The experiences and perspectives of alone and unaccompanied refugee children living in Uganda: Evidence from a child-centric approach

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Dissertation submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy (Sociology) in the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, Stellenbosch University

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December 2022

Declaration

By submitting this dissertation electronically, I declare that the entirety of the work contained in this doctoral dissertation is my own original work, that I am the sole author and I acknowledge that the works of other persons used herein have duly been recognised and acknowledged by way of referencing in text and bibliography. That the reproduction and publication thereof by Stellenbosch University will not infringe any third-party rights, and I have not previously in its entirety or in part submitted it for obtaining any qualification.

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Acknowledgement

I am humbled by the warm support I have received from different people and institutions during my doctoral journey. I express my gratitude to my supervisors Professor Rob Pattman and Dr Khayaat Fakier. Thank you for guiding and walking with me throughout this journey. Your patience, encouragement, and belief in me lifted me up throughout this academic journey. The stimulating discussions both physically and remotely, and the very candid feedback steered me in the right direction during this doctoral journey. We three made a fantastic team, and I could not have asked for better supervisors than you both.

I would like to extend my appreciation to the Graduate School of the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences for the scholarship and funding opportunity extended to me during this doctoral undertaking. I further appreciate the support of the Department of Sociology and Social Anthropology for the financial support extended to me during my final academic year.

To all my participants, I appreciate your huge contributions towards the completion of this academic work. I continue to be humbled by your zeal to participate in this research work, for letting me into your worlds and for accepting me living in your spaces and being a part of your daily lives during the fieldwork processes. To the research assistants who supported this work, I am grateful for your support and immense contribution in bridging and helping me to navigate the communication challenges that emerged during this research process.

To you, my family, my wife Patricia and our children Jordana, Jordan, Jethro, Johanna, and Patricia, for the emotional support, love, and encouragement during the four years of my academic life. I am humbled by how strong you were during the times when I was away and how convenient you made it for me to study and write while in Uganda. To you, Papa and Toto, and my siblings, you never stopped worrying about a son and brother in a faraway place but stood strong and encouraged me to complete this project.

To my friends and colleagues, I am so appreciative of your support. My colleagues at the graduate school, it was an honour to undertake this academic journey with all of you. And to Isaac, my friend and brother, thank you for prioritising my work, taking the time to read and critique it. Finally, to my ICAP Uganda family, thanks for being very understanding, accommodative and supportive throughout this academic journey. I am grateful and indebted to you all.

Dedication

I dedicate this to all the children who have contributed immensely to this academic work by participating in various ways. And to my wife Patricia and our children, Jordana, Jordan, Jethro, Johanna, and Patricia for your love, support, and perseverance during this academic period of my life.

Abstract

As a considerably politically stable country in the East African region, Uganda has assumed the role of hosting the largest numbers of refugees from the conflict-affected South Sudan. While the alone and unaccompanied refugee children form part of the refugee situation that Uganda is dealing with, little is known about how such childhoods are lived and experienced. This research plugs this gap by focusing on the lived experiences of the alone and unaccompanied refugee children living in Ugandan refugee settlements. It explores children's reflections of their earlier and present forced migratory experiences and how they negotiate their everyday lives as boys and girls alone, and/or unaccompanied by adult relatives, within new social spaces. Primarily motivated by the "New" Sociology of Childhood, this ethnographic study adopts the extended case methodology which included engaging with children using participatory and child-centered methodologies. Through these methodologies, this research appreciates and positions the children as experts of their refugee childhoods, irrespective of their being unaccompanied and alone. In so doing, this methodological approach provides a platform through which the alone and unaccompanied refugee children's voice is heard and listened to. This study also appreciates the significance of refugee children's protection rights as well as their participation rights. Rather than address the children in this research as objects of pity and in need of protection exclusively, this research also acknowledges the role of agency in childhoods that are constructed as minorities and of inferior status. More specifically, it questions the perceptions which are not often interrogated, including that childhood is a process of becoming that is only determined through socialisation processes. The child-centered methodologies adopted intend to position the child participants as authorities about their refugee childhoods and raise questions about my own positionality as a researcher. This research reveals that the *alone refugee child* is contextually different from the *unaccompanied refugee child*; that vulnerability agendas risk silencing the refugee's children's voice and participation rights. The vulnerabilities associated with the refugee children in forced migration attract a lot of gatekeeper restriction to accessing the children. The need to balance the implementation of children's protection and participation rights is pertinent. The ability of children to get past their adversities when faced by difficult and extreme situations arguably overrides the dominant vulnerability lens from which refugee children are generally perceived. Children tend to adapt rapidly to new social environments through relationships with other children and adults who may empower and support them to survive through their challenges. This study shows that pedagogic approaches to understanding children's worlds need to be adopted, as opposed to dominant research paradigms which have for long overshadowed the children's voices within childhood discourses in Uganda. This allows for the children to freely open up concerning their vulnerabilities and resilient mechanisms. The findings from this research also provide insights and implications for working with children in forced migratory situations. These include adapting child-centered research approaches which support child agency which empowers the child to construct and present their stories from their own point of view in contexts where they feel safe and validated.

Opsomming

Uganda het, as polities aansienlik stabiele land in Oos-Afrika, die rol aanvaar om die grootste aantal vlugtelinge uit die konflikgeteisterde Suid-Soedan te huisves. Alhoewel vergeselde vlugtelingkinders deel vorm van die vlugtelingsituasie waarmee Uganda worstel, is daar min bekend oor hoe hierdie kinderjare beleef en ervaar word. Hierdie navorsing vul´n leemte deur te fokus op die geleefde ervarings van die vlugtelingkinders wat alleen en onvergesel in Ugandese vlugtelingnedersettings woon. Dit ondersoek kinders se nabetragtinge oor hulle vroeëre en huidige gedwonge trekervarings en hoe hulle hulle alledaagse lewens as seuns en dogters alleen, en/of sonder begeleiding van volwasse familielede, binne nuwe sosiale ruimtes onderhandel. Hierdie etnografiese studie wat hoofsaaklik gemotifeer is deur die "Nuwe" Sosiologie van Kinderjare, gebruik die uitgebreide gevallemotodologie wat direkte betrokkenheid by die kinders insluit deur die gebruik van deelnemende en kindgesentreerde metodologieë. Deur hierdie metodologieë word die kinder as die kundiges van hul vlugtelingkinderjare geposisioneer, ongeag daarvan dat hulle onvergeseld en alleen is. Sodoende skep dié metodologiese benadering 'n platvorm waardeur die vlugtelingkinders wat alleen en onvergesel is, se stem gehoor en na geluister word. Die belangrikheid van vlugtelingkinders se deelname- en beskermingsregte word ook deur die studie op prys gestel. In plaas daarvan om kinders in hierdie navorsing uitsluitelik te sien as voorwerpe van jammerte en in nood van beskerming, word die rol van agentskap in die kinderjare van die wie se status gekonstrueer word as minderheid en minderwaardig, erken. Meer spesifiek nog, dit bevraagteken persepsies wat nie dikwels ondersoek word nie, insluitende dat kinderjare 'n proses van wording is wat slegs deur sosialiseringsprosesse bepaal word. Die gebruikte kindgesentreerde metodologieë beoog om die deelnemende kind as gesagsfiguur oor hul kindervlugtelingjare te posisioneer en skep vrae oor my eie posisionaliteit as navorser. Hierdie navorsing onthul dat die *alleen vlugtelingkind* kontekstueel verskil van die *onvergeselde vlugtelingkind*; dat kwesbaarheidsagendas die risiko loop om vlugtelingkinders se stem- en reg tot deelname stil te maak. Die kwesbaarhede in verband met vlugtelingkinders in gedwonge migrasie lok baie poortwagter-toegangbeperkings tot die kinders. Die behoefte om balans te vind in die implementering van kinders se regte tot beskerming en hulle reg tot deelname, is relevant. Die vermoë van kinders om hulle teëspoed te oorkom wanneer hulle deur moeilike en uiterste omstandighede gekonfronteer word, oorheers stellig die dominante kwetsbaarheidslens waardeur vlugtelingkinders oor die algemeen gesien word. Kinders is geneig om vinnig aan te pas by nuwe sosiale omgewings deur verhoudings met ander kinders en volwassenes wat hulle mag bemagtig en ondersteun om die aanslae op hulle te oorleef. Hierdie studie wys dat pedagogiese benaderings tot die verstaan van die wêrelde van kinders aanvaar moet word eerder as die dominante benadering wat die kinders se stemme vir so lank binne kinderdiskoerse in Uganda oorskadu het. Dit stel die kinders in staat om vrylik oop te maak ten onpsigte van hulle kwesbaarhede en weerbaarheidsmeganismes. Die bevindinge van hierdie navorsing bevat ook insigte en implikasies vir werk met kinders in gedwonge migrerende situasies. Dit sluit die toepassing van kindgerigte navorsingsbenaderings in wat kinderagentskap ondersteun wat die kind bemagtig om hulle stories vanuit hul eie perspektief te konstrueer en binne kontekste waarin hulle veilig en bevestig voel, aan te bied.

Abbreviations

AIDS	Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome
ACRWC	African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child
CFS	Child Friendly Space
COVID19	Corona Virus Disease 2019
CRC	United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child
ECCD	Early Childhood Care and Development
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
IPC	Infection Prevention and Control
IRB	Institutional Review Board
LWF	Lutheran World Federation
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organisations
OPM	Office of the Prime Minister
RDO	Refugee Desk Office(r)
REC	Research Ethics Committee
SOPS	Standard Operating Procedures
SPLA	Sudan Peoples' Liberation Army
UNHCR	United Nations High Commission for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Fund

Key to Transcript

Symbol	Illustration
…	Full conversation not quoted/ excerpts of conversation have been excluded from the quote or narrative
Italic(s)	Used for emphasis of non-English (first language use) words and also emphasis highlighted by the researcher
CAPITAL LETTERS	Used for abbreviations/ short word forms
(Comment)	Additional clarity/ emphasis by researcher
-----	Separation of narratives from different participants but within the same context
[***]	Conceal participants' identifiable content, for instance organisation, person's name, or title which could identify the addresses of children, or the persons quoted easily known.

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Chapter 1 : Contextualising refugee childhoods

Introduction

This ethnographic study explores the everyday lived experiences of unaccompanied and alone refugee children between eight to seventeen years of age living in Uganda. The study also sought to explore the reflections of these children on their journeys to refugee settlements in Uganda. The study is influenced by the "New" Sociology of Children, a relatively new paradigm in the social studies of children and childhood (Prout & James, 1990b), which argues for participatory forms of research with children, which engages with them as active agents, even in contexts where they may appear to lack agency, as in the case of alone refugee children, who feature in my study.

Through an extended case methodological approach, this study adopts the child-centred multiple methods approach (Corsaro, 2014; James et al., 1998; Prout & James, 1990b) I sought to understand how the children in my study recalled their journeys alone (unaccompanied by close adult relatives) from their homes to the refugee settlements in Uganda. Further, this research explored how these children later negotiated relationships with other young people in and outside the refugee settlement, as well as how they imagined their futures as young adults beyond being refugees. In engaging these children as active agents, my research aimed to provide a platform for the voices of alone children subjected to forced migration, to be heard (Kellett, 2014), which has never happened before in Uganda.

As refugee children living out of their home country, and not with their own families of origin, this research recognises the global classification that positions these children as vulnerable (Doná & Veale, 2011) and in need of protection from outsiders, including researchers. But at the same time, my research aimed to provide platforms for such children to participate, especially in a context where these were conspicuous by their absence.

A key aim for this research was to complement children's protection and participation rights as co-researchers, a stance clearly advocated for through the principle of *"the best interests of the child"* as a primary concern in all matters regarding children (UNICEF, 2007). In providing spaces and platforms for children to share their forced migratory experiences, this research revealed that refugee children as actors can thrive and assert their agency without intermediaries speaking on their behalf. In further appreciating agency and its effect on children when they are enabled or empowered to exercise it, my research positioned all children as

"*beings* and not *becomings*" (Uprichard, 2008) deserving of the opportunity to share and express thoughts and opinions in the best way they could.

. In my research, the children of interest were the *"unaccompanied"* and the *"alone"* refugee children. These were children below the age of 18 years who for one reason or another, migrated without a parent or legal caregiver to seek asylum in a foreign country, a common form of migration to Uganda (Hopkins & Hill, 2008; Keles et al., 2018). Some of the forced migratory literature on children indicates that these children often begin their journey to host countries alone, without an immediate caring family member, whereas others may lose such family members on their way to the host country (Hopkins & Hill, 2008; Keles et al., 2018; Menjívar & Perreira, 2019; Pettinicchio et al., 2018; Verwimp & Maystadt, 2015). The *"alone"* refugee child, on the other hand, finds themselves living on their own, having initially arrived with a caring adult, some of whom eventually died or returned home, or even relocated to other places, leaving the child on their own.

From children's experiences, as discussed in subsequent chapters, political upheaval, and ethnic conflicts account for their forced migratory trajectories through which their childhoods have continuously been altered and reshaped. Unaccompanied migrant literature has explored children's vulnerabilities in forced migration, with some studies suggesting that their vulnerabilities are cumulative starting from their exit, their journeys and eventually their experiences in host countries (Menjívar & Perreira, 2019). Similarly, related literature further argues that children's lived experiences in receiving countries are partly informed by past experiences on their journeys to those receiving countries, for instance, traveling long distances (Menjívar & Perreira, 2019; Perreira & Ornelas, 2013). My research sought to explore some of these conceptualisations of children within childhood forced migration using children's accounts.

My rationale for this study

My motivation to undertake this study stems from three major reflections. The first stems from my childhood memories of experiencing forced internal migration. The second motivation derives from the status of the Ugandan refugee settlement model which has received much acclaim within the migratory discourse. And the third motivation draws on my commitment to child-centred research, and to open spaces to children to express their interests, concerns, and reflections about being refugees in Uganda.

Memories of an internally displaced childhood

In 2012, I enrolled for a master's programme in Childhood Studies at the Norwegian University of Science and Technology. This academic undertaking introduced me to ways of perceiving children and childhood that I had never encountered before. As I continued to appreciate ways of understanding children, I started to reflect on my own childhood in ways that I had never done before. Prominent in my reflections were my rural early childhood memories, of living and experiencing insurgency at the hand of the Karimojong cattle rustlers in North-Eastern Uganda. Of my childhood memories, these particularly evoked strong emotions regarding loss and displacement.

As a people of Northern Teso, we had for long experienced insurgency from our neighbours, the Karimojong, who, for decades, had rustled[1] our livestock and looted household items, including foodstuffs. These frequent raids had destabilised our home, caused my family to move from our ancestral home in Agonga, Kapelebyong, to Orungo in Amuria. My experiences and memories stem from a life lived in Orungo, a place of which I have fond childhood memories to this day. The overbearing effect of this internal displacement has been the loss of connection with my own ancestry. This loss was driven by the fear of the possible return of the insurgents. We have recently returned to this ancestral home, feeling more alienated than before from both our clan and extended family.

My interests in undertaking forced migration research with alone and unaccompanied children are strongly influenced by my own childhood memories as a displaced child and connections I came to draw between these memories and the experiences of alone and unaccompanied refugee children. For instance, while reflecting on their journeys to the Ugandan border, the children spoke of experiencing crossfire, walking long distances, going without food and water, and even spending nights in the bush for fear of being captured. Some of these experiences, have a place within my memories of my own early childhood.

The discourse of child-centred research in Uganda

The discourse around child-centred research in Uganda is another justification for my engagement in this research. The level of engagement with child-centred research in Uganda is still low. Most child-related research projects are action-oriented, prioritising the provisional

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1 The concept rustle here is used to refer to cattle and livestock theft in the Northeast part of Uganda by the Karimojong and Turkana ethnicities. For several decades, armed Karimojong warriors had raided the livestock in the neighbouring subregions of Teso, Lango and Bugishu. These livestock raids are largely referred to in Uganda as cattle rustling.

and protection needs of children. These forms of research are, of course, important, and significant in identifying and responding to the instrumental needs of children, including in respect of health care and the provision of food. However, these have mostly been championed by Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) and have not attempted to engage in child-centred forms of research, which focus on how children construct and negotiate their identities, relationships, and everyday lives. Indeed, child-centred approaches to research with children in Uganda are critiqued as being Western-oriented and as failing to serve a useful research purpose. Instead, most research about child refugees in Uganda is "adult-centric" rather than "child-centric", thereby reflecting a commonly held and generally unchallenged assumption that having once been children themselves, adults are well-informed about all childhood experiences Darbyshire et al. (2005, p. 419).

The need for childhood researchers to engage on equal fronts with children as co-constructors (Spriggs & Gillam, 2019) of research knowledge ought to inform more child research processes in Uganda. From the perspectives of my research, child-centred methods of researching children are not in totality Western but can be adapted to a context of time and place. Co-opting children as my co-researchers through the use of child-centred and child-friendly methodology signified that research must, in meaningful ways, actively embrace and involve the participation of children. That is to say a move to researching *"with"* and not *"on"* (Spriggs & Gillam, 2019, p. 2) or *"for"* children (Darbyshire et al., 2005, p. 419).

Literature relating to child centred research with children in Uganda revealed that these approaches provided deep insights from children about their own worlds. For instance, the work of Oketch (2012) with formerly abducted children in northern Uganda revealed that children were more than just war victims, but through their agency, they were also peacemakers who contributed immensely to the peace-building and reintegration processes in Northern Uganda after the war.

Other related studies that have engaged directly in child-centred research have included Cheney (2004, 2005, 2011, 2015) whose work focuses on street children, child soldiers, and HIV orphans; Van Blerk (2006), whose work concerned street children in Uganda; Klasen et al. (2010), who have documented posttraumatic resilience of former child soldiers; and Kendrick and Kakuru (2012) who write about child-headed households in Uganda. All this research, although conducted by foreign researchers, has tended to prove the worth of making children central in research processes which seek to understand them. I argue that such research

is still absent from the local childhood discourse in Uganda, possibly because of the ways childhood is constructed and understood in Uganda.

 Few Ugandan researchers have argued for and advanced broader perspectives in childhood research in the country. For instance, Seruwagi (2017), supports the need to use child-centred methodologies to solicit children's views in Uganda. She further argues that there is a need to negotiate adult-child power relations, stressing that adults need to begin appreciating children as confidants and partners in their social worlds. Kamya and Walakira (2017) used approaches that directly engaged with children who are homeless, while exploring their experiences with police officers.

Furthermore, related literature reveals that childhood-related research in Uganda is driven by a needs-based initiative for children. This approach in childhood research leads to the predominance of a statistical discourse when compiling findings. Such statistical discourse even the few that attempt to explore viewpoints related to children use adult voices to speak for children. For example, in exploring child maltreatment in Uganda, Muhangi (2017), excluded the participation of abused children, purely relying on secondary data to report on an issue important to children. Whilst some researchers have attempted to include children's participation in their research, it is argued that children's level of participation and representation is questionable. Some researchers who attempt to understand children's experiences, enlist significant adults like parents and professionals as sources of information regarding children. This mostly occurs when adults construct standard research methods like interviewing as being beyond children's understanding (Darbyshire et al., 2005). For instance, Ochen et al. (2017) included more adult voices than that of children while exploring issues related to female genital mutilation and the girl child rights.

Finally, my stance to engage with child-centred researched is influenced by related examples from elsewhere within Africa. Drawing on examples from Southern Africa, where the extensive view of constructing children as competent actors (James et al., 1998; Jenks, 2005; O'Kane, 2000; Prout & James, 1990b) has been much adapted in contemporary childhood research. Drawing on the examples of Pattman (2005), Pattman and Chege (2003), and Bhana (2008), who, for instance, have used children's own voices to assert their competencies as members of society who are fully capable of reflecting upon and offering unique perspectives of their worlds. Equally, through extensive research with children mainly in Ethiopia and parts of Kenya, Abebe reveals the importance of having minority children voice their experiences through research (Abebe, 2007, 2008, 2009a; Abebe & Skovdal, 2010).

The forced migratory experiences of unaccompanied children in Southern Africa have been documented using, for example, the *"suitcase project"* in South Africa (Clacherty, 2006), and through the Save the Children *"Our broken dreams"* research project (Staunton et al, 2007). In both these research projects, children's voices are encouraged through their participation in artwork activities about their migration, followed by reflexive discussions. Such approaches have strongly influenced my research with refugee children in Uganda.

The Ugandan refugee settlement model

This research, as previously mentioned, is also motivated by a predominant model that has come to be known within the refugee discourse as the Ugandan refugee model. I choose to refer to this as *"the Ugandan refugee settlement model"* and place my interest specifically on the wording *"settlement"* and the context within which it is used within the refugee discourse in Uganda. Nonetheless, the Ugandan refugee model is influenced by provisions in the country's refugee policy which are informed by the Uganda Refugee Act of 2006 and the 2010 Refugees' Regulations, and which I discuss further in the next section.

Refugees in Uganda are hosted in over thirty settlements spread across the country (REACH, 2018). The settlements are establishments for refugees and have the appearance of an ordinary Ugandan village with the necessary amenities, such as small markets and shops, schools, farmlands, and health centres, all aimed at enhancing refugee wellbeing and to promote self-reliance (Ilcan et al., 2015). The need for the refugee to become self-sustaining through the settlement has often placed Uganda in the limelight in respect of refugee management. Some scholars in migration studies refer to it as the "refugee oasis" (Easton-Calabria, 2016) while others have categorically called its refugee policy an "open-door policy" (Rutinwa, 1999). As a consequence, Uganda has become the preferred destination for refugees in Eastern Africa, and the country hosts the largest number of refugees in the region (Ahimbisibwe, 2019).

Furthermore, studies which have explored the role of this approach in refugees' lives have argued that this Ugandan model has impacted on refugees' socioeconomic wellbeing, possibly because of the enjoyment of freedoms to work, movement and enjoyment of Ugandan social services (World Bank 2016). Exploring how childhood is experienced within the provisions of this settlement model is an important research focus. As children influence the lives of those around them, their lives are also influenced by those around them, including the different social structures (James et al., 1998; Prout & James, 1990b). Ugandan refugee settlements allowed

children to engage with different actors and spaces, such as schools, religious places, and play spaces.

Furthermore, in constructing their identities, children influence and are influenced by the different societal events and structures (Corsaro, 2014; Qvortrup, 2009). For instance, in living at the settlements, their lives are shaped and reshaped through their continued interaction with structures like gender, power and culture. Since childhood is integrated in society (Qvortrup, 1991), the refugee settlements present fluid grounds for children to co-construct their forced migratory experiences. My research facilitated the processes through which these views, emotions and thoughts were heard and became known and reshaped the way we adults should think about and care for such children. In so doing, this research intended to change and influence perspectives of refugee   children as being talked about but rarely listened to (UNICEF, 2018).

Positioning Uganda in the refugee geopolitics of Eastern Africa

In Sub-Saharan Africa between the 1960s-70s, states within the sub-continent had an open-door policy for refugees with even their local communities viewing refugees as victims of colonial rule and they therefore warmly received them (Rutinwa, 1999). This has since changed with several host states now having strong measures in place, which they, in effect, use to keep refugee populations separate from the indigenous communities in refugee camps, settlements and asylum centres (Kagan, 2013).

 Political and civil strife within and across borders still account for the major reason people become refugees. There is no doubt that different social structures, such as family ties and livelihoods, have been destroyed or altered as people assume refugee status and begin, often untold, long journeys to different host countries. For children, their childhoods have continuously lacked stability, as family systems and their survival have constantly come under threat. These disruptions have seen some children begin their refugee journeys unaccompanied[2], while others have assumed this status while on their journey to their host countries.

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2 Used here to imply unaccompanied minor asylum seekers who are children below the age of 18 years who for one reason or another migrate without a parent or legal caregiver to seek asylum in a foreign country.

Because of its location in an unstable region, Uganda hosts the largest number of refugees in the Great Lakes' region of Eastern Africa. Predominant among these refugees are those from the Democratic Republic of Congo, Somalia, South Sudan and Burundi (Verwimp & Maystadt, 2015). As a receiving and host country, Uganda reports that children and women form the largest number of refugees entering and living in it. Within the refugee and migratory discourses, Uganda's approaches to managing the refugee situation has been commended. With specific regard to the 2006 Refugees' Act and the 2010 Refugees' Regulations, the policy has been regarded as progressive and accommodative of the refugee populations. Some of the critical issues highlighted in the policy include entitlements, which guarantee the enjoyment of certain freedoms within the borders of Uganda. These include, the rights to property ownership, practice of agriculture and other livelihoods which enhance their development, access to and enjoyment of free and fair judicial processes, as well as freedom of movement and rights to an education (World Bank 2016). With such and more examples, Omata and Kaplan (2013) reveal that some refugees have benefitted from the policy's advocacy of integration and have blended well and even established sustainable livelihoods within different parts of the country, such as in the city of Kampala.

It is worth noting that even with these conducive legal and policy provisions, Uganda struggles with the actualisation of some of these provisions, especially those provisions which call for a sustainable approach. Some literature suggests that continued humanitarian support to refugees in settlements at the expense of their host communities sometimes affects the refugee integration processes (Hovil, 2014). For instance, to manage refugee-host community relations is a continuous process, with host communities getting thirty percent of all services intended for refugee communities (World Bank 2016). These, together with the influx of refugees from South Sudan in the recent years, have ushered a renewed debate on the country's refugee policy with extended discussions on the applicability of the Ugandan model in Africa and beyond (Hovil et al., 2018).

Drawing on its provisions to facilitate the resettlement of refugees in Uganda and notwithstanding the emerging issues in implementation of this refugee policy, it is worth noting that this policy unlike others across the board, does allow integration of refugee lives into Ugandan communities. Related literature has revealed that host communities interact and continue to influence the lives and livelihood of refugee communities within Uganda. Important to note is that both host and refugee communities have continued to reinforce the existence of one another by way of providing a platform for small businesses and cheap labour (Omata & Kaplan, 2013; World Bank Group, 2016).

