,000 troops were of Banyarwanda origin’ (Bøås & Jennings, 2008, p.163-4).

**The Second Congo War spilled over** into the west and south-west of Uganda, in the 1990s, killing an estimated 73,000 Ugandans, displacing 100,000, and leaving 1,000 orphans in the Bundibugyo district (Kibanja, Kajumba & Johnson, 2012, p.407).

**Around Lake Albert, longstanding border issues between Uganda and DRC** have led to violent clashes as recently as 2016. Both countries have historically accused the other of violating the border and fishing in each other’s waters. They signed the Ngurdoto agreement in 2007, following a significant escalation of border incidences that ‘threatened to escalate into full-blown war’.<sup>52</sup> The most recent incident, in 2016, saw the murder of four Ugandan marine police officers (USAID, 2016h).

**Congolese militias crossed into Uganda to assault and rob** families in the Nyamukimbo village twice in 2017, causing residents to flee and schools to close. Community members accused border security of being lax, and the government responded by adding military and police to the area (USAID, 2017e).

## Other

**In western Uganda’s Bunyoro, ethnic tensions between the indigenous Banyoro and the migrant Bakiga settlers** have existed for many years as the two groups disagree over land and political positions in this oil-rich region. This has led to occasional violent clashes (UNICEF, 2014, p.5). The Bakiga’s success in recent district and parliamentary elections has upset the Banyoro, prompting ethnic-based attacks (Kibanja, Kajumba & Johnson, 2012, p.407). ‘The Banyoro accuse the Bakiga of plotting to rule and dominate them through tribal voting and taking their land. The migration of Bakiga into the Bunyoro region has created pressure on the available land and fuelled ethnic conflict’ (USAID, 2017d).

**Government bias favouring western and central Uganda may have been a driver of recurrent civil wars**, argues Lindemann (2011). Golooba-Mutebi and Hickey (2013 p.8) suggest that ‘In terms of regional inequality, the generally pro-poor forms of growth experienced during most of the 1990s had become less inclusive by the late 1990s and early 2000s, with a bias emerging towards the urban and western

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<sup>52</sup> See - Oxford Analytica in <https://reliefweb.int/report/democratic-republic-congo/drcuganda-lake-albert-spat-imperils-wider-region-may-29-2008>

areas of the country, particularly vis-à-vis the north and east'. While the south-west and west of Uganda are often seen as beneficiaries of Museveni's government – e.g. in terms of official positions, and investments in infrastructure and service provision (UNICEF, 2014, p.5; Golooba-Mutebi & Hickey, 2013), the literature does not explore the idea of bias in depth. Certainly the south-west and the west have benefited from the lack of large-scale conflict in their region.

**In Hoima District, conflict between cultivators and pastoralists** saw pastoralists occupy land where the government intends to set up an oil refinery while they wait to be relocated. The pastoralist's livestock have invaded gardens and destroyed food crops belonging to the locals (USAID, 2017e).

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