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Given the diversity of this policy, for instance the full integration of the refugees into Ugandan societies and the sustainable livelihood agenda for refugees, I am drawn to argue that very restrictive refugee policies, such as restrictions on movements and confinement to refugee camps and holding centres, may not further the agenda of unheard voices for minority groups, like refugee children. Taking the example of the United States and Europe, where unaccompanied children are placed in restrictive spaces, Menjívar and Perreira (2019) highlight that children have to deal with thoughts and emotions from before, during and after migration experiences which may at times be difficult in a restrictive environment. Similarly, Scheibelhofer (2017) highlights how the Austrian policy targeted young male immigrants particularly, constructing them to be criminals who were a threat to the stability of the country.

> *"To regain political control over the movement of refugees after a brief period of openness, a shift in perspective was pursued that reframed asylum and humanitarian aid to a security topic. This shift of perspective allowed to depict people with individual histories and hopes for a life in safety as a dangerous mass moving towards a seemingly defenceless country. According to this perspective, it was the intersection of being young, male, and Muslim which made the refugees a security threat and called for measures of protection"* (2017, p. 101).

In the recent past, there were renewed migratory debates, including in the United States where African and Latin American states were categorised as *"shithole"* countries by Donald Trump, the former president of the United States in a bid to streamline immigrant policy. This was further extended to blocking off Mexican borders by building a perimeter wall along the borders with Mexico. Although these were treated as mere threats, it does portray how hostile some countries are towards immigrants, enacting laws, and policies which limit their movement within their borders.

Some countries have taken initiatives to tighten their response to immigrants through stringent enforcement and detention (Menjívar & Perreira, 2019) especially in countries where migration flows are associated with crime and negative consequences on their resources. Part of the process, for instance, through which undocumented and unaccompanied children are handled in the United States immigration system, is through arrests by the state authorities. Byrne and Miller (2012), argue that in situations like these, children enter a disjointed, and complicated system, which subjects them to numerous interrogations from federal departments and

government contractors, while others are categorised as juvenile delinquents who are eventually sent to criminal courts for trial and committed to holding facilities.

Whereas it is important that states have an upper hand on their immigration policy, it is also important that they rethink the ways in which they treat migrants, including children.

Refugee children's out of home experiences

The concept of childhood is socially and culturally constructed based on the importance and attachment placed on children across different societies in Africa (Ansell, 2005). In most East African communities, child-rearing systems did and still support the family as the best social structure to support childhood, because of its nurturing and protective role (Tefferi, 2007). International human rights instruments, such as the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC) and the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), equally position the family as the centre of childhood and the state as having a responsibility in ensuring that family systems thrive. However, forced migration practices have reshaped childhood experiences and the dominant notions of childhood.

Within forced migratory discourses, refugee situations have sometimes been constructed as "crises" (cf: Jeannet et al., 2021; Tirosh et al., 2021).This conceptualisation tends to problematise the refugee situation as a humanitarian catastrophe in dire need of immediate action (Tirosh et al., 2021).

This position is often reinforced by a common phenomenon to reduce refugees to a statistical variable (see: Menjívar & Perreira, 2019) which in turn fuels the label *"crisis"* in need of an immediate remedy. Although this categorisation is important in understanding the numbers of humanitarian response services, (Boyden & Hart, 2007) it does not provide any account - as I try to do in my study- of how (unaccompanied) children experience being and becoming refugees. For instance, Goodnow (2014); and Hopkins and Hill (2008) argue that the focus on children's experiences of being refugees in a new country is still largely missing within the academic discourse. This, they argue, entails exploring how refugee children experience learning in their new communities, and whether they feel discriminated against or included. It is true that intensity of conflict in countries of origin (Menjívar & Perreira, 2019; Stinchcomb & Hershberg, 2014) constitute a major push factor. However, it is also important to note that on commencement of their journeys from their home country, refugee children are exposed to several threats and experience different conditions. These, as well as the circumstances that

pushed them away from their home countries, shape their out of home expectations as they journey to their host countries.

Once children embark on their cross-border migratory journeys to different host nations, they, like adults, nurture different out-of-home expectations that can offer them a better life elsewhere. Mostly, these out of home expectations are projected to be better than the situations that force them out of their countries of origin. However, this may not always be the case, especially once they begin to interact with the different environments and structures that they meet along their journey as refugee children. Goodnow (2014) for instance, argues that the different contexts refugees encounter, such as bureaucratic process, shape their course of action for the future.

 As previously highlighted, the continued problematisation of the refugee situation within the forced migration discourse continues to prioritise issues such as protection over the participation of refugees. Where children are involved, they are viewed as deserving total protection and provision from their new adult gatekeepers who limit their interaction with outsiders. There is no doubt that the experience of becoming a refugee or an asylum-seeking child in another country exposes children to challenging experiences which they would never undergo in their other, or earlier childhood. In fact, some scholars like Goodnow (2014) and Menjívar and Perreira (2019) have argued that some of these experiences are hazardous and influenced by circumstances such as the time spent in the refugee camp, or arriving in a host country without being accompanied by a parent or other family members – all of which could affect the wellbeing of the child.

However, at the same time, children's levels of resilience when faced with adversity cannot be overlooked. I agree with the argument of Boyden and Mann (2005) in their work with children in extreme situations where they opined that children can quickly move on past their adversities and cope with the unfamiliar environment. The need to hear and listen to the voices of the children believed to be living in difficult circumstances must not be overshadowed by the adult desire to over-protect and limit their participation in matters that affect them.

There are reports of several inadequacies and misrepresentation of refugee children and of other children listed as being in difficult circumstances. For instance, McKendrick noted that "children's voices are not heard in studies about various forms of migration and mobility (2001, p. 266)." Twum-Danso (2016) on the other hand, argues that narratives on experiences of marginalised children and children in difficult circumstances have contributed to the creation

of a false representation of diverse Southern childhoods pitted against Northern childhoods, with the latter considered to be more desirable. Although Twum-Danso makes a valid argument, it must be noted that mis- or under-representation of such childhoods can be factored on grounds of limiting child agency for even those categories of children. Categorically, the outcomes from this research show that refugee children do not necessarily have only negative childhood experiences. What is more critical in changing this narrative is for child researchers to cultivate empowering research environments which allow children to engage directly with them as producers of knowledge.

Problem Statement

The lived experiences of unaccompanied refugee children are taken for granted, partly because of the ways childhood is constructed in Uganda and continues to be seen from the lens of the adult, with extremely limited voices given to children. This is further complicated when those children come from underprivileged childhoods. This study seeks to explore how these children negotiate their everyday lives in Uganda, by presenting a platform for children to share their views and directly engage with issues that shape their refugee experiences in Ugandan refugee settlements.

Research questions

1. What are the experiences of unaccompanied and alone refugee children living in the refugee settlements of Uganda?
2. How do unaccompanied refugee and alone children imagine their future lives in Uganda when they first arrive and how do they currently imagine it?
3. Do gender and age influence the roles assumed by the different alone and unaccompanied refugee children in the settlement? If so, how?

Chapter layout

Chapter One provides an overview of the dissertation. It specifically situates the study within the "New" Sociology of Childhood. In so doing, the chapter highlights and engages with the significance of refugee children as active agents. This chapter also provides a background to the study and discusses my motivation to undertake this research. This chapter further situates the Ugandan refugee policy framework, as well as discusses the strategic geopolitical situation of Uganda in the Great Lakes region of Eastern Africa which makes it the largest refugee-hosting nation in the region.

Chapter Two includes contemporary childhood debates in Africa that argue for the construction of children as competent and active beings within childhood. This chapter further engages in theoretical debates from the "New" Sociology of Childhood, Post-Structural feminists, and the Child Rights-based perspectives. The chapter goes on to discuss forced migratory childhoods, using both theoretical and methodological literature that help to lay an in-depth understanding of the unaccompanied and alone child refugee trajectory within the forced migratory discourse. The chapter also offers an overview of the concept of childhood and how it was constructed and perceived in the pre-colonial Uganda. It further positions childhood within post-colonial (contemporary) Uganda, and particularly how it has changed and continues to change within the different spaces which see interaction with children and childhood. Additionally, the Post-Structural feminist debates within the chapter are aligned to gender identity discourses, while the Child Rights-based perspective brings to light issues of participation and protection rights of all children, as grounded by the CRC.

Chapter Three describes the ethnographic processes I undertook while conducting research with alone and unaccompanied refugee children. In this chapter, I discuss and reflect on the different child-centred methodological approaches and techniques that I engaged in with children during my fieldwork in a Ugandan refugee settlement. The ensuing discussions in this chapter show how the participatory nature of the child-centred approaches used stretched beyond merely providing data but also aided key processes, including building relationships and interactions. The strength and shortcomings of methods are discussed, as well as the justification of a multi-method participatory approach. It further explores the different methodological and ethical dilemmas, manoeuvres, and processes, as well as how I negotiated these processes. The chapter concludes with insights of how datasets were managed, including storage, transcription, coding, and analytical processes. The chapter presents a degree of overlap with the next chapter, as it does provide insights into my negotiated research role in some of the discussions.

In Chapter Four, I reflect on the positionality I assumed as an adult male researcher in children's spaces. I particularly discuss the different encounters with children and how they construct my identity in their spaces, as well a show this identity continuously shifted across time and space. It also reflects on my other identities, as constructed by those (adults) who shared these different spaces with the children. In reflecting on these different constructed identities, I also show how they were able to further the entire research process through created relationships, trust, and uncertainties. For instance, I challenged the construction of myself as

a figure of authority by building friendships with children, playing with them, and allowing myself to learn from them through combined ridicule and humour. Furthermore, the chapter highlights the important contribution of my living in the settlement, the conversations it generated as well as how it facilitated learning, knowledge-creation and sharing with the children.

Chapter Five is the first chapter where I engage in depth with empirical data from the children's experiences. This chapter focuses on reflections of their immediate experiences when they first arrived in Ugandan reception centres and when they were eventually moved into the refugee settlement. The themes discussed in this chapter emerged from children's reflections of the pre-migratory and earlier migratory experiences. Furthermore, the chapter shows the new identities assumed by the children, such as being refugees, unaccompanied and alone, how they positioned themselves within these new identities. It further explores the ways in which the children negotiated their new spaces within the settlements and appreciates the diverse ways they manoeuvred and adjusted to their earlier lives in Uganda as refugee children.

Chapter Six explores the present lived experiences of alone and unaccompanied children in Ugandan refugee spaces. Children's narratives of the present experiences in this chapter reflect that they may still have the opportunity to experience a childhood and a life beyond just being refugees. Furthermore, the chapter accounts for how children's lives continued to change based on their experiences, as captured in the space of over eight months of fieldwork. For instance, the chapter documents how children developed relationships with different people and institutions, as well as how these relationships influenced or enriched the children's everyday experiences.

In Chapter Seven, I discuss the children's perspectives on gender and age complexities within their new social spaces. The chapter uses the theme of play to explore how gender identities are constructed and perceived along the masculine and feminine divides between boys and girls. Furthermore, the chapter explores friendships and the extent to which they are established and endure based on gender and age. This chapter concludes by exploring the distinct roles boys and girls assume within the different spaces – such as home – that they interact with, and how these impact on other aspects of their lives – like play – and their interactions with each other.

Chapter Eight, the last chapter, concludes with a summary of key research findings, implications, and considerations. In the summary of the research findings, the chapter draws the line between the alone and unaccompanied refugee childhood. It goes on to reconstruct the notion of vulnerability within refugee childhood, particularly constructing refugee children as being more resilient than they are generally perceived through the vulnerability lens. Furthermore, this chapter analyses relationships such as friendships, and discusses how they mitigate refugee childhood experiences. The implication and considerations part of this chapter discusses how adopting participatory and child-centred approaches to researching children can emphasise listening to children's voices in Uganda. Further, this part sets out how such approaches can fast-track the involvement of children in setting their own agendas for discussion with adults.

Chapter conclusion

This chapter has focused on the introduction to this study. I illustrated how this study was largely informed by theoretical perspectives from the "New" Sociology of Childhood. In so doing, I positioned unaccompanied refugee children as active agents, capable of making informed choices in their everyday lives. I further discussed my motivation to engage in this study. I specifically discussed how my engagement with childhood studies during the course of my master's programme inspired reflections of internal displacement in my own childhood.

Additionally, I was challenged by the need to adopt child-centred forms of research, engaging with refugee children who live alone in Uganda. I was particularly concerned by how children's voices are limited by conversational adult-centric approaches to research. I have argued and justified why childhood research in Uganda must be fast-tracked to include participatory approaches to research in respect of all categories of children. I also discussed the Ugandan refugee policy with specific interest regarding the refugee settlement model. As Uganda is known as the oasis of hosting refugees in the Great Lakes region of Eastern Africa, I argued that this policy allowed refugee childhoods to thrive within Uganda as refugees were known to enjoy similar privileges to those of Ugandan nationals. I also argued that the Ugandan refugee settlement model provided fertile grounds for exploring the lived forced migratory experiences of children.

This chapter also used migratory literature to analyse the out-of-home experiences of unaccompanied refugee children. I specifically drew attention to different countries' policies that were both supportive and non-supportive to refugees. In so doing, I highlighted the fact

that refugee-related issues are generally constructed and categorised as a form of crisis. This construction, as I highlighted, limits the discussion around the refugee experience to the humanitarian needs of refugees, with limited emphasis on other issues, such as exploring lived experiences by listening to the voices of migrant children.

Finally, this chapter places the research issue into context and supports it with major research questions. In illustrating the research question, I argued that unaccompanied and alone refugee children need to be encouraged to articulate their own experiences, interests, and concerns in a safe and supportive context, which I tried to create with small groups of refugee children. In this sense my research set out to provide a platform through which these children's voices could be heard through the application of inclusive and participatory research processes. I conclude this chapter by providing an overview of each of the eight chapters which make up this thesis.

Chapter 2 : Theorising unaccompanied and alone refugee childhoods

Introduction

In this chapter, I engage with different conceptualisations of childhood using different theoretical perspectives. First, I begin with the social constructionist perspective in which I explore the historic and contemporary notions of childhood. I also discuss the notion of childhood in Uganda. I categorically draw on the pre-colonial experience in Uganda and discuss how childhood was constructed and perceived in this period. I further discuss how childhood has continued to change across different spaces and in time in post-colonial Uganda. It is within post-colonial Uganda that I situate forced migratory refugee childhoods which are of interest to me.

Further in this chapter, I engage with contemporary perspectives of understanding children as influenced by the "New" Sociology of Childhood. Specifically, I place emphasis on the concept of child agency, as a predominant and guiding perspective in exploring the daily lived realities experienced in the childhoods of alone and unaccompanied refugee children. I also introduce arguments from the post-Structural feminist approach, specifically discussing how gender identities are constructed within different spaces and their impacts on refugee childhood. I conclude this chapter by engaging discussions around the Child Rights-based perspective, which, like the "New" Sociology of Childhood, is also a relatively new perspective to understanding children and childhoods. Through this perspective which I highlight as stemming from the Convention on the Rights of the Child, I discuss children's participatory rights – for instance, with specific emphasis on research processes involving refugee children who are generally constructed and perceived as a vulnerable group. This chapter therefore combines an interdisciplinary approach to understanding the concept of childhood across various times and places with much focus on forced migratory childhoods within Uganda.

The socially constructed child

The socially constructed approach to childhood stems from the notion that childhood per se is a socio-cultural construct that varies both historically and culturally (James et al., 1998). This perspective questions the notion of a universal childhood and instead sees it as an outcome of radical relativism, manufactured through constructive practices and the different social realities in which children grow up *(ibid)*.

The historical perspectives of childhood allude to the fact that childhood has always been a social construct, which is viewed, understood, and experienced differently in different contexts. It is certain that historically, the place of the child was predefined and objectified specifically within certain social concepts such as the family, culture, age, and gender. Such social concepts as constructed and defined by different societies determined what kind of childhoods children experienced. Such limited agency positioned childhood as a process aimed at fulfilling the end of becoming an adult, thereby justifying the socialisation role played by known agents who actualised this end (Qvortrup et al., 2009).

Having challenged the concept of the existence of a universal childhood, James et al. (1998), further advocate for research that questions hegemonic perspectives, for instance developmental psychology, which has been taken for granted and seen as ''normal'' for a long time. This, they argue, is achievable by drawing on insights as seen from the children's lens. The belief that childhood is socially constructed, advocates for the need to understand the diversities of childhood, which are embedded within varying social and cultural settings (Kjørholt, 2004).

 Honwana and De Boeck (2005), and Jenks (1982) also opine that the idea of childhood is not a natural one, but a social construct that is constituted in specific socially found forms of discourse. An understanding of the social construction of childhood requires the conceptualisation of cultural settings and forms of conduct within a social structure. Cross-culturally, children live in a world of meaning created through interaction with agents of time, social roles, age, and social expectations, all of which are constructed differently and, in one way or another, shape their childhood (Honwana & De Boeck, 2005; Hutchby & Moran, 1998).

The pre- and post-colonial perspectives of childhood in Uganda

Although childhood exists in all societies, there are variations to the way it is socially constructed across time and place (Prout & James, 1990b; Stearns, 2010). The subject of childhood has been of concern to several scholars, including social historians, anthropologists, sociologists, and social psychologists. Each of these disciplines has attempted to study and understand childhood from their own standpoints. Scholars within these disciplines, Stearns (2010), Jenks (1996), and Ariès (1962) have offered historic insights into the perspective of childhood in different times and places. Based on their work, it is worth arguing that the study of historic perspectives of childhood provide insights of previous childhoods which are crucial in setting up an understanding of childhood in contemporary times.

In exploring childhood as constructed within Ugandan societies, my point of departure is to acknowledge that in both pre- and post-colonial Uganda, childhood existed, and children, as I will subsequently discuss, were contributors to the existence of their society. However, my portrayal of a Ugandan childhood is not an attempt to universalise the concept of childhood in a rather multicultural and diverse society, but to situate childhood with certain shared doctrines within Ugandan spaces.

Legally, in Uganda, a child is defined based on biological age in Uganda. Supporting statutory instruments like the Constitution of Uganda, the 1997 Children's Act, as well as charters and legal framework instruments signed and ratified by Uganda, define a child as any person under eighteen years of age. In essence, these documents provide a definition of when childhood commences and when it ends. However, there is a tendency to substitute biological age with social age instead. In so doing, childhood thus stretches beyond this nominal age to include even the years that a *"child"* remains dependent on the family as the primary support system.

In pre-colonial Uganda, like elsewhere in Africa, childhood was understood to be a passage to adulthood. The child per se, besides their value as an asset or a resource (Ansell, 2005; Van Blerk, 2006), was expected to earn passage into adulthood by getting married, or by way of initiation rites.

In this era, social age dominated the definition of when childhood transcended into adulthood. This is to mean that age was constructed socially, based on how one expressed themselves in terms of maturity, interpersonal skills, and the ability to fulfil certain expectations associated with specific social roles, for instance marriage. It is worth noting that, based on the present day understanding of childhood as justified by legal age, children negotiated their lives as both children and young adults. Such historic narratives have tended to change over time, with a more dynamic understanding of childhood tagged to nominal age. James and Prout (1997, p. 231), have explored the concept of age within childhood and argue that "*it is during childhood that age has a particular significance.*" In exploring this debate in respect of age further, Qvortrup (2009), argues for the need to understand the interrelations of childhood to other phenomena such as age, adulthood, generation, and gender. By so doing, he suggests that the construct of childhood is very much integrated in society (Qvortrup, 1991), and although it is not universal, it is rooted in the past and continues to be reshaped in the present (Prout & James, 1990c). The patterns through which childhood has, for instance, found a place for the combination of nominal and social age is in interaction with societal appreciation of systems like education, which arguably account for several years of interaction with childhood.

Also, Heywood (2001) in Ansell (2005, p. 10), argues that *"particular conceptualisations of childhood need to be understood in relation to the social conditions that give rise to them."* This resonates with the structural phenomenon concept, which argues that childhood is both *"structured and structuring, comparable and equivalent to the proto-sociological class and the notion of gender in the social sciences"* (Alanen, 2001, p. 13). The notion of childhood in post-colonial Uganda is defined by the different social structures with which children and childhood interact. Their interplay constructs and reconstructs the understanding of childhood. In different ways, children can be seen as being a part of the construction mechanism of their childhoods within Ugandan societies (Qvortrup, 1991). Drawing further on this argument, Qvortrup (ibid) suggests that children are a valuable component of society, however, their value has and continues to undergo changes in society, and these are attributed to the ways adults and children construct both their co-existence and their social realities as active agents.

In exploring the debate in respect of the socially constructed child further, childhood has for long been positioned from the perspective of the family. From pre-colonial times to the present, the family has continued to define the place of the child within Ugandan society, as this setting is perceived as the best place for a childhood to thrive. Bell (2006) in Van Blerk (2006), for instance reveals that young Ugandans, are conditioned to remain under the care and dependency of their parents until they get married. This notion – which dates as far back as pre-colonial times – asserts and places the family at the centre of childhood. The continuity of the African family support structures still places supporting emphasis on the role of the adult in childhood, with parents taking the central role and other family members assuming a range of supportive roles. The socialisation role, to this day, is a responsibility primarily taken on by the family. Alanen (1988, p. 54), further elaborates this in the argument that *"the triangularity of childhood, the family and socialization prove to be as moulded into one piece that cannot be broken into parts for separate consideration.*"

The romanticisation of the ideal childhood, as constructed from a family perspective, does problematise experiences of childhood outside the family system. Children living on the Ugandan streets, for instance, are perceived as living undesirable childhoods: they are seen as perpetuators of crime and not as victims of crime (cf: Kamya & Walakira, 2017; Van Blerk, 2006). For refugee children in forced migratory situations, the absence of a parent or immediate family member in the migratory childhood, is constructed as a void in their childhood. In migratory and policy debates, some of these separations have been considered from a perspective which constructs children who grow up outside the family, as vulnerable.

In critiquing this perspective, it is important to note that children are vulnerable to forms of abuse and violation of their rights in families (Seruwagi, 2017). Often family spaces are small and private, which arguably makes it challenging to monitor the vulnerable positions children may experience. In such circumstances, children's voices are suppressed, and childhood moments arguably vary. For some children living on the streets, unsafe family spaces have been reason enough to shift to street spaces, where they can be certain of a certain level of independence. Menjívar and Perreira (2019), and Clacherty (2006), work with unaccompanied children, who, in their host countries, have revealed how unsafe family spaces and conditions have spurred on some children's forced migratory journeys and childhoods.

Furthermore, Boakye-Boaten (2010), opines that in pre-colonial Africa, children were constructed as biologically vulnerable beings in dire need of protection and nurturing from the family. Onwauchi (1972), is emphatic on the nurturing aspect, arguing that the continued existence of African societies depended on childhood education of culture and values. This, again, largely emphasises the role of socialisation within the concept of childhood and the reproduction of culture and values for subsequent generations. As I have emphasised previously, some cultural practices do transcend into contemporary (post-colonial) childhood practices and are emphasised through family and kinship structures.

I want to draw attention to childhood rites of admission into manhood or womanhood, for example, with reflections into some Ugandan societies. Ochen et al. (2017), reveal that, although outlawed, the practice of female genital mutilation within the Sebei and Pokot communities continues to evolve by way of its practice. The underlying factor they highlight is the patriarchal systems of dominance that vest economic, social, and political power to males as family heads particularly. Not only do such cultural practices assert childhood as a passage of time into adulthood (James & Prout, 1997), but they also question the notion of ideal childhoods as being existent only within the family structure.

Additionally, ideal childhood is further intertwined in the discourse of safety, happiness, and protection. Boyden (1990), argues that these are embedded within cultural and historic concepts that have since then transitioned into contemporary notions of childhood. In northern Uganda, a war, spanning more than two decades and characterised by child abductions, defined the notion of childhood along the divides of safety and protection. This insurgency was characterised by a period of massive NGO humanitarian activity. In the bid to further their agenda and existence, several humanitarian, and child-founded organisations in Uganda, have largely focused on the needs-driven approaches to children and childhood issues. Such

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narratives for refugee children – in forced migration, for instance – make their voices secondary, as they are often spoken for, or on behalf of, by NGOs. Relatedly, as the AIDS pandemic ravaged Uganda in the late eighties, all through to the nineties, many children were orphaned. This heightened the need for social support networks (Kendrick & Kakuru, 2012) for example, for orphaned children. Much later, the need to rewrite the narrative in respect of orphans and vulnerable childhood is silenced, specifically because the vulnerability agenda largely funds the existence and perpetuation of humanitarian and relief agencies. In so doing, children viewed through this lens have remained passive recipients of organised adult care and support programmes which overlook their agency (Skovdal et al., 2009).

Situating the unaccompanied refugee child in migratory discourses

The concept of the *"unaccompanied"* refugee child is one that generates diverse scholarly debates on children's rights, migration and even policy. The concept "unaccompanied*"* is considered problematic by the different disciplines that attempt to study and understand children in forced migratory situations. Some have preferred to use concepts like *"separated"* or even *"alone"* while referring to such groups of children (Hopkins & Hill, 2008). Additionally, within this debate is the notion of the *"child"* versus the *"minor",* which principally centres on the legal definitions of these two categories and their social applications within different contexts.

The unaccompanied refugee child is constructed as a person below the age of eighteen years, who has been separated from both parents and is not being cared for by an adult, who, by law or custom, has a responsibility to do so (UNHCR, 1997). Related literature on unaccompanied child migration equally highlights the concepts of age (eighteen years) and that of separation from parents in explaining the unaccompanied refugee child concept (cf: Hopkins & Hill, 2008; Humphris & Sigona, 2019; Musliu et al., 2019). I do find this statutory construction apt as it does include the concept "separated*"* in its illustration. Principally, this conceptualisation of the "unaccompanied" child places the child as being "*alone"* in this context.

To situate the refugee children within this research as *"unaccompanied"* is to emphasise that such childhoods are characterised by separation and aloneness. In further situating the unaccompanied refugee child, it is important to note that point at which the child becomes alone. Menjívar and Perreira (2019), identify those children who, in forced migration, become alone at different stages of the migratory experiences. For instance, they point out that some

children begin their migratory journeys alone without an accompanying adult while others lose a parent or caring adult along the way to the host country.

As children negotiate the forced migratory experiences, Keles et al. (2018); Hopkins and Hill (2008), suggest that unaccompanied migratory journeys that often see children seek asylum in host countries are propelled by several different reasons. The children, for instance, who participated in this research process, left their countries because of war. Literature relating to unaccompanied migration in Europe shows that most unaccompanied child migrants are from the Global South (cf: Allsopp & Chase, 2019; Chase et al., 2019; Humphris & Sigona, 2019). Unlike children who are forced out of their home countries by insurgencies, it is worth noting that most unaccompanied children who end up in the United States of America, for instance, are those who are seeking a better economic life, or are running away from difficult situations, such as violence within their families (Menjívar & Perreira, 2019).

Although the construction of children as unaccompanied refugees does grant them entry into new countries, or even permission to stay in host countries for an undefined period (Goodnow, 2014), host countries' attitudes towards unaccompanied children vary. Literature on forced migration tends to suggest that children often meet unfriendly policies, especially in Europe and the United States. Menjívar and Perreira (2019); Humphris and Sigona (2019), have showed how unaccompanied minors in the United States and United Kingdom, respectively are held in detention centres and some are deported to their countries of 6origin. Allsopp and Chase (2019), reflect on how unfriendly policies in the United Kingdom revoke the asylum status of minors once they reach eighteen years of age. Equally, Staunton et al. (2007), document experiences of migrant children in South Africa, highlighting how these children were reprimanded when apprehended by South African immigration officials, as well as their unending resilience in using all and every means to enter and remain in South Africa. Arguably, most host countries' policies treat unaccompanied children in migration in an unwelcoming manner, and crush children's expectations and dreams of their potential host countries (Omata & Kaplan, 2013).

Allsopp and Chase (2019), further argue that harsh immigration policies aimed at stopping the arrival of unaccompanied minors has partly been orchestrated by the public opinion of such children. For instance, they opine that those children who find their way past border authorities are labelled as *"undocumented," "illegal"* or *"irregular."* Within the media, policy circles and even scholarly work, the flows of unaccompanied children, especially to high-income countries, have been popularised as a surge or a crisis (Allsopp & Chase, 2019; Lems et al.,

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2020). Contrary to these perceptions, some migration literature has highlighted how some refugees have thrived in their host countries. For instance, Omata and Kaplan (2013), demonstrate how a relatively favourable refugee policy in host countries like Uganda has made refugees generally feel welcomed.

Beyond the policy issues, and within dominant discourses, the general perception around the unaccompanied child is that of vulnerability. This is heightened by the *"crisis"* debate that I have already highlighted. In sub-Saharan Africa, where the refugee discourse is informed by unending armed conflict on the continent, child vulnerability overrides child agency, for instance. Children's journeys to host countries have largely been discussed from the perspective of precariousness (cf: Musliu et al., 2019; Sierau et al., 2019). This imposition of the victimhood of the unaccompanied child ignores strengths that children exhibit in their journeys. For instance, their ability to undertake these journeys and the resilience they exhibit throughout their journeys. This is further explained in these two statements.

> *" much of the policy and advocacy debate that played a defining role in the formation of the unaccompanied minor as a distinct humanitarian category centres on the sense of trauma and vulnerability surrounding this child figure"* (Lems et al., 2020, p. 324).

> *"In these debates the unaccompanied minors are depicted as traumatised, vulnerable children that are awkwardly positioned outside the realms of what is thought to be a 'normal' or 'ideal' childhood"* (Wernesjö, 2012, p. 504).

This notion of vulnerability, I argue, risks a generalisation of such children's forced migratory experiences. Whereas it is possible that some children could experience traumatic situations from their experiences, there is also a possibility of them overcoming and recovering from such adversity (Boyden & Mann, 2005; Wernesjö, 2012). This is likened to the work of Chase et al. (2019), where it is argued that vulnerability and agency should not be perceived as mutually exclusive. As child needs-based agendas are often prioritised, vulnerability is constructed as a means to an end that guarantees support for children. Unaccompanied children assume vulnerable positions so that they are seen as eligible for support. Butler, has argued that such vulnerability is politically induced (2009 in Chase et al., 2019).

Positioning the unaccompanied refugee child within the "New" Sociology of Childhood

The major theoretical approach that I undertake in this research is that of the "New" Sociology of Childhood, a paradigm within the social studies of children and childhood that positions children as active agents (Prout & James, 1990b). Also known as the "Social Studies of Childhood", it draws its stance from the concerns in theory and research in the social sciences and cultural studies to engage with children as active agents (Corsaro, 2014; James et al., 1998; Prout & James, 1990b). The Social Studies of Childhood paradigm is critical of dominant perspectives of childhood for instance, pre-sociological and psychological theories' conventional view of constructing children as *"human becoming"*, as opposed to human being (Woodhead & Montgomery, 2003). This "human becoming" child was seen as one in the process of becoming a competent adult, through socialisation processes (Corsaro, 2014; Jenks, 2005). The Piagetian child development and the Parsonian socialisation theories constructed the adult as competent, mature, and rational. By so doing, they constructed childhood as a period of human becoming, immaturity, and growing up – all of which signified it as a passage to adulthood (James et al., 1998; Jenks, 2005; Prout & James, 1990b). The child, on the other hand, was positioned as traversing to adulthood and, therefore, was an incompetent and unfinished product (Jenks, 1996).

The "New" Sociology of Childhood thus situates childhood as a social construction. In so doing, ''it provides an interpretive frame for contextualising the early years of human life'' (Prout & James, 1990b, p. 8). The proponents of the "New" Sociology of Childhood are critical of theories of childhood which generalise childhood experiences and do not do justice to different social and material contexts which structure experiences of childhood. In so doing, this paradigm advances the reconstruction of childhood within different societies by taking the viewpoint of children very seriously, in matters which concern them (James et al., 1998). The immediate stance in this research has been to position participants as children who are active and are more informed than adults about their own social realities. Through this, my research considered the need to use approaches that enhance competent participation of children. It therefore offers the unaccompanied and alone child a platform through which they can be listened to and heard, as children in an adult-centric society. The possibility of understanding their everyday lived childhood experiences is founded on a blend of theoretical and methodological arguments, which I adapted into my research first by formulating a child-centered methodology which includes participatory and child-centered methods.

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A further important aspect to my research is the need to position new knowledge that is derived from children's voices at the forefront. In appreciating how children construct their own social realities, I pay specific attention to certain categories and constructs, such as "refugee", which has predominantly been constructed around the edge of vulnerability. In reconstructing such concepts within the folds of the Social Studies of Childhood, I am conscious of the attention the refugee child's viewpoint draws. This is because refugee children are generally constructed as passive victims, whose viewpoint is seen and represented by the adult perspective. What I find important within this framework, is to create an impartial representation of how children perceive themselves, the identities they have created, and how they have positioned themselves in their everyday interactions within their forced migratory world. My appreciation of the childhood experiences of refugee children positioned children as *beings* as opposed to *becomings* (Jenks, 2005).

The Social actor perspective: contextualising agency within alone refugee childhoods

The social actor perspective derives its strength from the "New" Sociology of Childhood. The central theme of this perspective is the need for children to be provided with the opportunity for their voice to be heard in research processes, as key informants, as well as theorising them as active subjects in research (Nilsen, 2005). Refugee children's voices being heard is a key goal that this research sets out to achieve. Furthermore, the social actor perspective emphasises childhood as a social reality, by focusing on the social activities of the everyday life of children at the macro level, particularly children's agency (Punch, 2003). Agency is arguably one of the key concepts rooted in the understanding of the child as a social actor (James, 2009). One of the systematic areas where the engagement of the concept of agency predominates is in that of research activities with children (Esser et al., 2016). "Children's agency is the fulfilment of participation and voice through actions that change of influence aspects of their lives" (Kellett, 2014, p. 28).

In research spaces with children, the "new" paradigm in childhood studies advances the need to situate children as active agents in the construction and determination of not only their lives, but also the lives of those around them and the societies in which they live (James et al., 1998; Jenks, 2005; O'Kane, 2000; Prout & James, 1990b). Children, as well as adults, reinforce the existence of each other through the co-construction of their everyday social reality. Children are thus not just passive subjects, but are active beings who have feelings, emotions and

opinions, as well as the desire to express them (Alderson & Tamaki, 2016). The paradigmatic shift to childhood agency (James et al., 1998) from dominant perspectives signifies a move to begin constructing and perceiving children and young people as independent social actors (Esser et al., 2016) on all fronts. In this research, the viewpoint of the children being social actors stems from the argument that children continue to experience childhood even in forced migratory situations. Even in such moments, children can create meaning in their lives and should not be relegated to passive subjects of social processes that emerge from their refugee situations.

Also central to the concept of agency is the need to elevate the position of children within the societies in which they live. Esser et al. (2016, p. 3), argue that children have, for long, remained a *"minority group."* This marginalised position of children in adult-dominated societies often relegates children to "be seen rather than heard". Within these marginalised positions in which children find themselves, it is crucial to understand that such exclusion undermines their skills and social competence in respect of participation *(*ibid*)*.

Since agency was a central concept to my entire research process, it was important to formulate and place new knowledge, as derived from refugee children's own voices, at the forefront. It therefore offered the unaccompanied and alone child a platform through which they could be listened to and heard, regardless of their place as refugee children in an adult-centric society. In developing and implementing the research processes, I was inspired by the thought of children as co-researchers (Spriggs & Gillam, 2019). Of great importance to me in the co-research actualisation, was the view of refugee children as social actors and knowledgeable subjects, who contribute to knowledge-creation throughout the research processes. I aimed for inclusiveness of these children in a research process, in a society where they are perceived as second-class citizens. Drawing on the example of Christensen and James (2008), this research sought to sustain children's agency, by repositioning the overbearing dominant research perspectives to accommodate children as shareholders in research processes, who need to be researched *with* as opposed to researched *on* or *for*.

The research agendas that focus on the invaluable contribution of children towards understanding their own experiences, must place emphasis on developing approaches that encourage participation. Boyden and Ennew (1997), equally argue for the fine-tuning of research methods in ways that enhance child participation. I envisaged the possibility of understanding refugee childhoods as being founded on a blend of theoretical and methodological arguments, which I adapted into my research first by formulating a child-

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centered methodology that involved not only participatory methods, but also child-centered methods. Using such an approach positioned the refugee children within this research at the top of the hierarchy of knowledge production in respect of their forced migratory experiences (Mason & Watson, 2013). In shifting the focus to child-friendly methods, for instance, my aim was not to appear patronising to the children, but rather to make a methodological statement, namely, that research processes can combine elements of knowledge creation with fun. These different methods stimulated interaction and discussions with the children, but also involved the children more directly in research, rescuing them from possible silence and exclusion, and from being presented as passive objects (Alderson, 2001, p. 142).

Furthermore, the focus of agency is much reflected in the concept of the voice of children within and beyond research agendas. Kellett (2014, p. 27), regards voice as *"the right to free expression of views that may or may not emanate from participation and relates to Article 13 of CRC."* Voice is thus one of the components that appreciates children's rights to be heard and concept of "voice" thus overlaps into the rights-based perspective of childhood as fronted by the CRC ("United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child," 1989). For children's voices to thrive, Lundy (2007, p. 33) opines that children can only express their views if opportune spaces are provided. This, she further argues, necessitates a voice which facilitates the expression of these views, an audience who should listen to these views, and, eventually, the influence which requires the views to be acted upon appropriately.

Additionally, I am specifically drawn to the work of Clacherty (2006), with unaccompanied refugee children, and how they use their voices to help them reclaim their lost identities. Forced migratory childhoods have for long been narrated and told by secondary actors, such as relief and humanitarian agencies, and academics (Green & Kloos, 2009). The need to hear forced migration accounts from the children's own voices is arguably worth exploring, especially with Uganda, as a recipient country, at the center of the analysis. The personal accounts of forced migration – be it written, spoken or visual – can help improve our understanding of narratives, such as resilience, which are often overlooked by outsider accounts which place emphasis on vulnerability (Green & Kloos, 2009). Related to the perspective of voice is the concept of listening to children, which Clark (2005a, p. 491), suggests must be an active process of communication that should involve hearing, interpreting and constructing meanings. Both Bucknall (2014) and Clark (2005a) seem to agree that children's voices, or listening, must transcend the spoken and should be appreciated as an active and not necessarily a passive process.

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Conceptualising childhood from a Post-Structural feminist perspective

In drawing on this perspective, my interest was in exploring how gendered perspectives influence children's experiences of migration and the roles played by these perspectives in families unaccompanied by adults. To this end, I draw on the contributions Post-Structural feminists have made by engaging with the social construction of gender and gender power relations in ways which seek to address and integrate agency and social roles of children themselves (Davies, 1989a).

Post-Structural feminists take issue with theories of socialisation which present boys and girls as passive dupes who simply internalise existing norms and values. They argue that gendered subjectivities are produced discursively through everyday forms of interactions, but they also focus on how children negotiate, resist, and engage with these categories in ways which connect with their interests, concerns, and pleasures.

While recognising how children in various contexts are constrained by gender norms and values, Post-Structural feminists further argue that the processes which facilitate children to understand themselves as male or female are not universal (Davies, 1989a, 1989b). Therefore, as in the "New" Sociology of Childhood, Post-Structural feminism advocates for the voices of children. In so doing, it recognises the role agency plays in children's construction and negotiation of their identities – in this case, gender, sex, and age – within the current societal structures of status and power. These social categories intersect as sources of identification and dimensions of power and provide important insights on childhood forced migratory experiences.

Childhood and gender identities; a forced migratory perspective

Gender is perceived as "*a social relation that is characterized by power inequalities that hierarchically produce, organize, and evaluate masculinities and femininities through the contested but controlling practices of individuals, organization and societies*" (Ferree, 2010, p. 424). As a socially constructed variable, gender is learned and reproduced through roles observed through socialisation processes in childhood. These perceptions of gender transcend childhood, into adulthood. Gender-structuring based on biology or sex has for a long time been used to determine gender roles within social systems. This, in essence, means that gender is embedded within different societal cultures and norms which, in principle, dictate an individual's assumed roles based on their sex identity. Ferree (2010), however, argues that differences between men and women must not be limited to societal constructs only, but should

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also be perceived as politically meaningful. In so doing, he questions the notion of gender roles, arguing that the perspective of gender is neither static nor ideal (Bhana & Pattman, 2009; Ferree, 2010).

As a concept intertwined within several social sciences, gender identity is perceived as *"a set of cognitions encompassing a person's appraisals of compatibility with, and motivation to fit in with, a gender collective."*(Perry et al., 2019, p. 289). Several scholars who have studied children and young people's identities such as Alsoraihi (2020); Pattman (2005, 2007) and Perry et al. (2019) show that assumed identities are informed by negotiated cultural discourses that emerge from race, gender or even age. In so doing, gender identities become the things we do or perform, and are partly forged through the language we use to describe ourselves and others (Foucault, 1979 in Pattman, 2005, p. 498).

I draw on gender theories for this study because of the gendered nature of childhood, refugee identity and the transitions from the different spaces in which the children find themselves. This is reflected in Chapter seven which draws particular attention to the gendering of spaces and activities in the settlement. Rather than attributing these to presumed "natural" characteristics inhering in boys and girls, men, and women, I raise questions in Chapter seven about how particular kinds of gender relations are constructed through everyday forms of interaction, and how these are mediated by power. The conceptualisation of gender as a relational construction, mediated by power, is exemplified in the very title and subheadings in Chapter seven, notably: "Negotiating gender and age identities within new social spaces;" "How the gendering of football opened up spaces for interviewing boys but not girls" and "A girl depicting girls' multiple positionings in work and play"

In analysing culture as an actor of gender identities, I draw on the example of Frosh et al. (2000), including the analysis of masculinities as being embedded within the culture that is produced from social engagements, or rather interactions between humans, and also from engagements between people and social institutions. During pre-migratory stages, children's gender identities are built and operationalised from previous engagements within their own cultural and social interactions. I am drawn to argue that these gender identities which can be considered as created, rather than given,(ibid), begin to change over time as children continue to experience their childhoods in new geographical spaces. Forced migratory literature, for instance, shows that children in situations of conflict and forced migration find themselves spending the largest part of their childhoods in refugee situations. Also, the repatriation processes of unaccompanied children are often held back by failure to trace family members

of those children, even once hostile situations in their countries of origin have long since been resolved. Within these forced migratory circumstances, it is likely that new cultures are constructed and assumed, which facilitate the emergence of gender identities.

Even within forced migratory circumstances, children are active and gendered beings and have their gendered identities constructed using the available cultural resources (cf: Pattman, 2005). In forced migratory situations, prevailing adversities tend to unite children who have from diverse backgrounds. Immediate contexts will thus influence children's gender identity (Perry et al., 2019). Children tend to find themselves amidst diverse identities from interactions with vast social structures, ranging from exposure to new languages of interaction, to age-identities. As children begin to construct and reconstruct their gender identities within forced migratory tendencies, their temporary gender identities may soon be replaced by other identities from more stable components.

A rights-based perspective and the unaccompanied refugee child

A child rights-based perspective is an approach that is closely linked to children and childhood research and is advocated for based on the provisions of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (Beazley et al., 2009; Lundy & McEvoy, 2011; Okimait, 2014). This perspective champions a paradigm shift, from conceptualising children as mere rights receivers who need specialised care or assistance, to rights holders (Kaufmann & Berman, 2002; O'Kane, 2000). Although this perspective is not expressly mentioned within the CRC provisions, it assumes its ground from the continued interpretation of several provisions in this human rights instrument. Alderson (2008), argues that the CRC is crucial in aiding research with children, especially as it does offer a principled as well as a flexible means of justifying, and extending respectful research practices. For instance, based on the right to be properly researched, Beazley et al. (2009), suggest the adoption of four specific articles (3.3,12, 13 & 36).

Although, I agree with Beazley et al., as well as other authors who have advanced the use of this perspective, I further argue that the perspective should not be condensed to four specific articles, as this will make it rather generic. Instead, the perspective should further be contextualised to the experiences of children with whom research is being conducted and relevant provisions should be adapted to their context.

My engagement with unaccompanied refugee children in this research was not intended to actualise what Beazley et al. (2009) regard as "victimhood in childhood studies", but to create an avenue where children can advance their right to form and provide opinions (CRC Article

12) and be able to express these freedoms unreservedly, through mediums of their choosing (CRC Article 13). In a research context, this kind of participation is compounded within the confines of participatory child-centred research that advance methods that do not necessarily patronise children, but instead make them co-researchers who can easily express their opinions and share experiences. This arguably deconstructs the problematisation of childhoods in Africa, whereby the developmental perspective considers children as always being *"helpless"* and *"hopeless"* (Abebe & Ofosu-Kusi, 2016).

The interdependence of the different children's rights also enhances their applicability to children's different situations. This, in children's right based perspective, has been fronted by Lundy and McEvoy (2011), with specific regard to the applicability of (CRC Article 12). This, they argue, must be applied alongside children's other rights, for instance (CRC Articles 13 & 17), the right to seek, receive and impart information. Whereas I have explored through the "New" Sociology of Childhood, the importance of agency in hearing and listening to alone refugee children's voices, I further want to argue that these voices cannot be heard in a vacuum, isolated from information flows. Knowledge-creation demands the flow of information. I have explored the importance of helping the children to conceptualise the meaning of *"lived experiences"* (discussed in depth in Chapters Three and Four). To achieve this aim, it was necessary to deconstruct the language previously used in the formulation of the research, in favour of a child-friendly adaptation of the language. It was important that the information shared with the children, through visual and spoken language, would assist and empower them to participate . Lundy and McEvoy (2011, p. 132), also emphasised this, arguing that *"the information which children receive in line with this rights-based approach may enable them to express and articulate latent views or to form new views through interaction with the information, adults and peers."*

As child rights-based research begins to gain ground in Eastern Africa (cf: Abebe & Skovdal, 2010; Cheney, 2013; Kendrick & Kakuru, 2012), active and meaningful ways of actualising child participation in research processes are slowly finding their place, for instance, within academia. The emphasis on the children's rights agenda in research processes fosters a realisation that children and young people must, like adults, enjoy a right to be consulted, and to be heard in the most appropriate ways (Darbyshire et al., 2005). I argue for the use of inclusive focused research processes to enhance participation and co-ownership of research.

As individual children experience childhood differently, even within shared spaces, both group and individual child dynamics become crucial in actualising their participation rights. I

found that appreciating children's basic cultures in their own right (Corsaro, 2014), enhanced participation within my research. To lump children into one social category, on the basis that they are all experiencing childhood, is the first violation of their right to participation. In my research, I opted to group children on the basis of peer dynamics, such as age and relationships. Navigating these group-shared dynamics worked in both my and the children's favour. The focus and agenda, for instance, set by the older children in their age group was different from the perspectives of relatively younger children. This was evident even in the appreciation of the methodological approaches each group used, and the feelings generated by their use of these approaches.

As argued by Ennew and Plateau (2004), children have a right to be properly researched. For the purposes of this study, this extended to allowing deductive processes to determine the course of most discussions. Themes emerged from ensuing discussions with children in groups and these transcended into other insightful discussions in this research process. This relates, to an extent, to the right-based notion proposed by Lundy and McEvoy (2011), namely, that adults need to build capacity in children so that the latter group are able to participate in research processes. I, however, argue that capacity-building happens on two levels as I found that my interaction with the children also built my own capacity to undertake research with them. This is closely linked to what Ennew et al. (2009, p. 3.14), argue, namely, that rights-based research with children must aim to encourage adults to think and act differently in their relationships and everyday interactions with children.

Research with children should also be viewed along with the best interests of the child perspective (CRC Article 3.1). Lundy and McEvoy (2011), suggest that researchers must continue to provide ways that ensure that children's involvement in research is both voluntary and ensures their safety. This perspective is supported by the inclusion, in the CRC, of the right to protection from all forms of exploitation, including harmful research, (CRC Article 36), and the right to the highest possible standards being used in work with children (CRC Article 3.3) (UNICEF, 2007).

The use of the rights-based research perspective is to guarantee that unaccompanied refugee children, despite their situation, are subjects of their rights (Beazley et al., 2009). As in the "New" Sociology of Childhood and the Post-Structural feminist approach, this perspective acknowledges the presence and relevance of agency. These perspectives emphasise the need to explore agency in greater depth when conducting research, even in respect of children who are perceived to be disadvantaged, as in the case of unaccompanied refugee children. As

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children first, then refugees second, unaccompanied refugee children interact with situations that have constructed them as second-class citizen (Menjívar & Perreira, 2019; Perreira & Ornelas, 2013) despite their right to be heard. Through General Comments, the CRC, tries to improve and clarify the relevance of the Convention to apply to children in all situations. For instance, General Comment to article 12 (the child's right to be heard) stems from the need to avoid simply patronising children's participation; rather, it is necessary to engage with children and listen to their concerns and ideas on an ongoing basis and, beyond this, to act ethically on the basis of their contributions (Smith, 2015). Further, Matthews (2002), similarly emphasises that the interests of both children and the youth to take part can be realised if their concerns are considered in a meaningful way, and valued, by adults.

Chapter conclusion

In this chapter, I discussed the major theoretical perspectives that forwarded this research. I discussed the perspective of childhood as a socially constructed concept. In ascertaining the place of the child within different childhoods, I engaged in both historic and contemporary notions of childhood, with emphasis on Uganda, where the study was situated. This constructionist perspective is applied to situate the concept of the unaccompanied refugee childhood, as constructed within the different spaces that engage with these children. I have further explored the point of view that ignoring the voices of children in forced migratory research have contributed towards a continuous construction of them as a vulnerable group. The argument that children are social actors and active beings is one that I discussed using the "New" Sociology of Childhood. From this perspective, I argued that there was a need to perceive and construct unaccompanied refugee children as active agents in their everyday lives. Through this perspective, this chapter reflected on children as co-constructors of knowledge through research processes.

The chapter also discussed the Post-Structural feminist perspectives on the construction of gender identities within childhood. This was discussed in relation to refugee childhoods, illustrating how the notion of gender identity transcends through diverse cultures and is continuously constructed and reconstructed through interactions within the spaces that children inhabit. The chapter concluded with the child rights-based perspective which is highlighted as a relatively "new" paradigm, based on the stance adopted by the CRC.

Through this perspective, the chapter discussion reflected on the participatory rights of refugee children. It argued that a combination of other rights, such as the rights to information and to

protection, enhanced the participatory processes of children. For children to participate in research processes, the chapter considered relevant rights-based literature. A key point that emerged, was the importance of helping children to understand the intentions of research that targets them, so that they can make informed participatory choices.

Chapter 3 : The ethnography of researching with unaccompanied and alone refugee children

Introduction

In this chapter, I present the detailed qualitative approach that I employed to the research I conducted with refugee children. I used a blend of child-centred multiple methods with the intention of allowing children to claim their participation rights in a research context. A central aim of child-centred methods is to cultivate an understanding of the child's views, opinions, experiences, and perspectives (Ennew et al., 2009). Their intensively participatory nature is a component that enhances the inclusion of all children. Consequently, it was of interest to me to use this child-centred methodological approach to support children in the exercise of their agency through the different participatory platforms that this research offered. These included focus group discussions, semi structured in-depth interviews, and conversations from artwork activities I had with the children. To supplement these methods, I enlisted techniques such as the keeping of field notes and engaging in informal dialogues. My use of child-centred methods resonates with Williams and Bendelow's thoughts of the same, arguing that these methods are viable for granting children opportunities and spaces to present first hand representation of their lives (Wiliams & Bendelow, 1998, in Corsaro, 2014).

I further give insights as to how the methods and techniques used in my research were not simply avenues of collecting data from children, but rather facilitated the building of strong relationships with the children. Additionally, I give an account of how I navigated the several types of ethos, including power relations and building rapport. In forging these social relations, we built trust that allowed both the children and I to explore and understand forced migratory stories from the perspectives of the alone refugee childhoods.

The ethnography of the extended case method

For this study, I adopted the extended case method (Barata, 2010; Burawoy, 1998). The extended case method, as an ethnographic research approach, focuses on studying detailed empirical cases, in which general principles are eventually derived from specific observations (Barata, 2010). In situating this approach within my study, I reflected on Barata's thinking that individual and group actions, as well as related events, can be observed over an extended period (2010). My use of the extended case method had to be altered initially, as face-to-face research with the children was not possible since my fieldwork commenced during the time when

lockdown[3] measures had been instituted. I commenced fieldwork initially using telephone conversations, as I considered this the best method of engaging with children remotely. With the eventual easing of lockdown measures, I moved quickly to apply this approach to strengthen the relationships I had already began to develop and to build on what I had experienced remotely with children. I briefly discuss the extended case method, as applied in this research, below.

As an ethnographic method, the extended case method approach was pivotal in forwarding my research processes, as repeated visits and interactions with the children turned out to be extremely useful in building relationships that nurtured meaningful engagement and conversations with them. Through repeated telephone *"visits,"* I soon enough began to feel like an insider, a sort of constant and living presence within these childhoods. For instance, after four weeks of repeated tele-conversations with the children, I had not only become comfortable with our conversations, but I could also identify the individual children by their voices. During these telephone conversations, I noticed a more asserted agency in the children's participation, as they spoke with greater ease; their laughter, giggles, chuckles and even smiles could be felt and heard from the other end of the telephone line. This signified a shared happy moment, while, at another time, the silence, or an indistinct mumble of words could be reflective of a tough moment previously experienced.

Arguably, these telephone conversations were   casual and informal and could not provide in-depth insights. However, frequent calls at previously agreed upon times provided a certain level of reassurance to me. Not only did these calls signify that the research process had commenced, but also that I had started to build the relationships which I would later rely on during the face-to-face research processes.

As repeated conversations and interactions via telephonic communication continued to construct more mental images, it was challenging to overcome the frustrations of not being fully able to observe and appreciate the physical expressions of shared emotion, or the body language generated and espoused in these conversations (I will return to this later in this chapter, as I explore the role of tele-conversations in my research).

Later, during stages of the face-to-face research processes, I utilised the extended case method to actualise promises and compensate for gaps that had originated from using the same

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3 Used to mean restrictive measures following the outbreak of COVID19 pandemic enforced by governments across the world including Uganda on its people aimed at infection control and prevention.

approach, remotely. For instance, in my tele-conversations with the children, we were optimistic that we would soon meet face to face. The children often used narratives which inferred that certain things I would be able to understand better only once I was physically with them. For example, during an informal tele-dialogue with a 15-year-old boy, in which we spoke about his daily activities, he said that *"I will show you when you come''*, with reference to his footballing skills. On a different occasion, a 14-year-old girl was quick to ask me *"but are you sure you will come after lockdown?"* when I had said I would go to the garden with her and her friends when I visited them.

My use of the extended case method in the face-to-face phase of this research actualised the visualisation of what initially had only been constructed mentally, both by the children and myself. In this phase, several questions, such as those I have highlighted, were answered over time, through repeated interactions with the children within the different spaces of the settlement, ranging from their homes, to play spaces, to learning areas and other communal places. Some of these repeated interactions were not planned, but rather occurred when my presence at particular spaces coincided with theirs, as I had become a fulltime resident in the settlement.

It is from within these informal and formal dialogues, let alone activities, that I situated children's agency, fully appreciating their role in the co-production of research knowledge (Pattman, 2013). As I will reflect in Chapter Four, the children's own perceptions, including their conversations, were influenced by the separate ways in which I might have appeared repeatedly within their spaces. This would not have otherwise happened, for example, during a single face-to-face visit, let alone during a tele-conversation. To me, the use of the extended method approach helped to project insights, as shown in Chapters Four to Seven, as to the children's social worlds, by revealing the interplay of their identities in their everyday lived experiences, both in Uganda and previously in South Sudan. This resonates with Burawoy's argument that the extended case method creates a connection of the present to the past in anticipation of the future (1998, p. 5).

Choosing the research site

As highlighted in the previous chapter, Uganda, as refugee hosting nation, has over thirty refugee settlements, most of them being in the West Nile region. This, therefore, was the initial basis for the selection of a research site in the West Nile region of Uganda. In exploring this region further, I sought a district with a long-standing history of hosting refugee populations in

Uganda. Consequently, Adjumani district was selected. As a refugee community host, Adjumani has nine refugee settlements, some of which include Pagirinya, Nyumanzi, Maaji 1, Maaji 2, Ayilo 1, Ayilo2, Olwa, and Baratuka. As the host of the largest number of refugee settlements in Uganda, Adjumani thus presented the possibility of hosting several alone and unaccompanied children, as reflected in migratory literature.

Furthermore, interactions with persons and institutions working with refugee communities in Uganda pointed me in the direction of Pagirinya, on the basis that it is one of the largest settlements in Adjumani and would likely host children of interest to my research focus. In addition, I considered the proximity of the settlement to amenities like transport and a nearby town, as relatively easy access to such amenities would enhance my research processes. In this respect, it was noted that Pagirinya is located along the Atiak-Adjumani highway, which made it easily accessible. It is also about twenty kilometers from Adjumani Town Council.

Additionally, in reviewing literature related to the refugee trajectory in Uganda, with specific interest regarding the establishment of settlements in the country, I was interested in an establishment that had a history of over five years, as this would suit the parameters of my research, by allowing for conversations around refugee childhoods and their lived experiences in Uganda. Pagirinya Settlement was established in 2016. As reflected in the different ensuing conversations of this research, this settlement provided an enabling environment that allowed for the generation of valuable data that contributed significantly to this research.

Figure 1: A sketch of Pagirinya settlement highlighting the points of my interaction with the children

(Adapted from: Esri, DigitalGlobe, GeoEye, Earthstar Geographics, CNES/Airbus DS, USDA, USGS, AeroGRID, IGN, and the GIS User Community)

The selection processes of the child participants

The selection processes for children who participated in this research was informed primarily by purposive sampling criteria. Bryman (2016) suggests that to answer the research questions posed, it is crucial to be strategic when choosing participants. In the case of my research, I did not wait until the commencement of fieldwork to begin identifying participants, but rather commenced from the initial preparatory processes of the research. Whereas my interest was in refugee children, I narrowed down the participation requirements to unaccompanied and alone refugee children living within Ugandan borders. This was because related literature from Europe, North America and even Southern Africa reveal the different experiences of unaccompanied children, including their common vulnerabilities, strategies adopted to protect, as well as to improve their circumstances (Menjívar & Perreira, 2019; Staunton et al., 2007). While there is much research about the children in these areas, available literature indicated that little was known about their forced migratory experiences in Uganda and Eastern Africa at large.

Furthermore, I narrowed the age criterion for children participating in the research to an age category of eight to seventeen years. Based on related literature that illustrated Pagirinya refugee settlement as having been established about five years back from the time when I conducted fieldwork, the selected age group were between the ages of four to thirteen years at the time when they commenced their forced migratory journeys to Uganda. As will later be reflected on in this research, the narratives presented relate specifically to the journeys, as well as the earlier life experiences in Uganda, which form powerful memories that children recalled more than four years after the events occurred.

Relatedly, my development and use of child-centered and child-friendly methodologies was aimed at enhancing equal participation of all children, irrespective of their age and gender identities. To achieve this, I grouped children into two groups; one group comprising children aged eight to thirteen years, and the other, children aged fourteen to seventeen years. The former participated primarily by using artwork-related activities such as drawing, taking photographs, and mapping. The latter participated in focus group discussions, from which key issues were identified. These issues subsequently informed in-depth conversations on an individual basis.

Different research processes present unique situations and challenges, which researchers must attempt to navigate to further their research. I will discuss, later in this chapter, the uniqueness

of my research about the Coronavirus pandemic. However, related to the selection process, my fieldwork commenced by means of rather remote techniques, which involved using phone conversations – as previously reflected upon in the research approach discussion. I relied on the help of the settlement commandant and my research assistant to identify, initially, children between the ages of fourteen to seventeen years. Of interest to me, was interacting with children with shared social identities, such as family relations and who were living together. The aim of this approach was to tap into the social networks and relations that already existed among the children with such shared characteristics. I imagined that such shared commonalities would make them comfortable around each other and would easily enhance trust and build conversations among them. With the settlement divided into about six blocks, A to F, it was important to have children from almost all the blocks participate. This was for instance the justification for the selection of children within the same space (mixed FGD and girls only FGD) or neighbourhood (boys only FGD) to participate in the focus groups specifically since the lockdown measures at that time did not allow the refugees to cross from one block to the other.

For this initial group of children, therefore, I selected three groups of children. One group was selected from an orphanage run by a religious Organisation. It is from this group that I generated focus group discussions that included both boys and girls. The second group was from another block in the settlement. This was a group of girls who had been taken in by another family. The third group consisted of boys, who were not necessarily living together, but who were living in the same neighbourhood and engaging in activities together, such as playing football. This was revealed in our focus group discussion. All these children (thirteen to seventeen years) were eventually recruited for the in-depth individual interviews. For the other group of children between eight to thirteen years of age, their participation only became possible once the lockdown measures were eased that made face-to-face research possible again. I utilised the Save the Children child friendly space as an entry point to this group of children. Through my interaction with the volunteers in this space some of whom I recruited as my research assistants for this group, we were able to use their records to identify households that hard two or more alone and unaccompanied children within the blocks where children had not already participated. It is worth noting that children in this group originated from four different households, from other blocks of the settlement but within proximity to the Save the Children child friendly space.

Code	Alias	Gender	Age
P001	Awadia	F	13
P002	Dawa	F	11
P003	Keji	F	10
P004	Kenyi	M	9
P005	Mawut	M	9
P006	Taban	M	13
P007	Gire	F	12
P008	Amadi	F	9
K1	Akifa	F	13
K2	Ajak	F	17
K3	Akech	F	17
K4	Nyawech	F	15
K5	Ajok	F	15
K6	Alek	F	15
K7	Nyalam	F	15
K8	Atong	F	17
R1	Lam	M	17
R2	Majok	M	14
R3	Riak	M	15
R4	Abuk	M	14
R5	Akur	M	15
R6	Tong	M	16
R7	Atem	M	15
R8	Gatwech	M	14
R9	Dak	M	17
R10	Kuol	M	13
R11	Moiba	M	14

Figure 2:List of pseudonyms and coding categories of study participants

As reflected in the figure two above, twenty-seven children participated in this research process by way of the different methodologies of the study. The children coded under category "K" represent both boys and girls under the age of eight to thirteen years who participated by way of artwork activities. Those coded "K" reflect all the girls fourteen to seventeen years whose participation was by focus group discussions, in-depth interviews, and informal dialogues. The code "R" is a representation of all boys within the age of fourteen to seventeen, who also participated by way of focus group discussions, in-depth interviews, and informal dialogues. Included also in this participation list, are children who changed location during the course of

the study and excluded is the one child under the category of eight to thirteen years who withdrew their consent

Negotiating access to the field

Since children are commonly constructed and understood as deserving protection and provision, adults tend to establish barriers that will stop outside adults from approaching children without following the appropriate provisions. My gaining of access to Pagirinya refugee settlement commenced the fulfilment of research ethical provisions both in Uganda and South Africa. Additionally, institutional permission to access the settlement was sought from the Department of Refugees in the Office of the Prime Minister in Uganda.

Negotiating access to research sites, especially where children are involved, can be a daunting process, as sometimes adult gatekeepers of these spaces can be reluctant to grant one access. In my case, the research site had been constructed by both the humanitarian discourse and field gatekeepers as a space for vulnerable people. The general perception is that children are always a vulnerable group. As they were refugee children, they were viewed as particularly vulnerable by their adult gatekeepers in the settlements in which they lived. The research site was thus constructed as a haven, where it was important to scrutinise the activities of adults like me who wanted to engage with refugees' children.

To reassure adult gatekeepers in the settlement why I wanted to conduct my research, I was explicit and detailed in explaining the intentions of my research. This resonates with my previously argument on the importance of providing institutional gatekeepers with insights about research and how this can enhance the wellbeing of both the researcher and the participants (Okimait, 2014). Furthermore, to appreciate issues surrounding access to the field research site, I categorised the adult gatekeepers into two groups: the institutional and home gatekeepers. These are discussed in more detail below.

The Institutional gatekeepers as child protectors

As previously noted, the Department of Refugees was the primary institutional gatekeeper with whom I dealt. However, additional institutional permission from various adult gatekeepers working in the settlement was also necessary, especially in respect of gaining access to certain child spaces in the field. This was the case with Child Friendly Spaces (CFS) within the settlement, run by Save the Children and World Vision. I was initially denied access to these spaces. The need to use these CFS was found on the basis that such spaces were good for

stimulating child participation, as it was highly likely that children were freer in them and had control of these spaces. Furthermore, I had anticipated during the earlier and preparatory stages of my research as to how such spaces, if available, could potentially enhance the inclusion and participation agenda of my research.

This denial of access to these places was treated by the overall institutional gatekeeper as a means of usurping their control in respect of the running of the settlement. I therefore found it necessary to provide an account of my research activities to the other adult gatekeepers within the settlement. This initially "taken for granted" stance caused me to call off my activities with the children at some point, as I negotiated the issue of obtaining access to the Child Friendly Spaces in order to facilitate my research activities. This ethical dilemma resonated with the recommendation made by Fine and Sandstrom (1988), for researchers to be cautious of such privately operated spaces and the need to work systematically on gaining the trust of gatekeepers and thereby to be given access eventually.

I argue for the need to resolve such power differential issues that arise from different adult gatekeepers responsible for protection of children in research sites immediately. This is because all these actors are important in reinforcing the wellbeing of the researcher and that of the participants. To me, it was crucial to take some time off from my fieldwork activity to visit Save the Children and World Vision, whose field offices are in Pakele Town, especially as I felt it especially important to give feedback to the primary gatekeeper so that I could access the spaces I needed to engage with children. It is worth noting that sometimes such secondary actors (other gatekeepers) want to do their own checks, but rather in simplistic and informal ways that may not require written permission notes. In my case, providing a credible reason for using the research space (ibid), including validating clearance from the primary actor, earned me verbal clearance and also helped to mend otherwise strained relations.

The lessons learned from such an experience was the need to appreciate the existence of several institutional gatekeepers for children within the settlement, however secondary their roles might be in the everyday lives of refugee children. A "taken for granted" mentality, as the one that I had initially adopted in respect of excluding secondary gatekeepers, could potentially jeopardise an entire research process (Okimait, 2014). In research environments where participants are largely constructed as vulnerable, Flewitt (2005) opines that salient ethical concerns will emerge, and it is crucial to address these as they occur.

Gaining permission from home gatekeepers

It can be taken for granted that unaccompanied and alone children, can be directly enrolled into research processes, because they are on their own. Despite being unaccompanied or alone, I found that each child participant had a caring adult or an emancipated sibling who was responsible for them. Some of these home gatekeepers were adult refugees, while others were older siblings to the children. What is worth noting, is that these caring adults had, in some cases, taken on these children to live in their homes, as was the case of one foster mother who had taken on three alone children in addition to her own; a reverend and a pastor who were caring for children in an orphanage and personal home respectively; and elder siblings who had assumed parental roles for their younger siblings. It is from these adults or emancipated minors with parental responsibility (Alderson, 2014) that I solicited permission for the children under their care to participate in the different research processes. As I was well aware of the possibility of both acceptance and refusal, I endeavoured to provide explicit explanations regarding my research (Alderson, 2004, 2014; Darbyshire et al., 2005). Such explanations included setting out the value of the research to both the children and me. I further illustrated activities that I had planned to facilitate engagement with the children, and the mechanisms that I had instituted to protect children from any possible harm.

Whereas several aspects involving the children's participation seemed well understood by these adults, to some, a type of vagueness was created by the need to guarantee the child their own privacy – let alone the child's ability to refuse to participate even when the adults had given permission. While explaining this process, for the group of children aged eight to thirteen years, one adult specifically said; *"These are my children, I stay with them, and they tell me everything. Do you really think they will not tell me the things they tell you"?* To refer to the children under her care as hers, inferred a sense of belonging for the children, but also reinforced her presumed care and authority for and over these children. Some adult carers assumed that the children for whom they were responsible, would, in the interviews and focus groups, only share the views with which they, as adult carers, were already familiar. One particular adult caretaker was not convinced that a child could refuse to participate once an adult had given permission.

At the same time, I found the need to keep this permission-seeking process an ongoing one, on the basis that my interaction with the children was also an ongoing process. This meant constantly reminding the adult carers that I would from time to time return to interact with the children. However, it was also important to remind them about the key aspects of the research,

as discussed earlier with each one of them. This strategy not only allowed me to build relations on a continuous basis with them as carers of children, but it also provided an opportunity where feedback could be shared freely and openly, especially if some children felt the need for their carers to speak to me about something related to their participation.

The ethics of researching with unaccompanied and alone refugee children

Ethical research with children requires that an intensive ethical protocol be followed throughout the entire research process. Ethical requirements are critical in assisting researchers to pay more attention to hidden issues in research, and find possible ways of navigating those issues (Alderson, 2004, 2014). Simultaneously, ethical protocols in research can often be daunting, especially where research participants are constructed as a vulnerable group, in this case refugee children.

The cross border ethical processes and dilemmas

While formulating and developing the different processes of this research, the importance of interacting with cross country ethical clearance processes could not be over emphasised. With each clearance process asserting its mandate that would allow for my research to commence, it was important that I pay attention to the provisions of each.

The ethical clearance processes in Uganda could only commence upon the approval of my research protocol by Stellenbosch University. On the eventual commencement of these processes in Uganda, which, among other things, involved in-person defence of my research approach, I noted in my research diary the extensive back-and-forth process.

Within research doctrines, it becomes difficult to convince committees about the agency of children, as they assert the perspective that such children are always vulnerable. This constructed vulnerability of childhood reinforces dominant ideologies of perceiving children as being easily influenced and, therefore, the need to study them using known standard and structural approaches (Solberg, 1996).

 My cross-ethical dilemmas stretched further to the discussion of having to remunerate my participants for the time taken to participate. With each ethical committee having its own divergent views, the Ugandan committee argued that all humanitarian-related activities that involved participation of refugee communities, had to pay for participation time. The remuneration discourse for children's time consumed in research processes has remained a

significant debate in childhood research (cf: Abebe, 2009b; Ennew et al., 2009; Fargas-Malet et al.).

Most often, researchers like me, find themselves caught up in this predicament of both having to follow ethics and having to exercise compassion with participants. In working with refugee children, I acknowledge that their invaluable time in this research process went beyond the remuneration discourse. It rather placed focus on understanding these children's individual cultures (Corsaro, 2014) using child-centred research processes, which, in essence, put forward these children's agenda by providing a platform for listening to their voices. In so doing, various research activities were punctuated by breaks. It is during these breaks that I shared a refreshment with the children, took a walk, or played a game with them. Further, all tangible materials that facilitated research activities – including children's artwork – were retained by the respective participants.

With IRB clearance from Uganda at hand, the Coronavirus pandemic outbreak put a significant strain on my commencement of fieldwork activities. Research activities in both Uganda and South Africa were suspended, with both countries activating total lockdown processes in the wake of the pandemic. With more infections spreading across South Africa, Stellenbosch University REC issued a suspension notice on in-person research activities, more so with regard to direct contact with research participants. The trend in Uganda was rather different. The rather slow infection rates and high recovery rates ushered in a phased easing of the lockdown regulations. By June 2020, resumption of research activities was sanctioned, but with strict adherence to Coronavirus Infection Prevention and Control (IPC) measures through observance of provided Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs).

The dilemma in one research space being open and another one being closed necessitated a justification for commencement of my face-to-face fieldwork activities. In presenting my case to the Stellenbosch University REC, I argued that the two geographies which informed my research were contextually different based on the curve of the Coronavirus infection at that time. My in-person (face-to-face) fieldwork stages thus started nearly four months later than intended, at a time when everyday living that required physical distancing, commonly known as social distancing, regularised mask wearing and sanitisation processes, all as a safety strategy for both the children and me. To conclude, it largely came to be known as the "new normal" in Uganda, and, in fact, across the world.

Child informed consenting processes

Lambert and Glacken (2011) argue that informed consent is critical in governing participation in a research process. As an ethical prerequisite, allowing children to experience informed consenting processes, validates children's participation rights, as provided for within the CRC. While developing informed consenting materials, it was important for me to move away from the dominant and adult-centric forms that consenting processes often assume. My approach was to simplify my consent statements, as far as possible, by using simple and easy to understand language and also to develop short and condensed consent forms.

Furthermore, I also understood and took full responsibility for providing sufficient information that would enable all my research participants to understand the essence of my research and why their participation would be important. This was achieved by developing inclusive, child-friendly informed consent forms that explicitly explained key issues, like the purpose of the research, the risks and benefits, participation and withdrawal, as well as the measures in place for their own protection (Alderson & Morrow, 2011; Ennew et al., 2009).

Some authors on ethical research with children have emphasised the importance of using different approaches to provide research information to children before soliciting their participation (cf:Alderson, 2014; Ennew et al., 2009). Although I had developed a condensed flyer with key talking about my research, I could not in the initial stages of the fieldwork administer it face-to-face due to the lockdown measures. Like the consent forms, the flyer was also availed to the potential child participants remotely through the help of my research assistant. It was only after this that I was able engage remotely with the children using my research assistant's phone to speak in detail about every issue highlighted in the flyer.

When I first engaged with the children through phone calls, the informed consent process was not concluded in one day, but rather over a number of days, after repeatedly talking to children about my research. Like Masson (2004), I strongly believe that repeatedly talking to the different children about my research, helped many of them to make a well-informed decision on their participation. Masson (2004), further opines that children are able to make valid informed consent if the information provided to them about the study clearly explains details of the research, such as the purpose and the nature of their involvement with the researcher. Unlike the phone consenting processes, the face-to-face consenting processes for the children eight to thirteen were simpler and direct as it was easier to appreciate and physically respond to the concerns, doubts and make clarifications that emerged from the children during this

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process. It is against this background that throughout the fieldwork process, I made the consent negotiation process an ongoing one (Thomas and O'Kane 1998 in Alderson & Morrow, 2011; Skovdal & Abebe, 2012), not taking for granted that a child who had given their consent on one particular day, would necessarily consent the next day. Fine and Sandstrom (1988), explore how informed consent could lead to an informed rejection to participate, especially when children are given the opportunity to legitimise their participation. The thought of an informed rejection is one that can be discouraging to a researcher, on one hand; however, at the same time, an informed rejection acknowledges and reinforces child-centred research as fluid grounds for children to exercise agency. As part of my ongoing daily consent negotiating processes, I often reminded children about their voluntary participation and their rights to opt out of the research without there being any consequences for them from their guardians, or the settlement authorities. In fact, I informed them that no one would know about their participation, let alone their withdrawal.

Fine and Sandstrom (1988) argue that, when soliciting informed consent from children, there is also a need to solicit support from adults. I have written about adults giving permission and granting access to children. However, my emphasis here is the ability to have adults see a child's refusal to participate from the child's viewpoint and not necessarily from an adult-centric point of view, where it could be constructed as the child being an embarrassment to the adult. Through the introduction of both an *opt out* and *opt in* (Skovdal & Abebe, 2012), an opt out occurred during the course of my research. Some scholars have argued that participants who *opt out* should not be given an audience in the research data (cf: Fine & Sandstrom, 1988). However, I argue that *opt outs*, as shown in my research, serve as a confirmation of written research principles in practice, which, as a researcher, I ought to report.

Whereas my research appreciated that children from fourteen to seventeen years of age would be comfortable reading plain text consent forms, but in simplified language, I explored the possibility of using a more fun and inviting approach of including corresponding smileys (icons) next to the text of the consent form for children from eight to thirteen years of age. Having explored the benefit of a similar approach while working with children with disabilities (cf: Okimait, 2014), most of the children who used this colourful consent form were physically and emotionally expressive, most were beaming in excitement, or smiling or chuckling at the sight of it. Upon consenting, I asked some of the children why they appeared excited when presented with the consent for the first time. In their responses, some described the consent form as being beautiful, others identified with the smileys, while a number related to the bright

colours. While no child identified with the wording, the responses as to what children had identified with, presented a good opportunity for me to make the wording in the consent form more relevant to the participants. While I kept the electronic version of their consent forms using a phone scanner, children were extremely excited and grateful to own a copy of their completed consent forms. In the light of this research process, the feelings the children expressed when they retained copies of their consent forms, portrayed their appreciation of newfound power, a sense of autonomous identity and identification with the research.

Guaranteeing child privacy & confidentiality

Alderson (2014, p. 94), describes a distinction between privacy and confidentiality, illustrating that "privacy involves ensuring that no one except the primary research team sees identifiable data or personal records and all reports are anonymised, while confidentiality means that each person's responses and identifiable data will not be discussed with anyone else in the study, including parents or teachers but only among the research team." Although seemingly different, I often found the two concepts to overlap. As with other ethical manoeuvring processes, I similarly found that guaranteeing privacy and confidentiality to be an ongoing process throughout my fieldwork. This was important, as there was a need to assure the children that their shared information was safe right from the field processes.

The key issue regarding privacy in childhood research is that of identity. I am drawn to argue that the notion of child vulnerability becomes valid when approached from this point of view. In one of the group discussions, I had with the children, my express emphasis in respect of guaranteeing their privacy through using pseudonyms, resulted in mixed reactions. Having told the children that it was important for their voices and stories to be known by people elsewhere, the children held the view that it was important for the audience elsewhere to know the owners of these stories. "How can they know our stories if they don't know our names" exclaimed one boy. Canosa et al. (2018) also write about related experiences, where participants have preferred open identity over their privacy. This experience caused me to reflect later that sometimes, as researchers, we may not have answers to children's questions. Further, even if we do, children may not entirely agree with us. I also found the views expressed in this opinion valid. As I insisted on privacy, my adult role did manifest here – specifically around adult-child power control. Drawing on the concept of children as co-researchers, I am inclined to argue that, while negotiating this role which can sometimes be overbearing for either party,

researchers are bound to disagree in principle with their participants, especially in situations like this one where participant safety can be compromised.

Another manner in which children manifested their privacy was through silence. This ranged from prolonged silence to murmurings, often indiscernible even after repeated attempts to get them to speak clearly. Bucknall (2014, p. 74) opines that *"like voice, silence is not neutral but communicates meaning. It might for example, signify unwillingness to participate at all…"* Similarly, Lewis further argues that where research involves the child's voice, there is a need to account for *"why and how children's silences were recognised, noted, responded and interpreted"* (2010, p. 19). In reflecting on the discussion around possible risk and discomforts of participating in this research, as provided for in the consent forms, I placed emphasis on the possibility of discomfort in choosing certain topics or issues. I encouraged children not to discuss or speak about things that they did not feel comfortable about. They could either choose to remain silent or say that they did not want to talk about the topic in question. Having proposed this option to the children, it is worth arguing that silence was one way of exercising their right to privacy, instead choosing to speak when they felt comfortable only. Ennew et al. (2009, p. 2.16) also stressed the importance of respecting the privacy of children in research, arguing*, "do not violate a research participant's privacy by asking insensitive questions or by probing for information when it is clear that a child or adult would prefer not to answer."*

Mitigating risk and negotiating potential harm to participants

The need to protect and care for child participants is advanced by Hill (2005) argument that research can have an adverse impact on some participants and therefore researchers need to debrief carefully, observe, discuss adverse effects, and seek possible ways to improve such participants' experiences. While reflecting on the safety of my participants, I argued that their protection remained an ongoing process throughout the entire research process. The Convention on the Rights of the Child provides for a complementary understanding of children's participation and protection, which reinforce each other in their implementation (UNICEF, 2007). To demonstrate this, this research process ensured that the participants enjoyed both their participatory and protection rights, ensuring that no physical or psychological harm befell them. As this research, in part, required children to reflect on earlier forced migratory experiences, ethical concerns that participation might trigger memories of difficult experiences and arousing emotional and traumatic situations, or even relapses for some children, arose. Spyrou (2015), for instance, suggests that our attempts to understand children's

experiences through their own voices can, at times, evoke painful memories of lived experiences. This risk, in essence, raises ethical dilemmas. By positioning myself as an indirect participant involved in the co-construction of the children's social reality, I relied on my self-reflexivity in negotiating these kinds of ethical concerns and manoeuvres.

I engaged with a counselling therapist from one of the organisations that worked closely with the children. The advantage of using an onsite therapist was that she had a history of working with the children in the settlement. Although parts of the research at times evoked painful memories and even aroused sentiments for both the children and I, neither the children nor I required therapeutic counselling throughout the research processes. My way of managing such difficult moments was to allow both myself and the children a moment to collect our thoughts, sometimes even by switching to other topics of conversation. I also supported children from the onset of our interactions in understanding that they were the authorities of their stories. They had the power to choose what they told me, and the ability to change their minds or just remain silent whenever they were not comfortable. In other words, I encouraged the children adopt the *opt out* and *opt in* (Skovdal & Abebe, 2012) approach, allowing them to opt out of a topic or the entire research and opt in if they felt like doing so again.

Additionally, my decision to use a multiple methods approach, which was participatory oriented, was driven by the need to make the participation in this research fun and enjoyable for the children, rather than simply being an information gathering process. I argue that this approach in this research stood out as being therapeutic for the children. Through narratives from their suitcase stories, Clacherty (2006) argues that the participatory nature of this research was therapeutic as children were able to use both the spoken and unspoken to tell their migratory stories.

In the wake of the Coronavirus pandemic, it became difficult to conduct face-to-face interactions everywhere. My research could not progress, as lockdown measures were instituted, and face-to-face research activities were suspended. I sought to engage with children remotely, using the phone to conduct focus group discussions. In doing so, I initiated conversations with children, while ensuring the safety of all participants. However, the shortcomings of doing exploratory research by phone can be daunting. I soon began to rethink ways of engaging in face-to-face research activities with children without necessarily putting them in harm's way. This necessitated the development of a Coronavirus mitigation strategy, which also formed part of my research protocol amendment.

The safety of research participants is exemplified by Masson (2004), in the argument that ensuring the safety of research participants on all fronts during fieldwork, is the responsibility of the researcher. Ensuring the safety of the child participants in their spaces necessitated that I undergo Coronavirus tests prior to going to the research site. This was followed by the appropriate use of a facemask through all the interactions with the children. I also provided the children with masks. As my interaction extended to their households, I had to provide masks to their guardians and, at times, some of their household members. While engaging the children, it was also important to maintain a hand-hygiene strategy. This involved frequent hand sanitising or washing and disinfecting all items and surfaces that had been touched or used at the beginning and end of each fieldwork day.

Furthermore, it was necessary to keep a contact list of all children on the different days that I interacted with them. This extended to including even their household members on days when I visited them at home. The aim of this list was to make it easier to trace and contact any of the listed people or children, should they happen to contract the infection or meet an infected person. While working with the children, it was important to maintain at least a two-metre distance. Whilst this was crucial, there were moments when this was difficult to achieve, as children were peers, and therefore, could not keep away from each other. Additionally, I had no control over what the children did whenever they were not with me. Whether they wore their masks and observed the hand-hygiene processes, was difficult to establish. It is worth noting that issues relating to negotiating children's safety in face-to-face research in the wake of the Coronavirus pandemic will continue to evolve, but it is similarly of importance to note the need for researchers to work with strategies that enable a balance of face-to-face research and safety of children. In the entire time I engaged with the children face-to-face, no child or members of their household was reported as having contracted the infection.

How methods and techniques facilitated research processes

Ethnographic research derives its strength from the use of a range of methods to understand social phenomena (James, 2001). Drawing on the recommendation that ethnographic methods are reliable for understanding children's social worlds (James et al., 1998), I utilised methods beyond the data collection process. I also relied on certain methods to build trust and relationships with participants, from which I generated insights and understanding as to the children's lived refugee experiences. I adopted the use of multiple methods and techniques throughout this research process. These methods and techniques were developed in order to

facilitate the participation of all children involved. In combining a multiple method *vis-a-vis* a child centred approach, I sought to explore how different methods would allow the expression of different in-depth viewpoints of the children (Clark, 2005b, 2017; Glaser & Strauss, 1967). I have previously explored the benefits of both these approaches while working with children with multiple disabilities and found that children can adapt to the use of multiple methods if the methods are inclusive and participatory in nature (Okimait, 2014).

To enhance peer-related participation, I categorised children according to their age ranges and clustered their participation on this basis. For the group that consisted of children between the ages of fourteen and seventeen years, I engaged with them initially through focus group discussions and later followed up with inductive in-depth interviews based on themes that had emerged in the focus groups. I further engaged with this group of children through repeated informal conversations, which were conducted in both group and individual settings. The other group included children of eight to thirteen years of age. In this group, participation was facilitated through artwork activities, some of which the children had helped to design. These activities included drawings, photography, and mapping. To understand the meanings of children's work from these activities, children led discussions around their works.

I also used diary notes as a means of recording an account of events that happened during the entire fieldwork processes. Repeated visits and interactions were primarily captured in my dairy notes, as well as the informal dialogue conversations. In using child-centred multiple methods, this research used a strategy that demonstrated respect for refugee children's agency, appreciating them as social actors, active in the creation and recreation of meanings from their own worlds (Darbyshire et al., 2005, p. 454).

Similarly, drawing on examples from related methodologies within child research, Abebe (2009b), for example, highlights that his use of multiple methods helped to offset the weaknesses of one method by the strengths of others. Van Blerk (2006) and Cheney (2011) who have both conducted extensive research with children in Uganda have relied on the use of multiple and child-centred methods to understand and appreciate childhood experiences in Uganda.

Child Focus Group Discussions

A focus group is a discussion involving a small number of participants, led by a moderator, with the aim of gaining an insight into the participants' experiences, or perceptions (Agar et al., 2005, p. 3). Focus groups were a part of my entry strategy into the children's social worlds.

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Through focus groups, I positioned myself as the knowledge seeker, with the children as experts (Levine & Zimmerman, 1996). This resonated with the argument put forth by Agar et al. (2005), namely, that child participants in focus groups should feel that their participation is more about experience sharing and not necessarily about being questioned by an adult.

While developing my proposal, I anticipated that I would engage with children with similar or shared social dynamics in these group discussions. Of specific interest to me for this activity were children between fourteen to seventeen years of age, with shared group dynamics, such as friendships, siblings, playmates, and similar neighbourhoods in the settlement. Morgan (2019), opines that it is important to pay attention to specific identities, such as friendships and age, when designing focus groups for young people and adolescents. These dynamics, as it turned out, were crucial in forwarding discussions: I felt that children were comfortable around each other, their stories especially about journeying and earlier experiences were related and they augmented each other's points of view.

I conducted three focus groups by telephone. These included one with mixed gender, another with boys only, and the other with girls only. In addition to using this as a platform for generating conversations, I was also interested in observing and understanding the interplay of gender within the group dynamics, especially how different or similar these focus group discussions were, and whether gender as an identity had any influence on this. This was not easy to assess initially through tele-conversations and only became possible later, when I physically accessed the field site for face-to face interactions. I again conducted one follow-up group discussion with the mixed group and girls' groups, respectively. I structured the focus groups based on topics and guiding questions (Atkinson, 2017), for instance *"What does it mean to be a refugee to you?"; "What does it mean to be an alone refugee child in this place? Do you feel you there is any difference between you and other refugee children in this place?"* (See FGD guide in appendix VI). All this, I argue helped me to keep track of the topic being discussed.

Importantly, the focus groups set the pace and agenda for further discussions in the follow-up conversations. Through these discussions, there emerged themes that I later used to build on individual discussions with the children. In the mixed group and boys-only focus group, it was evident how children constructed social relations in the different spaces, like home, school, and the outer host community they interacted with. Within these constructed social relations, there also emerged the issue of identity formation, which included labelling and being labelled by the Madi host community. While in the focus group with the girls only, there emerged evidence

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of the resilient mechanisms which they used to adapt to tough moments of their refugee childhoods. Some of these moments included losing an only parent or surviving on limited food rations. It is from this focus group that a powerful concept, namely, "the alone refugee child," emerged and began to take precedence in this research. As is evident from my diary excerpts, I reflected on this concept, specifically debating whether I could lump it with the concept of the *unaccompanied refugee child.*

Tele-focus groups

Although I previously mentioned that I conducted focus groups using telephones, it is important to give a detailed account of this process. Darbyshire et al. (2005) are of the view that research with children demands a certain level of flexibility and creativity, for both the researcher and in respect of the methods of data collection. Such flexibility may require methodological modifications that may be better suited the situation the researcher is presented with. The move to use the telephone focus groups, which, for purposes of this research, I refer to as *tele-focus groups,* followed the suspension of face-to-face research activities and the institution of country-wide lockdown measures in Uganda following the outbreak of the Coronavirus pandemic. Even more so than face-to-face focus group, tele-focus groups require plans to be carefully devised, in respect of how to execute these groups in a manner that maximises their output. My reflections on planning these phone discussions stretched from ethical processes to data actualisation. As mentioned previously, the focus groups were supposed to deconstruct complexities, such as building rapport, and power differentials between the children and myself through interactive conversation. Of additional concern was that I risked having these tele-focus groups function as mere group interviews *(*ibid*),* where the emotions and feelings espoused could not be explored.

Working with relationships established in the settlement, the three separate groups of participants were identified at separate times, as discussed previously in the participant selection processes in this chapter. The guardian permission and child consent forms were shared electronically, and my research assistant made these available to the guardians of the three groups. I conducted phone conversations with guardians of the three distinct groups of children at different intervals. Unlike the guardians of children of the mixed and girls only tele-focus groups, it took longer to get permission from guardians of the boys' group as each of the six boys who participated had their own guardian. In soliciting the participation of each child, I reflected on the rights of each child, and considered the best way of enrolling each one of

them. I devoted one week to each group, getting to know each member of the group. During this time, my research assistant would spend close to two hours with the children. Using his phone, I would speak with each child individually. Our conversations were casual, and I used them to introduce sections of the research. As these were informal conversations, aimed at building relationships and seeking consent from the children, I only started to include these conversations in my diary notes from the moment when each child consented. To confirm that guardian permission had indeed been granted and informed consent of each participating child had been obtained, I had my research assistant send screenshots of the signed consents forms.

The actual focus group discussions commenced after one week of getting to know the children. One of the techniques that I employed during this stage of the research process was to learn to identify each participant by their name. This enabled me to refer to them by their names when they spoke. As with face-to-face focus groups, I applied the principle of privacy to our discussions, ensuring that I was in a private quiet place with no interference from outsiders. The children also sat in secluded spaces and for the entire time of our conversations, there was minimal interference. Furthermore, I relied on the power of mental images to help each one of us to imagine the other's space. At the beginning of our conversation, we would each describe our surroundings for the benefit of the other. To be able to hear each participant properly, I encouraged each child to hold the phone and speak directly into it.

After one week of repeated phone conversations with the children, I had managed to build some relationships, from the other end of the phone, it was not unusual to hear laughter, giggles, or murmurs as reactions to one of the participants' comments or jokes from my end of the phone. Confidence in the voices when some of the children spoke could be observed, something that I had noticed had not been the case when we started our informal conversations. I could argue that I possibly had become a part of their social reality. What is worth noting in addition to this, is that the frustrations of using the phone cannot be understated, especially in appreciating the expressions like emotions, feelings or anxieties that came with the conversations. Although I tried to overcome this by *"visually"* listening to our interactions, I felt that many observable phenomena were lost through this method. This is partly the reason I explored the follow-up face-to-face unstructured group discussions with the children at a later stage.

Semi structured in-depth interviews with children

In using this method, rather than considering interviews to be an instrument for eliciting information from children, I interpreted these as social encounters (Flewitt, 2014; Pattman,

2007, 2015) and contexts which nurtured further those relationships initially established between the children and myself. My concern was not to reproduce what Prout and James refer to as *"adult-centric"* power relations in the process of conducting research (1990a). Rather, the aim was to work hard at inverting the presumptions that the children may have of (strange) adults, like myself, as an authority figure who was expected to dominate any dialogue they might have. I aimed to challenge these presumptions through the ways I presented myself when introducing myself. The types of questions I posed in interviews aimed to show interest and caring, and I tried to notice issues and concerns which they raised. In other words, I wanted to encourage the children to set the agenda.

I used the in-depth interviews with children aged between fourteen to seventeen years as a continuation of the previous conversations I had had with them during the tele-focus group discussions and the subsequent follow up informal group dialogues. With the exception of one male participant who had temporarily relocated to Adjumani town, all children fourteen to seventeen years of age who had participated in either the tele-focus group discussions or the follow up face-to-face informal group discussions were enrolled for the semi- structured in-depth interview. The decision to follow a semi structured approach to these interviews was premised on the need not to have participation and agency operate in a vacuum. Inductively, thematic areas of discussions had emerged from previous group discussions. It was around such themes that the semi structured in-depth interviews took precedence, over previous themes.

Flewitt (2014) emphasises that a semi structured interview adapts more of a naturally occurring talk, with the researcher also participating in the creation of a social reality. With each child participating in at least one interview, it was crucial for me to remain attentive throughout these interview processes to the specifics that uniquely emerged from each of them, such as what the children had said, the ways in which they said it, including, for instance, the accompanying expressions of emotion and displays of body language (Pattman, 2007). It was also important to note the moments when our interactions resulted into or were marked by silence. Such moments at times caused the interview to be paused for a while or even postponed to another time convenient to the child. From my diary excerpts, I noted that I had to reschedule five of the interviews for varied reasons some of which included allowing the children attend to their chores, join a scheduled football activity as well as allow the child to ease the emotions that emerged from discussing hard to talk about topics such as parental loss. As an additional technique to allow the flow of the discussion, it was important to frame each child as being the

centre of the discussion. In so doing, I had to balance out listening to each child's narrative and also seeking clarification and elaboration from the child (Pattman & Kehily, 2004).

Importantly, these interviews presented the opportunity to engage at a more personal level with each child. In these engagements, I sought clarification on some issues that were not clear to me during the focus group discussions. These in-depth conversations, as I recalled, presented some of the toughest moments for both the children and me. This arose from the emotions elicited by specific topics, such as journeying to Uganda and early life in the settlement. For instance, the conversation below with a seventeen-year-old revealed some of the difficult moments within children's migratory journeys.

Me: Could you tell me how your journey here was like?

Child: It was all that not good journey we faced a lot of attacks when coming. It was in 2016 when we started the journey from Sudan in July then when we came to Elegu, they brought us here and told us this is where we will live, I came with my brothers, and we walked from Nimule to Elegu where we spent three nights. They were serving porridge is something difficult when you wanted to get porridge you have to wake up like at 6:00am and start lining up to around 10am. when you're very far in the line you end up missing, so you have to start again to line up for the food.

Recalling moments, such as these highlighted above, affected me strongly also, not only evoking my empathy but questioning and reflecting within myself on the need to continue with such difficult and emotionally intense topics.

Conducting artwork activities with children

I used artwork activities with the children aged between eight to thirteen years. These activities included drawing, photo-voicing, and mapping. Artwork activities are part of a participatory research strategy that is closely linked to the "New" Sociology of Childhood, because it contributes to the pool of visual methods that allows the researcher insights into the children's lived experiences (Young & Barrett, 2001). Some literature refer to them as task-based participatory methods (Darbyshire et al., 2005; Punch, 2002) that can help children overcome communication challenges with unfamiliar adults. Of importance to me was not simply to create activities where children, for instance, drew pictures or took photographs of places in the settlements but rather the need to combine participation with fun, allowing the formation

and provision of opinions outside the adult-centric research processes. In using this method, I specifically drew on examples from the works of Clacherty (2006), where the use of artwork with refugee children in Cape Town allowed children to share insights of their migratory experiences based on their own agencies. Clacherty (ibid) further opines that such an approach is inclusive and allows refugee children time to tell their stories.

In using artwork activities with children between eight to thirteen years of age, my intention was to aid children to share their different viewpoints on their lived experience of a forced migratory childhood. Through drawings, for example, children shared their experiences related to journeying to Uganda and to their gender identities. Through photographs and mapping, children relived their present childhood experiences as refugees in the Ugandan settlements, capturing photos and mapping places important to them as individuals. While developing this approach, I reflected on how spaces might enhance the participation of children in a research process. I was drawn to think, that the spaces constructed as child-friendly would enhance the utilisation of this method. Of particular interest to me were spaces where children had more control without interference from adults. During fieldwork, the child-friendly spaces of the early development centres became one of the spaces that facilitated artwork activities. This space was used interchangeably with the space where shade was cast by a mango tree. Even for activities like photography and mapping, which involved movement around the settlement, it was in these two spaces where our journeys often began and ended.

In using this method to facilitate child participation, each child spoke about their work, including showing it to their friends if they felt comfortable to do so. The children eventually came together as a group to share and discuss their work, with each child taking the lead when it was their turn. Through artwork, children used symbols to bring to light their thoughts and experiences of migration. Prout and James (1990b), opine that these can be critical in understanding the expressive meanings of everyday life. In using this method, I utilised a combined multi-sensory approach, involving the visual, spoken, and unspoken attributes. This resonates with the concept of listening to children in research processes, which Clark argues must stretch beyond just the spoken, but must include "*active process of communication involving hearing, interpreting and constructing meanings."(*2005a, p.491).

Drawings

Within the childhood research discourse, drawings have been presented as a participatory method that deconstructs the difficulties of children participating in research. Hunleth (2011),

presents drawings as a means to enable researchers to gain ground to accommodate verbal discussions with children regarding their drawings. Punch (2002), argues that drawings bring in creativity and fun, thereby motivating children to be more actively engaged within a research process. It is also argued that drawings have a powerful relevance in all stages of the research process. In forwarding this argument, Buckley and Waring opine that they provide,

"an alternative form of communication for interviewees, acting as a source of data in themselves, clarifying the process of research for both the investigator and reader, acting as a stimulus in fieldwork and interviews, exploring the relationships between emerging concepts and categories and acting as a tool for representation of theoretical complexity"(2013, p.149).

They have been used in several research projects with children, for instance, Cheney (2005), used this method in an ethnographic exploration of experiences of war with formerly abducted children in northern Uganda.

I initially utilised the drawing activity as an opportunity to get to know children and for us to become comfortable around each other. Having experienced how difficult it was to talk about topics such as journeys to Uganda with some of the children in the previous group, I was keen to initially engage children with rather drawings on topics which would be easier to converse about. I chose *"my friends and me now in the settlement"* as a preferable topic to begin with and returned at a later stage, to *"my journey to Uganda and my first days in the settlement."*
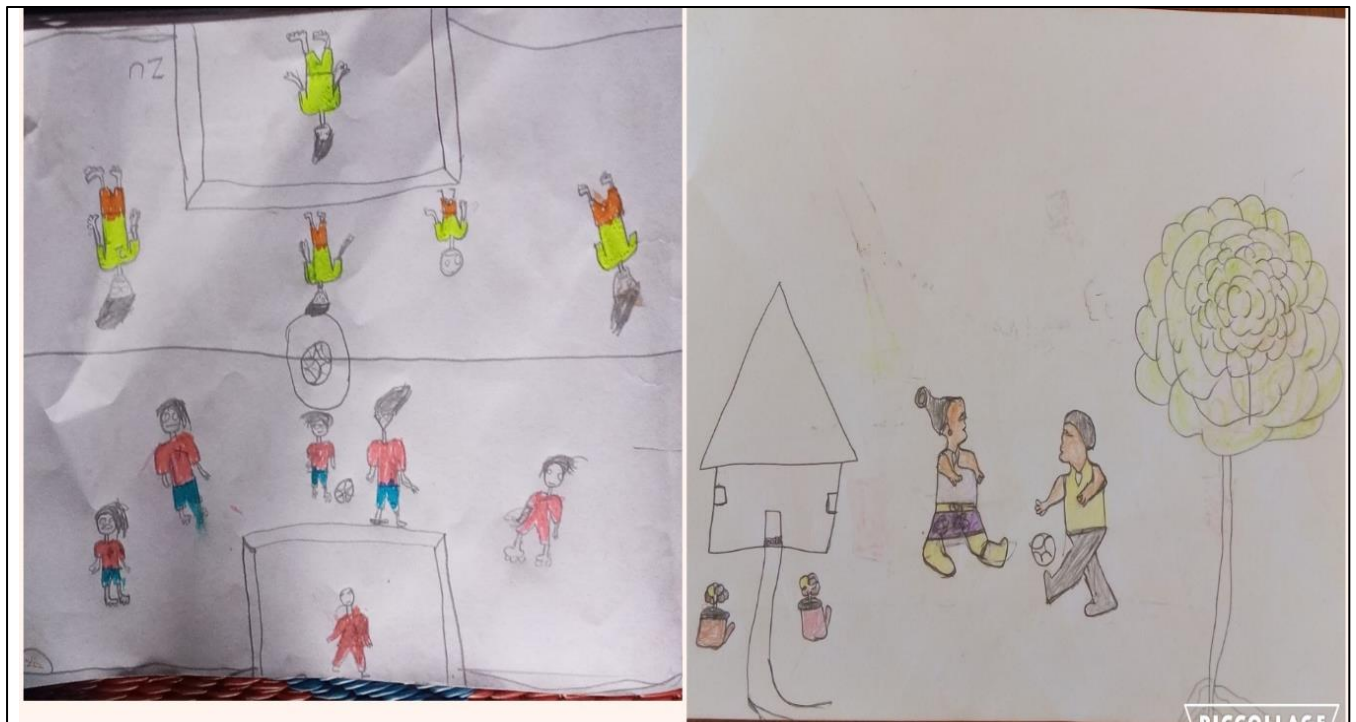
Figure 3: Drawings about ''my friends and me now in the settlement''

As adults, we are almost always sure to misinterpret children's drawings (Ennew et al., 2009). For example, when children were encouraged to reflect on the drawings above, in respect of both drawings, children mention and reflect on play as one of the things that they engage in with their friends in the settlement. In the first picture, my conversation with the child reveals that he is playing football with his male friends at school. This narrative from the child delivered an important insight, as it introduced a gender discussion with the children regarding which friends they play with in their different spaces. In the second picture, the theme reflected by the child is still that of play, but the difference is that he argued he was playing with his sister at their home. What children exemplified through these pictures, for instance, was the interplay of their different gender identities within their play activities and spaces.

Photovoice

As part of the children's artwork-related activities, photovoice became an enormously powerful tool that helped children to connect with the various places they consider to be important within the settlement. My use of photovoice in this research aimed to actualise the discourse of children as co-researchers. Co-researching with children involves allowing children to take charge and make certain decisions while the research is being implemented. In so doing, my research was not simply aim to provide platforms for the voices of children to be heard, but also aimed to have children be seen as decision-makers in research processes. While developing the artwork activity method, I specifically included and developed drawings as the only method and simply suggested the possibility of using other methods while in the field. My reason for doing this was to prepare for later work with the children, in which they would help to develop other artwork methods that would be relevant to the context of the research environment. This resonates with the argument that, in developing research, it can be useful to allow children to identify their own needs and concerns (Cheney, 2011), including, the ways in which they may wish to participate.

The choice to use photographs emerged from one of the children's curiosities about the many things she saw my phone could do, from receiving calls to recording conversations. I then introduced her to another function of the phone, namely, capturing pictures. Cheney (2011) advocates for the need to practice and exercise flexibility right from the start of research. She further opines that ethnographic research by its nature is exploratory and flexible – an aspect that is crucial if one is working with children whose thoughts are often undervalued. After all

participants had been afforded an opportunity to capture a photograph or two, we had a discussion around using photographs as opposed to mapping activity. The photovoice method was used with the children with the specific aim to generate discussion around the activity question *"the important places for me in the settlement."*

Figure 4: Children's reflections of their important spaces in the settlement using photovoice

As a participatory method, children used the photovoice to communicate their perspectives without the need for the spoken or written word (Clark, 2001, 2005a). Additionally, the photovoice facilitated conversations between myself, as the adult, and the children (Clark, 2005a). In exploring HIV/AIDS stigmatisation in rural schools in the KwaZulu-Natal province by using photovoice, Moletsane et al. (2007), argued that the method was both insightful and fun to use in helping to understand and analyse children's experiences of stigma in schools. Prior to the photo activity, each child had taken a day to think and reflect on the places in the settlement they considered important, so that we could better plan our activity. Some of these spaces, like the playground, turned out to be shared important places. The children selected five places, situated in the various parts of the vast settlement. We decided to drive to each of these places in order not to tire the children, given the extreme hot temperatures at the time. While at each of these places, each child guided the rest of the group to specific areas that that child considered to be important. They would then take pictures of these spaces. While doing

this, we engaged in informal discussions that were aimed at helping each one of us gain some understanding of each participant's important space. My recollection of using this method is that it allowed children to assert their agency in ways that I had not imagined. The moment each child had the camera, they felt like they possessed a power over their peers and could take as many pictures as they wanted. Among the children, rapid conversation took place and an unreserved expression of emotion, particularly excitement.

Furthermore, this participatory activity brought a new twist to this research, specifically affirming the children's resilience and capacity to bounce back from adversity (Boyden & Mann, 2005) and quickly adjust to new spaces. In assuming the status of refugee children, they were also extremely far away from home and alone. To the outer world they were vulnerable children, but through the lens of this research, they had built relationships not only among themselves, but with this place they now called home. They had personalised spaces, which, through photo essays, they brought to life, to help adults like myself understand that they are aware of their circumstances and context. The photo essays served as to prove that the children participated in creating and recreating their social reality each day.

 I came to an agreement with the children that each one of them could choose five of the pictures they had taken, to be printed. It was these printed pictures that I used to facilitate discussions with the children. These included both individual and group discussions. The thought of each one of them having five of their pictures printed also generated excitement and encouraged conversation. With each child displaying their picture in group discussions, they narrated why the place in the picture was important to them. The follow-up activity was a progression from the informal dialogues I had had with the children, during the picture capturing activity. From these informal conversations, I was able to identify thematic ideas; for instance, in the playground, which emerged as a shared important space for each of the children, the emerging theme was play with friends. In the later conversations, I sought to know which friends these were, and how it made them feel to play with these friends. Darbyshire et al. (2005), who has applied the same method with children, argue that it yielded both contrasting and complementary information.

Mapping

Visual methods of researching with children, such as mapping, diagrams and images, are argued to "present insights that are increasingly independent from discursive relations because the image has the ability to create alternative ways of understanding social relations" (Buckley

& Waring, 2013, p. 149). My initial plan had been to use this as the main method in generating perspectives on the topic "the important places for me in the settlement." However, with the children's preference for pictures, I decided not to use this method. Since all the mapping materials were available, the children still felt that they could use them. I then decided to use this method as a complementary to the photovoice, with each child mapping out the journey we had undertaken to their important spaces. As a complementary method, children found mapping activities fun and interesting. It generated interaction as each child tried to include everything that they thought was important in their maps. Through this mapping activity, they expressed their opinions about these places alongside the pictures. In using this method, I also reflected on the children as being aware and comfortable with their socio-spatial spaces. In further using this method, the children would sometimes show their pictures and illustrate the location of the picture in the map. It was, for instance, common to hear statements like, "when we were here, here at school or church." By referring to "here" the children were drawing my attention, as well as that of their peers, to specific spaces they had visited that were also reflected on the map. This was their way of taking us all back in time to these different spaces shown on their maps. For the playground space, which was an important space for each child, these maps helped me to remember the different areas in the playground each child identified with.

Figure 5: Children's mapping reflecting their important spaces in the settlement

The research diary

Alaszewski (2006), opines that diaries, as a method, are useful in exploring individual life, activities, and relationships of particular groups in society. By keeping a diary, I was, for instance, able to take an account of events and unspoken. As a method, the diary was revealed as an appropriate tool for capturing many occurrences that would otherwise pass unnoticed or as "taken for granted" within my research space. This resonates with Alaszewski's argument that *"diaries can be used to access those facets of social life which members of social groups take for granted and therefore not easily articulated or accessed through research methods such as interviews"* (2006, p.14). Furthermore, it complemented the output of other methods and techniques, such as interviews and artwork activities. For instance, when children mapped out their important spaces in the settlement, I used the diary to capture the emotions and feelings they expressed about that activity as well as those spaces.

As a standalone method, diary notetaking helped me to capture insights that I later utilised to generate additional conversations with the children. As such, it was crucial in adding both value and meaning to my entire research process. I also diarised the singing voices of children, something that happened in the evenings in the settlement. It is also the very tool that captured the dialogue that ensued as a result of my follow-up to this activity. Related standalone events captured also included the dancing and singing practice for a wedding ceremony in a church and the crowds and excitement it drew. It is from the use of my dairy that the musical theme emerges from the present lived experiences of the children. Music and dance, as I later learned and jotted into my diary notes, both offered healing and was a way of connecting with children's homes of origin.

As a method that augmented others, the diary came in handy in capturing the unspoken moments that had been created through the use of these methods. Such moments included the heavy emotions gleaned from conversations about journeying to Uganda, in the individual semi structured interviews, the light moments of excitement, laughter, and other displays of body language. The diary was essentially a creative tool, which helped me to reflect on my research dynamics. It was through diary note-taking that I visualised spaces within and about my research environment and how these might have impacted on the research activity. For instance, I wrote that when it no longer became possible to utilise the child friendly (CFS) spaces for the artwork activities, the children suggested that we use the shade of a mango tree adjacent to the CFS. Our use of this new space attracted other children as onlookers, but also made the participating children the envy of the others. This resonates with Mackrill (2008),

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who considers diaries to be important in tracking research subjects and events across time and contexts.

Furthermore, the diary was a significant way of actualising children as co-researchers in a participatory research process. Mackrill (2008), also stressed this point, arguing that participants being co-researchers is reflective of good diary data, as the diary will have access to explore the contexts of their everyday lives. In my case, the diary facilitated the repeated visits as contextualised in the extended case method approach used in this research. Specifically, as I discuss below, through informal dialogues, which were unplanned and took place in public and children's spaces, I engaged in completely unstructured conversations and, at times, activities, like playing with the children. The interactions in these spaces were, at the end of each field day, captured and reflected upon in my diary. There is no doubt that, from the diary reflections, strong and in-depth analytical processes emerged that augmented the themes from other methods. Like Sá (2002) argues, my utilisation of the strong potentialities of diary writing did better inform my analysis and understanding of the children's social reality.

Informal dialogues

The informal dialogues as unstructured and unplanned conversations in research processes, are crucial in providing the researcher with insights in respect of aspects that might have been overlooked during the planned data realisation processes. As a technique, informal dialogues were crucial in initiating and forwarding fieldwork processes. As previously discussed in the context of the focus group, these informal dialogues laid the groundwork for the tele-focus groups. Additionally, as discussed under the researcher diary, informal dialogues were a major contributor to my diary notes. I utilised these dialogues to build relationships, not only with the children, but also with other people within the settlement, as these relationships were equally important in facilitating my fieldwork. The informal dialogues which took place during fieldwork happened just about anywhere in the settlement. However, most of the accounts of my informal conversations are from my recollections of moments shared with the children at home, playgrounds, boreholes, and churches. The informality of these dialogues can be attributed to the fact that the dialogues occurred outside the planned research context. In using this technique, my intention was to have meaningful conversations with the children, mostly outside the home surroundings, but without making them feel that I infringed on their time or invaded their spaces. With this in mind, I did not do any notetaking or audio recording during these conversations. When I joined the children at the different spaces where I thought they

might be found, my intention was not to disrupt the activity but rather to find a way of fitting into it. For this reason, I often kept the conversations short and precise, so as not to take up a lot of children's time during these moments. Another concern that related to these time constraints, was to reduce the risk of losing data owing to my inability to recall most of the issues discussed.

Data transcription, analytical processes, and interpretation

In this study, data were collected using different techniques. These included digital voice recordings, note-taking, photography, and drawings. It is these datasets, in combination, that inform this thesis. In this section, I discuss the processes of my interaction with these datasets, including the transcription of audio data, and analytical and interpretation processes.

Digital voice recording

I sought to voice-record all interactions from the planned activities. The permission to voice record participants was included in the permission and consent statements. Nonetheless, I again sought permission from my participants just before commencing with the voice recording. I specifically made it known to the participants, that it was important to represent their views accurately while writing, and that recording our conversations would allow me to achieve this. Furthermore, audio voice recording was essential, as I completely excused myself from taking any notes during the conversations with children, to avoid dividing my attention while interacting with the children. Additionally, I felt that taking notes in the presence of the children could be reminiscent of a classroom-like setup. As a consequence, the children could relate the research activities to school activities, especially the children aged eight to thirteen years old.

Transcriptions and coding

In transcribing the recordings, I used certain transcribing conventions, which enabled me to do justice not only to what the participants said, but also how they said it, including the emotions they expressed, hesitations, intonations, repetitions, as well as the types of engagement with other participants in the group discussions (Frosh et al., 2003).

In coding and identifying themes – as they emerged in the interviews, focus group discussions and the artwork created by the children as part of a thematic analytic approach – I was influenced by contemporary grounded theorists, such as Charmaz (2006), who argued that

'codes' should not be descriptive, but should tell us something about how our participants are conceptualising the world around them.

Inductive thematic processes & analysis

I adapted a thematic analysis which Braun and Clarke (2006) argue as involving the systematic study of research data so as to identify particular patterns of thoughts, experiences or behaviour, and then, eventually, to explore how these address the main research concerns or questions. An inductive approach to thematic analysis took precedence as emerging themes were developed from the data itself (ibid). In so doing, emerging themes were coded based on the agenda put forward by children themselves. This I did by paying specific attention to the insights children provided about the diverse ways they constructed and negotiated their different identities as alone and unaccompanied refugee children. In thinking about the stories as important resources through which people make sense of their social worlds, I wanted to draw on particular versions of narrative analysis, which raise questions about people's emotional investments and engagements in the stories they tell (Reissman, 1993). I was interested in how stories emerge in the research encounters in my study, and the interests, emotions, relationships, and memories such stories seem to generate (in focus groups, individual interviews, and artwork activities).

Chapter conclusion

This chapter has described the ethnographic processes of conducting research with children. It has reflected on the research processes that I engaged in with the children in soliciting their lived forced migratory experiences in Uganda. The chapter has also situated the ethnography of the extended case method as the primary design and approach to this study. The justification for this approach was based on its concept of repeated visits and how these enhanced the understanding and exploration of my study phenomenon. This chapter has further discussed the methods that were engaged in this study. It specifically argued for the use of child-centred and participatory methods. Through the combination of both, the chapter has discussed how these methods provided in-depth perspectives of children's own accounts of their experiences. The participatory methods are described in the chapter as not only having enhanced participation, but also being fun to engage in for both the children and me. Through the methodological insights, the chapter has highlighted that the methods used were not simply data collection tools but were rather instruments that facilitated conversations with the children and allowed the building of strong relationships between the children themselves, and between the children and me.

The chapter has further given insights of my positionality as an adult researcher working with children. The reflections from this chapter have informed part of the discussion in the following chapter, Chapter Four. Furthermore, the ethical dilemmas and manoeuvres associated with conducting this research are explicitly discussed in this chapter, as are the processes of gaining access to the children and the different spaces they interacted with. As these children are categorised as vulnerable, this chapter demonstrated the extent of adult protection which surrounded these children, and why it was important to navigate all these access processes in the research. Furthermore, issues of child protection and safety are also reflected upon in this chapter. Specifically, this chapter included reflections on how I worked with the construct of vulnerability in enhancing child protection by ensuring privacy and confidentiality during the research processes. As the research was conducted during the Coronavirus pandemic, this chapter has also detailed the ethical safety protocols that were designed and implemented to sustain the safety of all persons engaged in the research processes.

The chapter has concluded with the discussion of processes that were used to guarantee data safety and reliability. These included digital voice recording of individual and group interviews, the transcription and coding processes, and how listening to the interviews repeatedly during transcription helped the thematic development processes that eventually built up into the final analytical and discussion processes.

Chapter 4 : Negotiating positionality and constructed research identities

Introduction

In this chapter, I reflect on myself as an adult researcher working with refugee children. I particularly discuss the different encounters with different people and how they constructed and perceived me –notably as a particular kind of adult and an outsider – and how these constructs might have impacted on the research process. Furthermore, I reflect on the relationships I established with the refugee children, and how these were influenced by my own assumptions and interests in engaging with their agency and learning from them about their experiences as   unaccompanied refugee children. I further reflect on the positionality of the interpreters, and how they forwarded this research, the uncertainties that emerged from engaging with them and how I overcame those uncertainties. As discussed in Chapter Three, I place much emphasis on engaging with participatory forms of research and reflecting upon these, not as instruments or tools for eliciting information from the children, but as social encounters in which the participants, including myself, establish particular kinds of relationships which provide insights into their everyday social lives. I conclude this chapter by discussing briefly how these methods helped to shape and negotiate my positionality.

How my presence was constructed using different identities

The "roles that adults assume when they study children maybe differentiated on two dimensions: (1) the extent of positive contact between adult and child, and (2) the extent to which the adult has direct authority over the child" (Fine & Glassner, 1979 in Fine & Sandstrom, 2011, p. 2). As adult researchers who explore children's worlds, we are often reminded of the structural differences that exist between us and children and the need for us to negotiate our research roles in an impartial and objective manner. While developing my research processes, I had several debates with myself on how I would position myself as an adult male researcher, trying to appreciate a children's world. One such debate concerned how to position myself as an adult who saw children for who they were and not appear to be patronising towards them when I engaged and interacted with them.

My research draws on the example of Grover (2004), who argues that research moments pave the way for research experiences, which allow for the active participation of children in ways that create opportunities for them to share their own stories and personal experiences. It is these

subjective experiences that give meaning to our research processes and provide rich and complex data. While appreciating the various aspects that enhanced my entire fieldwork processes, I became aware of the diverse identities that I embodied in my research environment. From my diary excerpts, I noted that the identities I assumed did not only emerge from the children who participated in various research activities, but also from other children in the settlement and the larger refugee community. Equally important to note was the existence of silent identities that neither children nor adults were comfortable talking about. While appreciating both the known and silent identities, I navigated my way around them and noted the uniqueness of each.

The self-centred outsider

My use of the term *"self-centred outsider"* is to fit the different identities attributed to me or constructed around my presence, by the different gatekeepers. These constructions of me by gatekeepers and others emerged in the process of arranging and organising my research, as well as during my participation in various research activities. In the previous chapter, I emphasised the role gatekeepers played in forwarding the entire research process. When I visited the Refugee Desk Office to initiate entry processes into the settlement, I was asked to justify that my research intentions were academically driven, and not politically driven or related to media research. This objection was raised on the grounds of persons who had previously gained access to the refugee populations as researchers, but who had turned out to have alternative motives. This explanation was therefore the first incidence where I was constructed as the self-centred outsider. To illustrate this further, I was subjected to a number of questions, including being asked why, if I was not a journalist masquerading as student, I had a particular interest in Pagirinya settlement, despite there being several other settlements in Adjumani district. To address some of these concerns, I explained that my choice of the settlement was informed by related literature about the refugee situation in Uganda, and the prominence of Pagirinya as a settlement – especially the fact that it had been in existence for over four years, and it was not admitting any more refugees. This was crucial to my major research question, which sought to understand the lived experiences of refugee children in Uganda across a specific period of time. Additionally, the fact that this settlement offered relative accessibility was also a contributing factor These responses, together with a copy of my university student identification and the research proposal, were requested as part of the process to confirm my identity as a student researcher.

Another incident involved being denied use of the child-friendly spaces established by Save the Children Uganda and Plan International. While developing my research, I had argued that identification of child-friendly spaces in the settlement would enhance participation of children as they would assert their control over these places. Unfortunately, this assumption was countered by the discovery that adults were focused on asserting control over who could use these spaces. In one of the spaces, I was questioned after having observed for over twenty minutes how children went about their playing and interaction activities. As I later became aware, after my interaction with the overseeing adult at the centre, places like these, where children converged, were targeted by child traffickers. In the other centre, I was also unknown, and the children's safety could not be guaranteed unless I had clearance from the area manager.

In reflecting on both situations, the underlying concern was the safety of the children, and both my known and unknown intentions cast a doubt over my involvement. In migration and humanitarian situations, children and women are often constructed to be vulnerable groups. Such situations necessitate outsiders, including researchers, to make good their case if they are to gain access to children. The CRC, in Article 36, argues that children can equally be exploited by researchers, for instance, through breaching their privacy or having them undertake tasks that breach their rights. Such exploitation can further amount to a violation of the children's human dignity. The CRC, in Article 12, equally argues for the need to respect the views of children. It highlights the importance of children's views being heard and given consideration. In so doing, it further takes a stance that all children are capable of forming a view on matters affecting them, and that they also have a right to freely express those views.

In distancing myself from the common construction of myself as a self-centred outsider, I stressed the importance of encouraging children's participation in my research without endangering their wellbeing. While engaging with the area manager of Save the Children, I elaborated on how I had developed my research, taking into consideration the necessary safety measures when engaging with children. Furthermore, I argued that while children's protection was crucial and a responsibility of everyone, it was also important that their voices be heard in ways that they had not been heard before. My research, therefore, would combine the protection and participation interests of the children by opening up spaces for them to reflect about their experiences and concerns as refugees in another country. Having access to child-friendly spaces would contribute to the success of this attempt to facilitate children's voices in spaces that protected them but also empowered them to participate. Importantly, in this child-friendly space, this clearance eventually ushered in a rapport between these adults and me. Through

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them, I was able to identify households with alone and unaccompanied children who participated in the artwork activities. Beyond this, I recruited some of them to work as my research assistants and interpreters for some of the activities with the children.

The humanitarian worker and reciprocity

My frequent association with the different institutional and humanitarian caregivers within the settlement portrayed me as a relief- and humanitarian worker in the presence of guardians. As an outsider conducting research in what was generally constructed to be vulnerable community, it is important to check constantly and keep in touch with the key gatekeepers. My continued interaction with the different gatekeepers fuelled high expectations from the children's guardians (home gatekeepers). These expectations arose from the fact that they perceived me as one of the gatekeepers, who was on a work visit to the settlement. Through my research assistant, I further became aware that research and other related activities conducted by outsiders, like myself, were often reciprocated with monetary compensation or other tangible benefits. To some of the guardians, there would emerge a compensation arrangement even though they had been made aware that the children's participation was voluntary. I learned that some individuals and organisations would still devise ways to reciprocate informally, outside their agreed ethical positions.

Furthermore, the community's increased interaction with different aid agencies, which provided tangible support to them, equally positioned my research activity along the same perspective through the lens of some of the caregivers. These thoughts were fuelled further when children returned home with participatory items and refreshments at the end of each day. As some of the children would return the next day and share the expectations of their guardians, this raised an ethical dilemma which necessitated returning to two guardians to resolve these concerns. While such situations gave rise to unique ethical concerns, I found it important address these issues individually, first by appreciating the guardian's viewpoint. It is important to note that all the guardians to the children with whom I worked were also refugees. As such, they also had their own needs, and to some, using children as a means to an end was one way of actualising their own immediate needs.

In one of these situations, the guardian was concerned as to why the child returned home with refreshments which were not enough to be shared with the other siblings. A situation like this required revisiting the key issues of my research with the guardian, such as free participation and no remuneration. Such situations further underlined my thoughts as to how important it

was to continuously maintain a rapport with guardians of the children aged eight to thirteen years old. This was because most of the activities that I engaged with these children were done out of home in the spaces that were largely controlled by the children.

In a way, as my relationships and connections with the children grew stronger, a quiet disconnection was slowly taking place with the guardians. Reflecting on this and the strategy I devised to resolve these two ethical dilemmas, I was also drawn to think that situations like these can potentially cause guardians to withdraw consent for the participation of children under their care. I soon saw the need to keep in touch with the guardians, often passing by their homes for a casual conversation in the evenings on my way to or from the playgrounds. Sometimes I bought cobs of maize or sugarcane that was hawked or sold in the trading centre. Chatting away while enjoying maize or sugarcane with the household really kept the conversations going. These repeated visits-built trust and nurtured lasting relations between the family and I, so I could easily count on them to support the participation of the children selected from their households.

In another incident, I was expected to compensate a guardian for consent for child participation with an intellectual contribution to a developing project idea. A religious leader who had taken in some of the alone children into his own household, was fascinated by my particular interest in listening to the children's voices through my research. He argued that caring for orphaned and alone children was his Christian calling, and he was in the process of establishing a child-based organisation to support needy children. I therefore assumed an advisory role on this child development project. This role involved offering project writing and possible funding advice, as well as insights on how to establish and register a community-based organisation within Uganda. My execution of this stretched for a few more months, even after the fieldwork had been completed. I was drawn to believe that some of the girl participants who approached me to help them to find sponsors for their education and other basic needs, were motivated by thoughts raised in my engagements with their guardian, because he had confided to them the essence of my meetings with him in the evenings when we had had discussions outside the research work that I had been engaged in with them.

Also, reconciling my positionality as a researcher and father was extremely challenging in some situations. Sometimes, my empathy as a father manifested and overshadowed my primary role as a researcher. Such situations arose from narratives that were challenging to talk about, resulting from the reflections of children who had found themselves in demanding situations.

These included moments of separation from family members when they commenced their journeys, and travelling long distances on foot, sometimes without water or food.

David: Tell me about in between that movement there. How was it in terms
        of food, in terms of sleeping, your safety?

Atem: Even food was also a problem for us

David: Okay. So how many times would you eat like in a day?

Atem: Only one

David: Only one! And this could be food given in the reception centre

Atem: Yes

David: So, whom did you come with, who helped you to come this way, just
         you and your brother, you came on your own?

Akur: My uncle was given money for us to come.

David: Why didn't your uncle come?

Akur: He said that he will not come.

David: So, he remained?

Akur: Yes!

David: The money which your uncle gave you, was it enough to buy
         something to eat also or to buy some water.

Akur: No, we did not even buy food and water. For us we ate before we left.
         The lorry people took all money to bring me and my brother to Nimule

David: So, when was the next time you ate some food and drunk water?

Akur: From Elegu. there was biscuit there in Elegu.

David: So, in Nimule, nobody gave you any food?

Akur: No!

David: Weren't you very hungry?

Akur: Yes, but nothing to do

David: Not even water?

Akur: But we drink water, there is a bore hole.

David: From now Nimule to Elegu, you said you walked?

Akur: Yes!

David: How long did it take you to walk?

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Akur: I think around 30 minutes.

David: And in these 30 minutes, you walked with other people?

Akur: No, we were two only.

The excerpts are from separate conversations with two boys, each narrating their moments of leaving their homes without an adult family member, adapting to earlier days with limited food supply. Such was the narrative for most of the children, and some of these aroused painful memories for them. These reminiscences were expressed with different emotions, including teary eyes, prolonged moments of silence, murmurs or even just one-word answers. On several occasions, I contemplated refraining from engaging with the children's earlier migratory experiences, but I also wondered whether steering clear of these experiences did not amount to silencing their voices, in a way. Chase et al. (2019), on their research experience with unaccompanied children, similarly expressed a shared sense of repeated discomfort that emerged from discussing experiences and the impact of issues surrounding children's loneliness, exclusion, discrimination, and racism.

I explored my own childhood experiences of internal displacement to reciprocate in some of these challenging moments during group and individual discussions. While doing this, my concern was not to appear to be patronising towards the children, but rather to suggest to them that I related very well to their experiences. Opening up to some of the children aged fourteen to seventeen years about related experiences proved therapeutic as it allowed children to recollect their own thoughts and presented them with *a get to know me moment*, more so as they probed me for deeper insights of my own internal forced migratory experiences.

In this research, my construct of working with children is combined with the notion of researching with children. The concept working with children thus appears to signify children's active participation and co-ownership of the research processes. While working with children around the topic of *"the important places to me in the settlement,"* one of the girls did not show up on one of the days and none of her friends knew why she had not done so. A visit to her home later that day revealed that the scabies infection on her body had spread to her fingers, and she could no longer grip pencils and other materials that she worked with. This girl was from one of the child-headed households with which I was working. After witnessing how advanced the infection was and the discomfort it caused her, I agreed with her sister (guardian) to have her treated. In the days that followed I visited her to check on how her recovery was progressing. Sometimes, I would visit her on my own and sometimes I went with her friends.

In reflecting on moments such as these, I am drawn to argue that reciprocity can be diverse during research processes, by sometimes demanding a researcher to be dynamic within the positionality that it presents itself. Being duty-bound, ethically, to ensure the safety and wellbeing of my research participants and drawing on my parental empathy, I argue that such research moments that evoke our empathy and care are of paramount importance and serve to remind us of the importance of treating research as a social encounter. Chase et al. (2019, p. 469), argue that *"changes in how we go about research with potentially marginalised constituents of people are fundamentally shaping our roles as researchers and ultimately our position within the research context."* Repeated visits forged a bond between the children and me. It was difficult to ignore the emotions and feelings of fear, for instance, from the sudden absence of a child or their being unwell. It is under such circumstances that I sometimes found myself helping children where I could. I further drew on the experience of Abebe (2009b), with street children in Ethiopia, in which he argues that attending to children's immediate and personal circumstances reciprocates for their time and also facilitates acceptance, providing researchers entrance into their worlds.

The playing and playful adult

One of the identities that I adopted was that of the playing adult. Throughout the research, I learned from the children themselves and from observing them that play was an especially important aspect of their childhood. To facilitate outdoor play, the settlement had several play spaces, some of which were just bare playgrounds, while others were fitted with playing equipment. The demarcated child-friendly spaces, which I have discussed in the previous chapter, were also the other spaces intended to facilitated play. This, however, does not mean that children did not utilise other spaces, such as their backyards and compounds, to play.

My use of the playing and playful adult role was aimed at overcoming barriers, such as power and generational differentials that manifested between myself, as an adult, and the children. Eventually, the children accepted me in their play spaces. Initially, my appearance in the children's play spaces seemed to bother some of them; for instance, during football games, the boys would sometimes restrain from arguments or fights because of my presence. However, as time passed, they began to ignore my presence and would engage in their arguments. To fit my playing adult role into scenarios such as this, I refrained from interfering with disagreements that emerged from play spaces, even if sometimes the children's body language suggested that my opinion as an adult should prevail. To maintain my playing adult role, I thought that

intervening or giving my opinion would put me in a compromising position. The children would eventually find their way of resolving conflict that emerged in these play spaces.

Important to note also, is that while in these play spaces, children assumed a more assertive all-knowing positionality, which was not the case in adult-controlled spaces, such as their homes. This was one of the reasons I chose these spaces as areas to initiate follow-up conversations with the children. Even within their spaces, some children wielded more power than others. I observed that this allowed them to dominate others, especially when they disagreed. Yet, at the same time, those with more power – usually the older boys – also assumed the role of mediators whenever conflict ensued. Assuming a silent but also neutral adult role in these spaces allowed me to observe and witness such moments, but also reinforced my neutrality and continued to guarantee my unobtrusive presence in these spaces.

It must be noted that assuming the neutral adult role can be challenging, especially at the onset of the role. This is because children are consciously aware of your adult presence in their space, and they keep anticipating that as an adult your judgment will prevail over some issues of which you do not approve. For instance, whenever children disagreed on issues within their play spaces, they tried to resolve the conflicts among themselves. But even in doing this, their bodily gestures, such as glances in my direction, did suggest that I, as the adult, had the power to intervene and resolve this. This exemplified how much power is centred around the adult being within children's worlds. How such power can be shifted to create a balance with the children is dependent on how successfully and consistently the adult plays the neutral role he assumes. In my situation, I chose to ignore the indirect invitation to decide over their disagreements. This was something that the children adapted to and with time, they engaged in their conflict resolution matters within their play spaces, without being affected by my adult presence.

My role as playing adult sometimes involved not only being present in play spaces, but also playing with the children. When I walked the streets, sometimes I found the boys playing dodge[4] ball and would take a few moments to allow them to dodge me. There was always excitement from all of them if I was successfully dodged. In the boreholes where I would sometimes pass by to cool off from the hot sun, or to refill my water bottle, I would join the

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4 Dodge ball was a game of football that boys played on the streets and in their compounds at home. It was played by a minimum of four boys. It involved one player who would be in the middle of the rest tackling to get the ball from the opponent who on the other hand had to dodge him and pass the ball to the other.

girls in their shoot[5] ball games. Equally important to highlight is the gendered dimension within this role as a playing and playful adult male who crosses gender lines by playing shoot ball with the girls. In doing so, it evoked much humour from the girls and made me more accessible as an adult male researcher to the girls.

My moments of shoot ball did not only evoke humour among the girls in the borehole, but also with the women who would come to fetch water. Shoot ball, even from my own childhood memories, was constructed as a feminine game. While this play moment drew humour and appeared to be self-deprecating, in my opinion it made me seem more accessible to the young women within my research environment. Some of them referred to it later during our group artwork activities. My reflection of this is that there was gendering of play in these play spaces. Football and the play space it occupied was predominantly a boys' game in a boys' space. It allowed them to assert their masculinities by the way they played and resolved their conflicts. As I stated before that the dominant argument from my research space was that shoot ball was a girl's game and my engaging in it was possibly seen as a queer behaviour. A further insight into the gendering of this game was the borehole space where it was often played. For a long time, the role of fetching water has been predominantly associated with girls and women. During the entire time devoted to fieldwork, women and girls always occupied the borehole space. It was in the moments of waiting for their turns to fill up their jerrycans with water, that the girls had a moment to play. This utilisation of this waiting time also suggests that the girls try to fit their play time within such assigned gender roles. Unlike the boys, they seemed to have less play time. I have discussed this further in Chapter Seven, in which the absence of girls in out-of-home spaces is highlighted.

In these different play moments, I found conversations with children easy to sustain, as there was no overbearing fear or ever looming respect that adults received in the presence of children. I argue that if it did exist, the playing adult role had redefined this to a more sustained and balanced adult-child relationship.

I explored this identity further to help me explain to the children in the age category eight to thirteen years of age, during a plate-tossing game, the purpose of the research and how they

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5 Shoot ball was a game that was predominantly played by girls using a small fiber ball (about the size of a tennis ball). For the game to be played, it required at any one time three girls, with one girl being in the middle and the other two in the opposite ends attempting to shoot the one in the middle with the ball. How long the person in the middle-played shoot ball depended on their swiftness and agility to dodge an impending ball from the shooter.

would participate. More importantly, it positioned me as an adult who did not know everything, as is reflected in the diary excerpt below.

> *"...I equally picked up a plate & also tossed it in the air. My plate toss did not take to the air like the children's & for a moment, they all stopped & laughed at me. I smiled back, then they spoke almost all at the same time, but I did not make meaning of what they were saying as they spoke in Madi...one girl then came with her own plate & demonstrated to me how the plate should be tossed into the air. My second attempt went fairly well but the children nodded their heads as if to say that I could do better than that...the next instruction given to me was about my standing position and how I should position my legs. This time, the toss was a good one & they all screamed in excitement & murmured in Madi that 'you have now learnt'..."* **(Field diary excerpt 2020, playground group conversation).**

In the above reflection, contrary to the children's perceptions of me as an all-knowing adult, my shortcomings demonstrated during this game possibly suggested to them that, after all, adults are not perfect beings. The power shift in the playing adult role tended to shift to the children as the powerholders and decision-makers. Their actions, as reflected here, and in other play activities that I participated in with them, suggested that children can learn to trust adults and get along with them in their spaces, should the adult accept to adopt the least adult role, as suggested by Mandell (1991). Similarly, this resonates with the argument of Fine and Sandstrom (1988), which suggests that a researcher should aim at becoming a friend to their research subjects, by interacting with them in the most trusted way possible without necessarily having any explicit authority role. As the playing adult role cultivated a relationship of trust, I also think that it aided me in further transcending the boundaries of age and authority, as children allowed me to access to their hidden cultures *(*ibid*).

In further reflecting on my adult playing role, I am drawn to argue that child researchers who fully assume this role also become playful adults. From my field experiences, I transitioned to a playful adult whom children found to be full of fun. In my playful adult positionality, I was happy to be ridiculed and teased by my young participants. From this experience, I learned that an openness to mockery while working with children is an important research and pedagogic

activity that allows relationship creation, while, at the same time, facilitates knowledge production.

Navigating language diversities through interpreters

In my research, interpretation played a pivotal role in forwarding several research processes. My initial aim, while at the development stages of the research, was to use Kiswahili, because it is largely spoken in Eastern Africa. However, on the advice of the ethics committee in Uganda, I engaged the assistance of interpreters who also doubled as my research assistants. Working with interpreters did generate different concerns, which had to be navigated continuously. Since the interpreters were adults, I was concerned as to how to prepare the interpreters to work with children.

It was inevitable that I would have to coach them on some of the skills they would have to use, such as how to manage their adult power dominance over children, as well as their body language and voice, while communicating with children. The importance of enforcing confidentiality during and after the research was also stressed.

All interpreters signed confidentiality agreements in the presence of the children. It was important for the children to understand the role of the interpreters and the principle which bound the interpreters and myself. Todorova (2019) equally emphasises the importance of skilling interpreters who render assistance in humanitarian situations. He argues that training interpreters helps them to develop empathetic reactions and provide a voice in situations where there is a language gap. In so doing, my purpose of using interpreters was not to overshadow the children or have the interpreters usurp their agency, but rather to explore alternative ways of listening to children in situations where language diversities manifest. Although interpretating presents its own shortcomings, my experience, revealed that minority children's voices can remain muted if a researcher does not explore and stretch beyond their own language and communication abilities.

I worked with interpreters who were also refugees and were living in the same settlement with the children. As they had a shared background with the children, I anticipated that they were better placed to understand the feelings and emotions children expressed during our interactions and they would in turn transmit this to me. I found that working with refugee interpreters hastened the establishment of relationships between the interpreters and the children, as well as with their guardians. One of the interpreters was a youth leader, who also mobilised many children and young people to participate in footballing activities in the

settlement. The other two interpreters were volunteers in the child-friendly spaces. This shared background nurtured the establishment of trust between children and the interpreters. Prior to the tele-focus groups, the interpreter was pivotal in establishing and sustaining the relationship between the guardians and myself. I draw on the example of Todorova (2019), who argues that working with interpreters with shared similar identities could also help to create cultural connections between refugees and humanitarian workers.

However, this is not to assume that children shared completely similar or identical cultures with the interpreters. Interactions with children indicated an existence of their own peer culture, for instance Corsaro (2009), opines that such cultures are worth documenting and studying in their own right, independent of adult perspectives. Having the children build a relationship with the interpreters was important in helping me to strike a balance between them and the interpreters. This manoeuvre was learnt from my reflections of how the interpretation was impacting on the aspects of my interaction with the children.

It was necessary to reflect on the argument of Miller's (1998), that refugees might feel inadequately understood by outsiders who have no connection to their lived experiences (cf: Todorova, 2019). This partly explained why it was important for the interpreters to establish a bond with the children. This, I opined, would help to resolve my dilemma of how interpretation biases could possibly suppress the impartiality within my research. I learned to trust the outcomes of interpreted interactions, as children developed bonds with the interpreters and could easily and freely express themselves. Additionally, allowing children to express themselves using their first (native) languages, also emphasised their agency. This was because first language usage encouraged them to be as expressive as possible; the use of interpreters to relay the children's thoughts emphasised this notion, as I encouraged children through their interpreters to speak their minds freely. This is not to assume that children did not speak English at all, only that they could more comfortably express themselves in their native languages. With time, some of the children used both English and their native languages. This helped to overcome some of the concerns that arose in respect of the impact of interpretation on impartiality.

Rather than see my research interpreters as enablers of communication, I saw them as active partners in the entire fieldwork process. In addition to working with the children, they also, to an extent, helped to demystify the lens through which I was seen within my research community members. For instance, at the trading centre in Block C, which was the meeting point with one of the interpreters, my relationship with this interpreter (research assistant) was

humorously constructed by the boda-bodas (motor bike riders) as a student-teacher relationship. When I sought to understand this analogy further, he explained that at the beginning of fieldwork, some people thought that I worked for the humanitarian and refugee support organisations. The perspective of being a student studying child was one that, according to the interpreter, saw appreciated only after I had been seen on numerous occasions spending more time with children than with any other group of people in the settlement. To be my interpreter's "student" was more of a direct Madi dialect interpretation, implying that my interpreter knew more about his community than I did. I was therefore learning more from him as I went almost everywhere in his company.

Further, during the tele-focus group discussions, although the interpreters took instructions from me, their agency was revealed in their ability to work independently, by planning and scheduling meetings and activity appointments with the children and their guardians. In a way, they felt responsible for both the children and me, knowing how important their role was in completing our interactions.

How my residing in the settlement was perceived

As highlighted previously, my decision to live in the settlement was motivated by the desire to keep both the children and me safe from possible Coronavirus infection. Living in a tent within what was referred to as the base camp within the settlement, was a worthwhile experience. It presented the opportunity leap into my ethnographical work with children, as it brought me closer to experiencing, exploring, and understanding children's forced migratory realities in ways that I would have not have otherwise done if I had been living outside the settlement. In living within the settlement, I soon began to take a keen interest in what I saw or heard beyond my pre-arranged engagements with the children. I took evening walks on my own, some of which ended up in children's play spaces where I informally engaged with them. Apart from this, I also began to take an interest in other things that I heard happening around me late in the evenings. It was through this gained consciousness that I started to listen to the voices of children singing, occasionally accompanied by beating drums. Within the silence of the night, these sounds were loud, possibly amplified by the echoes from different valleys within the settlement.

From informal dialogues with the children, I learned that folk culture was an important part of their lives. In such evening musical moments within their homesteads, they sang and danced to folksongs of their South Sudanese origin. Arguably, such moments were experienced as

ways of connecting with the past, a deep connection with their own culture and traditions while in the diaspora. These informal conversations revealed that these were also playtime moments for children within their neighbourhoods before bedtime. Because I often heard children singing, clapping, and sometimes accompanied by drumming at night, their actions suggested that play was not a time-bound concept for them, as they engaged in such activities at any time.

Related to this observation, I also witnessed how important music and dance were to children and their community during a practice session in one of the local churches. Three of my participants had skipped an afternoon appointment with me and when I later bumped into them at the church, I understood that they had foregone the appointment to be at church for the music and dance practice. My interest in seeing what was happening in the church was piqued by hearing and following the beating of loud drums, children's voices singing, and several people who were headed in the direction of the church. At the church, I observed that children and young people entirely attended this event. They had arranged themselves into different dancing troupes, according to their ages, and were rehearsing ahead of a wedding ceremony planned for the next day. One of the children (Ajak), whose forced migration story (orphaned and caring for her other siblings) was of interest to my research, led one of the dancing troupes.

While attending these rehearsing activities, I watched children work together through their own leadership, without interference from adults. It seemed to me that the leadership dynamics were shaped by a person's outstanding dancing and singing skills. I observed that they took the lead in rehearsals and the others followed their instructions. It was interesting to note, also that leadership dynamics transcended gender divides, as it was not unusual to see a girl or boy instruct a dance group of either sex. In the midst of rising clouds of dust from the stamping of their feet, it was clear that this activity evoked different feelings of excitement and happiness. To understand how important this activity was, it had attracted many spectators, both adults and children, from the settlement who cheered the dancing troupes. In experiencing such moments, I found the children to be expressive beings, who greatly impacted on one another's lives. In witnessing these and other moments in the evenings where the children interacted and engaged with one another, I posit that my living in the settlement positioned me as an ever-present adult researcher. This validates the principle of ethnographic research, where the researcher must immerse himself into the community, becoming a part of his study phenomena.

Furthermore, recollections of my lived moments in the settlement, were also inspired by a twelve-year-old girl's inquisitiveness about my life in the tent during a drawing activity from the topic "*the things I do in the settlement.*" She asked me if living in the settlement and in a

tent with them did not make me a refugee too. In children's recollection of their earlier days, they spoke of times (nights) spent in tents (often referred to as carpets) in reception centres and in the settlement. In those earlier days, they also spoke of being washed by the heavy rains (beaten by rains) and being given tarpaulins (tents) to build shelters in the settlement. This girl did not see my living in a tent as different from her own experience or that of other refugees. The tent had become an identity synonymous with being a refugee and in her analysis of my situation at that time, I seemingly fitted her description of being a refugee.

Adapting to adult-child power differentials

While some researchers have argued that issues of power will always be present and adults cannot avoid being in control of research agenda (cf: Abebe, 2009b), social research involves establishing certain types of relationships between the researcher and the researched, and that these are mediated by power. This is reflected in research paradigms that present research as an instrument for eliciting information from the researched, in which the researcher is expected to minimise his/her influence under the guise of ''objectivity'' (Pattman, 2015).

In both the previous and this chapter, I have revealed attempts to democratise the social relations between myself and the children through various activities such as being around their spaces and participating with them in informal activities and games. Corsaro (1996) weighs in on the power differential debate through the ''typical adult'' perspective, whereby he urges researchers working with children to adopt the ''incompetent adult'' role. It is his opinion that adult researchers learn not to mind being bossed around by children. Entering children's spaces meant continuously navigating and negotiating emerging power differentials, and, understanding that ignoring emerging adult-child power differentials in a child research process would undermine the child-centredness of my entire research process.

It is feminist practice to consider unequal power relations between the researcher and research participants. Self-reflexivity on the part of researchers can democratise these relations in a context-sensitive manner. Thus, Stanley and Wise (1983)raise concerns about power and self-reflexivity in research; they argue that relations of power are constructed in the very process of conducting research and that these are particularly acute when they are hidden. They further argue that this is when researchers seek to minimise their influence by constructing apparent conditions of objectivity and relate to those they are researching as "mere objects there for the researcher to do research on" (1983, p. 164). I observed the emergence of the initial power-differential issues during telephone conversations with children. First, during the informal

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dialogues in which I was trying to build relationships with children and, later, during the focus group discussions. During these informal dialogues, some children referred to me as *"Sir"* as opposed to "David," as I had wished and had urged them to do. In some of the repeated conversations children continuously preferred to use *"Sir"* in their reference to me, especially during the greeting formalities. My immediate thoughts were to move away from the greeting formality *"how are you doing?"* which I thought invited the *"sir"* when children responded. During the focus groups, particularly the one with girls only, one girl constantly referred to me as *"Sir"* throughout the discussion. In between the focus group discussions, I would remind the children that they should just call me "David." However, I noticed a mixed reaction to this from the distinct groups. For instance, in the mixed group, there were murmurs about this and nothing more was said by the children when I asked them what they thought. On the other hand, in the girls' only group, they said it was okay with them, but not before long, some of them would use *"sir"* and be apologetic about the error and then switch to David.

During the face-to-face interactions, I noticed that signifiers of power, other than the common deployment of "Sir" by participants, began to emerge. For instance, during the follow-up focus group conversations[6], when I joined the mixed group and the girls' group, they had both setup a teacher-student delivery classroom seating arrangement. In both groups, they stood to their feet immediately when I entered the space where they had arranged for our discussions to take place and did not sit down again until I asked them to.

These actions all resonate with the ways childhood is constructed within Ugandan society. The adult is constructed as superior over the child in almost all circumstances. The action of children standing up and referring to me as *"sir"* was something that they had been socialised to do within home and school space. It was perceived as a way of demonstrating respect for the adult. The children's actions also resonated with my own childhood memories, of the adult superiority and the entitlements that came with it, such as titling "sir" or "madam" and offering your seat to the adult.

In further illustrating these power differentials, I argued in Chapter Three that children's silence denoted their agency to abstain from certain topics that they felt they were not comfortable discussing. Alternatively, the silence could have suggested an overbearing power differential that could have limited children's comfort to engage in conversations with me during the initial

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6 The use of follow up focus group discussions here and elsewhere in this thesis is in reference to the first face to face group discussions I had with children when it became possible to meet with them after the easing of the lockdown measures. I refer to them as follow up because they are preceded by the initial tele-focus group discussions

moments of the fieldwork. Chase et al. (2019), offer a related opinion, arguing that participants can at times assert their power in complex ways, either through resistance, by remaining silent or even expressing certain emotions such as anger. In so doing, the power that the adult researcher wields – even as an outsider – may not be anything different for the children to that of the adults in their everyday lives. Bucknall (2014), illustrates this in the argument that children will always find the adult to be the *"other."* The *"otherness"* of the adult she opines rests on the manifestation of the power differentials between the adult researcher and the children researched.

My positionality in negotiating power differentials also involved acceptance of these differences between the children and myself, then working towards developing a friendly role with them. Rather than rush children of fourteen to seventeen years of age into individual and personal accounts of their lived experiences, I opted to explore avenues that would strengthen the relationships first established through phone interactions. I did not want to take it for granted that previously manufactured relations through phone conversations would sustain face-to-face conversations.

Reflecting on the tele-focus group discussions, I chose from them some of the key issues that had emerged and used them as icebreakers for group conversations that followed. Using this technique helped children to recall more easily the issues previously discussed during the phone group discussions and they were able to join into the discussions easily. To aid this technique, I recalled the children who had actively engaged in discussing certain issues and asked them to lead follow-up discussions on these topics. In a way, this approach tilted the balance of power, with the children taking the lead and guiding their peers in topics they were either passionate about or familiar with. This resonated with Hill (2006), affirmation that peers in groups can help to dilute adult-child power dynamics as opposed to direct "adult to individual child" initial engagement, in which the child sees the adult as a stranger.

In research processes, adults cannot pretend not to have power over child participants (Abebe, 2009b). It therefore becomes important to find ways of checking these power relations and Abebe (ibid), suggests that this must be done in context of the adult power that children are exposed to within their everyday spaces such as school, homes, or communities. I suggested to the children that we re-arrange our seating arrangement, opting for the circular arrangement in which I assumed a seat between them. In this way, I sought to redirect myself from being the focus of attention and rather have it shifted to any person within the group who was talking. Throughout the entire duration of the fieldwork, I found it important to keep a very casual dress

code. Like most of the boys, I dressed in shorts and t-shirts, something that seemed to amuse the children at the beginning because they expected adults to dress in a more formal way, but then eventually my dress code was accepted and soon became normal to them. While working with the eight- to thirteen-year-old group, we had adapted to using a large straw mat for our participatory activities. I opted to sit down with the children while engaging in these activities. Sometimes the children did their activities while lying on their bellies and I adapted to this too. Because boys and girls are conditioned to sit in specific ways when on the floor, they took to these seating arrangements. The boys would sit on the floor and cross their legs while the girls sat sideways with their legs together and one hand supporting their seating posture. I identified more with the boys' seating posture because even as a young boy I had been conditioned to sit like this and still fund this position comfortable.

Positioning children as knowledge producers and learners in relation to their own experiences

To me, the child-centredness of this research involved children taking the lead in discussing their experiences, using approaches that encouraged and facilitated conversations. This involved my own consciousness of my positionality as an adult and the impact it would have on participation. By children taking the central stage in discussing their unaccompanied journeys and lives in Uganda, the research facilitated child agency. I had constructed the refugee children as agents and positioned them as both knowledge producers and learners in their forced migratory experiences. From the phone interactions to face-to-face dialogues, I allowed the children to decide and guide me on the direction of our interactions. At the onset of our interactions, I informed them that they were the authorities of their own stories and that no one could tell their stories better than they did. Important to me, was appreciating children as knowledge creators and the co-construction role they had assumed in this research, was one where I was positioning them as co-researchers. This involved allowing the children to know that they knew more than I did, their stories were to inform my entire learning experiences of their migratory lives. In further forwarding the child knowledge production agenda, I also allowed the children to know that they possessed the power to choose what they said and what they did not want to say.

While I appreciated children as contributors to knowledge production through this research process, the children questioned this positionality. This, it can be argued, emerged from firstly, the dominant spaces of research, which limit the view of the children in their own affairs where

the adult perspective to view and represent children's thoughts is used. And secondly, the socio-cultural spaces which continue to have a strong influence on children and childhood, particularly emphasising the child as recipient of adult processes and being passive as opposed to being agent and active. When I mentioned, during the mixed group discussion, that they knew more than I did and I was aiming at learning from each one of them, one of the boy participants challenged the knowledge producing notion and rather positioned themselves as learners who I would orient to learn from me. In so doing, this child's perspective was one that positioned me as an all-knowing adult.

> *"One girl asked why I thought that they knew more than I, do & yet it's supposed to be the adults who know more. I told her that it's not always true that adults know more or everything, sometimes we don't know and they - children - know somethings more than adults & it's therefore important for adults to also hear children out and learn from them." (Field diary excerpts 2020, playground group conversation)*

This construction of the adult as the knowledge creator and the giver of knowledge was an identity role that adults in this society have assumed and enjoyed for a long time. In their everyday interactions, the children argued that they always learned from adults. From the children's perspective, adulthood was equated with knowledge and childhood with limited knowledge levels. Knowledge per se was thus one-sided, emanating from the adult. I found this to be typical of the adult-dominated spaces like schools, homes, and even religious places, where the place of the child was one defined by their assumed socialised role, primarily as a learner.

In further exploring the child as a producer of knowledge, I noticed that although I constructed refugee children as active agents, they did not necessarily feel this way. They explicitly reverted their agency role to the adults in arguments like the adults know it all. It was important to help children know and understand that their contribution to knowledge production was not to mean that they knew more than adults did, or the other way round, but rather they were the authorities on their own experiences. This put them in a position to best explain these experiences first-hand as opposed to second- or third-hand accounts by others. As minority children, I argue that alone and unaccompanied refugee childhoods are easily reinforced by

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dominant notions of becoming adults as a way of escaping from an undesirable childhood, characterised by suffering and hardship. This is further grounded in the minority child approach, which argues that children, like other minority groups such as women and ethnic groups, are marginalised and exploited by existing socio-generational structures (James et al., 1998). It is within such constructs that I sought to explore an existing silent agency within the children seeing them not just as learners but also as contributors to the knowledge production by using their own experiences.

  In appreciating how children co-constructed knowledge, I came to understand that knowledge construction is not necessarily only in what is spoken but was also displayed in the children's actions which accompanied their spoken words, even more so the moment in which both of these happened (Clark & Statham, 2005; Okimait, 2014). In other words, understanding children as human beings involves becoming a part of their own actions in their own spaces (Prout & James, 1990a). Visiting children's spaces like playgrounds, playing football and other games, were my way of being a part of my participants' lives and in constructing our social reality together. Here, their agency was both visually and verbally constructed, sometimes one explaining the other. For instance, how children resolved their conflicts in the playground confirmed the existence of negotiation and coexistence dynamics among children within their own spaces.

How methods and techniques facilitated my identity and positionality

I have previously highlighted in Chapter Three how methods stretched beyond being just data collection instruments. In utilising child-centred participatory methods, they defined my role as an adult participant in the research process who engaged with children as authorities about themselves and contributed with them to the co-production of knowledge. It is worth arguing that the methods used did impact on participation and interaction of both children and me. They shaped emotions, feelings, and actions. Reflecting upon themselves (as adults) in the process of doing empathetic research with children does evoke and trigger different kinds of feelings, which resonate with their own memories of childhood (Thorne, 1993).

When I started working with the children, the immediate position I assumed was that of an adult stranger. During these initial interactions, I could feel the tension between myself and the children when they expressed themselves. Some of them barely spoke, while others were shy. In a focus group of boys alone, these tensions were prevalent during the group discussion under a mango tree. When rain disrupted the meeting and the boys relocated into one of their friends'

rooms which was dark, these tensions eased, because their expressions, and feelings were no longer visible to others. Such tensions have been elaborated on by Fine and Sandstrom (1988), who argue that having access to children does not guarantee their friendship and therefore, there is need for explanations to be able to cultivate social relationships.

My adoption of the friendly adult positionality, for instance, was mainly facilitated by focus groups and interviews. These methods provided fluid grounds upon which trust continued to be built. I explored the benefit of shared humorous moments and tough moments with displays of empathy, everything worked towards breaking the barriers of communication and the tensions around them. Also worth noting is that my positionality as both the playing and playful adult was supported by the artwork activities as well as other moments outside planned activities with children, such as in the playgrounds. As discussed, in Chapter Three these reconstructed ways of refugee children participation in research processes in Uganda. For instance, the intention was to enhance fun-based participation, through facilitating the expression of children's views.

While I could not take it for granted my adult presence and the power it could assert on them, I was drawn to believe that my acceptance to be taught how to play some of their games between the activity breaks, as well as taking moments to play in spaces they had constructed as important to them, had the children ignore my adult presence at least during these moments. Additionally, venturing into children's spaces like playgrounds and water collection points (boreholes) facilitated informal dialogues, which was a technique that allowed me not only to repeat visits to children's spaces but also presented the opportunity to understand them in spaces beyond their homes where to their adult gatekeepers always had more power and control over them, and their actions. When methods are both fun and engaging for the children, it is possible to argue that the adult researcher may not only be the *"playing adult"* through the lens of the children but could also be perceived as *"the other adult."* My engagement in playing activities thus positioned me as the "other adult" who unlike other adults, was spending more time with the children in their spaces and involving myself in some of their activities.

Chapter conclusion

This chapter has explored the different positionalities that I assumed during the fieldwork processes. It has reflected on how these positionalities were constructed while doing fieldwork and has further explored how these identities were constructed and given by not only the children but even by adults within my research environment.

Throughout this chapter, I have challenged some of the popular constructs of myself as a figure of authority by virtue of being an adult but positioning myself as a friendly adult who sought to learn from refugee children who are the authorities about their everyday lives and backgrounds. This, as reflected in the chapter, involved playing with the children in their different spaces and listening to children as they shared their stories and memories. Through continuously negotiating the power that an adult researcher possesses; the chapter has shown that building relations with children can be especially useful in helping adult researchers understand children's worlds as children open up to adults in ways that they usually do not do.

Additionally, the chapter has also highlighted how critical living in the settlement was in forwarding this research. For instance, living in a tent known to the children as a tarpaulin positioned me also as a refugee in their eyes. This, as reflected, created a bond that continued to facilitate learning and knowledge-creation between us. Living within the settlement further led to understanding the children's ways of life during the night. As discussed in the chapter, it is because of living in the settlement that I managed to have time to spend with the children the evenings, playing and chatting with them. Such moments, as I have discussed in this and the previous chapter, are core, because they furthered my critical understanding of the everyday lives of refugee children, venturing into their spaces like playgrounds that would not have otherwise been possible had I not been living in the settlement. Furthermore, this chapter has shown that children's knowledge-creation was a continuous process throughout this research. From living in the settlement, I became aware of the children's night life that was characterised by singing, dancing, and drumming within their homes. The meaning of and how important this was to children, was something that I generated from informal conversations with them.

In this chapter too, I elaborated on how I was seen and perceived by the different adult gatekeepers in the settlement, and how I tried to present myself to them in ways which would facilitate my research with the refugee children living in the settlement. This entailed, for instance, taking time off to visit and chat with them. In essence having the gatekeepers become my friends too was pivotal in addressing their concerns about me, including the voluntary participation of the children under their care without remunerating either them or the children monetarily, as some of them had expected this to happen. The relationship between the researcher and the gatekeepers, is something this chapter emphasises as paramount because of its role in enhancing the research processes.

Finally, the chapter explored the positionality of interpreters in this research. It appreciates the adoption interpretation as an extended voice for listening to the children's views. It raises the

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uncertainties such as fear of misrepresentation of the children's views by interpreters and suggests ways of overcoming such doubts. It offered insights of how relevant interpreters can be if they are seen from a lens as being active agents and participants in research processes. It recommended the need to build a relationship between the interpreter and the children as an important aspect that is illustrated in this chapter, however, the chapter stresses that the child must remain the centre of focus and not the interpreter. In using interpreters, I argued throughout this chapter that the aim is not to silence the children's voices but rather to use interpreters as an extension of their voices. As adult researchers with children, I have further argued that we cannot shy away from doing research with and about children whose language or communication competencies are unfamiliar to us. Rather, we need to find alternative and sustainable approaches, like using interpretation, which allow children to participate more easily.

Chapter 5 : Children's reflections of their earlier refugee lived experiences

Introduction

This is the first analytical chapter where I engage in the emerging discussion from the children's forced migratory experiences. The focus of this chapter is the early forced migratory experiences of the children who informed this research. The chapter begins by discussing the concept of being a refugee from the children's own perspective. In analysing this concept, the children draw themselves into the refugee picture, given their situation. They use their experiences, such as journeys to Uganda, being away from home, being taken care of by humanitarian and relief agencies to construct the identity of being refugees. The chapter further explores the children's experiences about the long journeys undertaken. In so doing, it engages with the emotions, feelings, and other sentiments expressed by children as they recalled moments during these journeys. To illustrate the effect of these journeys on their childhood, this section of this chapter goes on to discuss the memories of a refugee-free childhood as a powerful reflected theme that emerged from a comparative analysis of the children's earlier childhoods in South Sudan. This section concludes by discussing the children's thoughts about their assumed refugee status as alone and unaccompanied. In so doing, the children bring to light differences between them and other refugee children who live with their own family members and relatives.

I conclude this chapter by highlighting and discussing the children's early experiences in Uganda. As I progress in this section, I discuss how children recalled settling and adjusting into life at the refugee settlement, which had become their new home. I do this next to discussions about new relations they constructed, including the different activities that they engaged in during these earlier moments. Evidently, most discussions with the children revealed that they experienced tough times during these moments of their childhood. These challenging times, as discussed later in this section of the chapter, created a nostalgia for their homes and families, with strong emotions and desire to not only return "home" but purposely to be reunited with their family members. Important to note in this chapter, is that it is entirely based on the children's reminiscence of lived experiences that happened in a space of over four years from when they arrived in Uganda as refugees. Furthermore, while it cannot be taken for granted that participants in research processes can always recall historic moments in their lives, let alone be willing to share them with researchers, I find it important to acknowledge how

powerful children's reminiscences were in forwarding this chapter of my research. Their ability to engage through this technique did not only assert their agency but also continued to affirm the role children play in knowledge-creation, guiding adult researchers to understand their worlds by using negotiated methodological styles.

Constructing the notion of being refugee children

The concept *"refugee"* is a familiar one in Uganda, widely known from discursive representations in the media, humanitarian, and relief agencies as well as in the academia. The question arises: how did my research participants understand and experience being refugee children and what significance did they attach to this in relation to how they defined and positioned themselves? These were questions which framed my research and in which I wanted to explore in the participatory and young-person research I conducted with my participants. Rather than taking the concept "refugee" for granted in my research, as if this conjures connotations for my participants which they share more readily with Ugandans, I am interested in tracking themes, as they arise in conversational dialogues between my participants and myself about the concept "refugee."

To facilitate this, I posed questions which picked up on what they say about the temporal processes of becoming refugee children, whether these involve particular symbolic moments, such as leaving their homes, or being formally received into refugee settlements in Uganda, or their longer and everyday experiences of becoming a refugee through relationships they establish with others in the settlement and how they position themselves.

In the context of my research, the concept "refugee" generated much interest in children who participated and engaged in the drawings, walks and other activities and the conversations these stimulated. Indeed, the construct "refugee" took centre stage in many of the discussions we had, as discussed, and illustrated in this and subsequent chapters. It was a concept that helped to define my point of entry into the children's lives and explore their lived experiences in this regard. Through focus groups, my participants and I explored what it meant to be a refugee. This discussion around the refugee concept had children put themselves in the picture as they shared their thoughts and experiences about this.

Separated, forced, alienated; children's multifaceted lens of being refugees

To children, being a refugee was constructed from the point of alienation from their country of origin. Interaction with all the children revealed that they originated from South Sudan and their diversity was evident in their diverse backgrounds, such as languages spoken. Being a refugee was related not just to being away from what they constructed and referred to as their "home country" but being taken away forcefully or against their will. In the children's narratives below, some of them revealed that conflict emanating from war was the push factor that had driven all the children out of South Sudan.

Akech: For me I think when you run away from your country because of war, you become refugee.

Alek: These are people who have been chased from their homeland and sometimes they are orphans, and these are miserable people.

Kuol: They are kind of people who come from their country because of war.

Some of the children had been orphaned by the same war that had forced them out of their country. It was for these reasons that some of the children strongly associated refugeehood to orphanhood. As revealed later in the chapter, some of the children's refugee moments were characterised by difficult moments. A follow up discussion with fifteen-year-old (Alek) to understand her view of refugees as being miserable people, revealed that there was a certain level of emptiness that came with being a refugee. She argued that this emptiness emerged from her inability to have control over certain things like where to live, or even what to eat. To her, having been forced out of her home in the eastern equatorial province of South Sudan, her refugee experience had been characterised by the death of her mother, something she felt had brought both misery and suffering to her and her siblings. In her view, she further argued that her mother would have been alive and with her and her siblings, had it not been for the war in South Sudan.

In further understanding the aspect of war and its relation to children's position as refugees, (Alek) during the tele-focus group discussion further revealed that *"these are people at the time of war, they are being separated from their parents ... and their parents run differently and even them they ran differently."* Through this statement, she alluded to the fact that there

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was an element of separation from family members and relatives. The portrayal of parents and others (them) running differently was to imply that when the war broke out, family members got separated from one another because they each fled to refuge individually. This and other situations, as discussed in the alone and unaccompanied section of the chapter, are examples of how some of the children found themselves on their own.

Taban's experiences of guns as images of war

The association of refugee to images of war was further explained in the children's pictorial and conversational artworks, as illustrated in the topic I asked them to explore on "My journey to Uganda" and elaborated in the discussion below.

David:	Please tell me more about your drawings
Taban:	This one is a gun
David:	Ok! Who does the gun belong to?
Taban:	The army men
David:	So how do you know it belongs to them
Taban:	I saw the guns at the roadblock in Nimule with army men
David:	did they come to you with their guns
Taban:	Yes!
David:	Why?
Taban:	To check our car
David:	Did they find what they were looking for?
Taban:	No!
David:	How did you feel when they came to you with guns?
Taban:	Scared
David:	Why were you scared?
Taban:	Army men can use guns to kill people
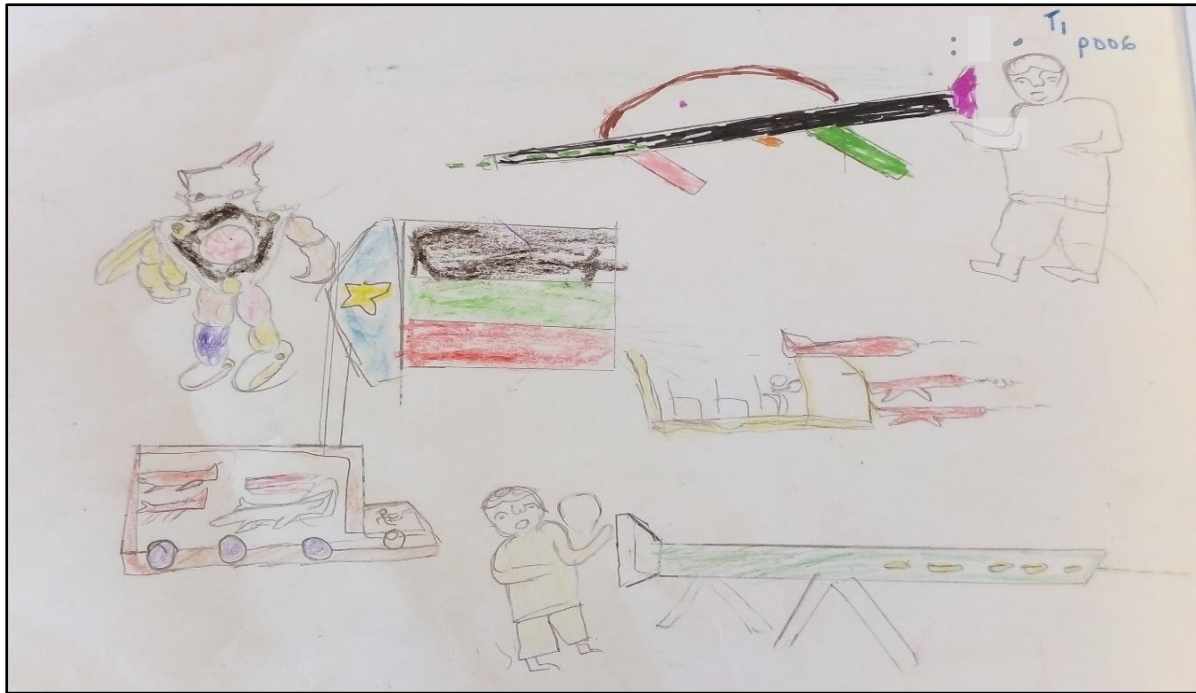
Figure 6:Taban's drawing from the artwork activities' topic one; my journey to Uganda

In this conversation a 13-year-old Taban reflects on his drawing in which he illustrated his experience at a military check point near Nimule border point. In conversation that emerged about his drawing, Taban has vivid memories of soldiers wielding guns, armoured vehicles, and military trucks. In the narrative, he expressed how scared he was, coming face to face with soldiers. At the sight of gun-wielding soldiers, Taban expressed his fear of being killed as he believed that soldiers used the guns to this effect. In his drawing, Taban included a flag of South Sudan as he argued that he remembered one of the trucks having this flag on it. Based on his account of this situation, it was evident that the emergence of war in South Sudan had evoked feelings of fear and insecurity within children. There were different constructions of soldiers and guns, for instance, with some of the children having revealed through their drawings that guns were toys, by portraying themselves shooting at nothing in particular. Most of the boys who had images of guns in their drawings said that they had seen armed men on their refugee journey to Uganda. For these boys, it could be argued that guns became symbols of forced migration to them. They had impacted on them differently, while others adapted them as instruments of play was perhaps their way of showing their resilience past the moments when they interacted with them, to others, they were silent instruments that threatened their very existence.

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From independence to dependency

Furthermore, being a refugee aroused mixed feelings among the children with some arguing that it was neither a good or bad thing more so as it was something that was beyond their own control as reflected in this statement by seventeen-year-old Lam *"… for me I can't say that it's a good or bad thing to live as a refugee because it's not my own making…"* Beyond such feelings were other feelings and concerns that came with being a refugee. Through focus groups, the children further reflected that being a refugee was based on having to depend on other individuals and organisations in another country. These engendered "bad" feelings.

> *…to leave your country and to rely on some other people or some other organisations and for me I feel bad being in another country…* **(Tele-FGD 2020, boys & girls)**

> *…When you run from your country to another country, you will be called a refugee because everything will be given to you freely.* **(Tele-FGD 2020, girls only)**

The above excerpts from both focus group discussions suggested, that since the children had found themselves out of South Sudan and into Uganda as refugees, it created a dependency situation. Although they suggested that they received everything freely, some of them felt bad about having to rely on organisations and individuals that they barely knew because these organisations decided what they would receive and not otherwise. I found these emotions expressed to resonate with those of Ethiopian and Eritrean refugees who opined that being refugees reduced them to being beggars in North America (McSpadden & Moussa, 1993). From my own observations, while living in the settlement, having to depend entirely on others had structured children's lives beyond their own control. For instance, on days when there was food rationing in the settlement, the children would forego their other daily activities just to ensure that they were at the rationing centre receiving their food.

Whereas children shared their perspectives about their dependency situations including the inadequacy of food rations for instance, dependency also confined them to their refugee settlement. Each child within a household had to be registered to qualify for humanitarian or relief assistance. In my discussions with children, they spoke of family sizes and family cards.

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The family size was to mean the official registered number of refugees living in a household and whose names were reflected in that household's family card. It was this mechanism that was used in the distribution of relief services. Seventeen-year-old (Atong) who had relocated from Bidi-bidi settlement with her two brothers to join her aunt, who was family size two, said that the five of them had to survive on food rationed for a family size two, until her aunt, together with her two brothers and cousin decided to return to South Sudan. Whereas she and her brothers were able to relocate to another settlement, some of the children were hesitant to join their relatives and family members after learning that they lived in other settlements within or beyond Adjumani. This to some, was because they were uncertain about the continuity of their relief support if they relocated, based on the dynamics and circumstances which had placed them in their present spaces. To others, they were uncertain about the presence of these family members in these places and so they could not attempt to move. Some also said it was too expensive to go to some of these places, like Bidi-bidi in Yumbe.

Children's reflections of being alone and unaccompanied

During the focus group discussions, I also explored the children's perspective of being unaccompanied. My intention was later to use the emerging discussion in the in-depth interviews, specifically exploring the moment each child became unaccompanied or alone. During the group discussions, the children reflected on their unaccompanied status, the circumstances, and moments when they assumed the unaccompanied status, while others recalled the situation that led them to being on their own and assuming the status of alone refugee children.

Atong: We came with our neighbour because our mother went back to Torith…

Kuol: When they died, they left me alone, that is when I came here with my auntie, but she remained in Nimule…

Riak: I came with my brother; we left our dad there in South Sudan but suddenly dad was killed.

Lam: For me I lost my mother, my father is still there but I do not know where he is, I lost my mother before the war and I have a brother, we are three…

Majok: I came alone.

Majok: When the war started, I ran my own way and now I am alone

> Majok: Even my parents do not know where I ran to
>
> Majok: [***] told me my mother & father are there in Yumbe
>
> Akur: For me I come with my brother.
>
> Akur: No, before we came there, we were living at our home.
>
> Akur: My uncle gave us money to come.
>
> Akur: He said that he will not come.

These shared individual experiences indicated moments where the children lost their family ties. They also suggest that children were motivated to travel alone because some of them were in the company of a sibling and other people, not necessarily family members, who were on their way to Uganda. Atong's story, for example revealed that her mother entrusted her and her two brothers to their neighbour along the way as she returned to their home in Torith to find her mother (their grandmother). It was at this point that Atong and her siblings experienced being alone and unaccompanied. While in the company of their neighbour, Atong revealed that she (the neighbour) was more concerned about her own children and did not help them as she had been requested to do. She further argued that her younger brothers became her primary responsibility from the time when her mother returned to their home in Torith. On arrival in Uganda, they were received and registered as unaccompanied children. Like Atong, Kuol also found himself arriving in Uganda alone after his accompanying auntie decided to remain at the Nimule border point. He further revealed that she, despite this, encouraged him to continue to Uganda in anticipation of a better life in Uganda, as opposed to South Sudan where they were coming from.

Related to Atong and Kuol's experiences was that of Akech where equally her accompanying father left her in Elegu and returned to South Sudan to find her grandfather.

> Akech: When we are coming... we came with my dad! But then when we reached Elegu we are brought here! After that, my dad decided to go back to bring my grandfather. He went back there and after that I am here alone, I am suffering…
>
> David: When did your dad go back?
>
> Akech: In 2016
>
> David: And he has never comeback since 2016?

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Akech:	Yah
David:	You've never heard from him? Do you know where he is?
Akech:	No, later I heard that my dad, I lost my dad
David:	He died?
Akech:	(*exclaims in agreement*) he died!

The children's reflections of circumstances leading to their being alone and unaccompanied showed how the trends of forced migration had affected their childhood differently. With each child having their own unique experiences, the children also highlighted how the migratory situation had affected their parents and immediate family members. These effects had directly trickled down to the children. Using the example of Akech, and Atong for instance, their father and mother respectively returned to war ravaged South Sudan in search of other immediate family members they had left back home. I argue that their actions, based on the respective children's narratives, suggest that having accompanied their children to the border points, they felt that the children were now within a safe zone, and they left hem in the hope of returning to join them later. Whereas Atong cannot ascertain the whereabouts of her mother since her return, Akech on the other hand further revealed that her father was killed when he returned to South Sudan.

Furthermore, the children's narratives on arriving alone or unaccompanied revealed that this had a strong bearing on their childhoods and everyday lives going forward. While Akech revealed that she was suffering because of being alone, Atong, as the eldest of her siblings, assumed the parental role immediately after her mother returned to South Sudan. At the same time, some children like Majok, who had an idea of the whereabouts of his parents, had no way of being reunited with them. Even if children, as I discuss, later in Chapter Six provided insights into coping with these moments, they also showed hope that someday they would not only return to their native homes but also be reunited with their parents and family members.

Recollection of moments leading to separation and aloneness

In situating children's "alone" journeys, it is worth noting that some of the children were separated from their families and relatives right from the moment when they left their homes whereas others got separated from them during their journey. Furthermore, whereas some of the children's narratives revealed that separation was a planned process, other separations were coincidental. Akur, for instance, who travelled with his brother, had their uncle plan out their

journey. He provided the boys with money to facilitate their travel to Uganda. In my discussion with Akur, he further revealed that they did not know in which direction Uganda was, but their uncle told them which way to take.

On the other hand, coincidental journeys, such as the one undertaken by Majok, were related to being caught up in the middle of a conflict war zone. This was the situation Majok found himself in before he commenced his journey as an unaccompanied child. As Majok fled from his neighbourhood when gunfire rocked his village, so did his parents, who were at home. He further explained that with people of his village running away from the direction where his home was located, he was afraid to return home and so he followed the rest of the fleeing villagers. He said that he was never able to find his parents since then, although he had been told that they lived, in another settlement in Uganda.

In further reflecting children's unaccompanied situation, some children's narratives also pointed out that they were responsible for themselves even before the armed conflict that saw them out of South Sudan. For instance, Lam said that he had lost his mother even before the conflict and did not know the whereabouts of his father. With no definite caring adult family member or relative, it is also worth noting that orphaned children, like Lam, found themselves in situations where they were already living alone and later migrated to Uganda on their own.

Situating being alone and adjusting to new social groups and relations

In this section, I explore children's narrative accounts of their experiences of marginalisation as they adjust to life as alone and unaccompanied refugee children in a Ugandan settlement. Their accounts revealed how different being alone and unaccompanied made them feel from the rest of the refugee children who lived with their parents and other family members. The absence of a caring family member, from their descriptions, became a vantage point for ridicule and stereotyping from other refugee children. In my diary reflections of the discussion around this issue, I pointed out that even when some of the children had caring guardians, most of them still felt alone and when some of them attempted to adjust to the absence of immediate family members through building social networks with the peers outside their home spaces, their alone situation was reinforced through stereotypical statements from their peers. As I engaged deeper into this discussion, it is also important to note that as children continued to adjust to their new spaces and build relationships beyond the settlement, such stereotypical tendencies of rejection continued to manifest even within their peers in the local host communities.

 As I discuss here (and in more detail in Chapter Six) their narratives of marginalisation were often linked with examples of how they and other unaccompanied children were able to bounce back and think beyond feelings of inferiority.

The hostilities of new spaces and having to deal with strange new adults

In situating their being alone and unaccompanied, some of the children reflected on moments within their journeys as well as those immediately after their arrival. Crucial in their reflections, was how quickly some things had changed as a result of the absence of their parents. In their journeys, some of the children described moments when they lacked food or even money to buy food. This, to them, was different from their peers who were traveling with their parents. Some children described tough moments in reception centres at Elegu, Nyumanzi and Pagirinya. These included not being able to get food, or at least enough of it. They also failed to secure accommodation within crowded reception centres.

These were presented in the young people's accounts not just as "difficult moments" which they had to go through as unaccompanied and alone refugee children, but also as raising their concerns about how different they were from their peers. To most of the children, while their status as refugee children would not have been a bother to them, they argued that in their situation, the things experienced, such as those I have described, would not otherwise have happened to some of them if they had been with their parents and other family members.

In adjusting to life within their new spaces, some of the children were sent to live within orphanages in the settlement, while other community members, also refugees, volunteered to take alone children in and assume the guardianship responsibility.

> *"When we are here there are sometimes, they treat us like their children its only that there are some situations when your parent shows you all love because you are his own true child like anything you ask now sometimes like here there some people who are helping us here, they are mistreating the children especially the young ones because they know that you cannot do anything bad except if you're something like 15years. By mistreating the children, they do not show us the love, they shout at them, they even sometimes beat them, they don't have that moral language of speaking to children so in that situation when your being mistreated you start feeling bad and you start feeling bad that you lost your own father and that will make your life uncomfortable here and you sometimes even cry"* (**Tele-focus group discussion boys & girls 2020**)

In the above narrative, a 17-year-old female participant highlighted the struggles they experienced as they tried to fit into their new family and social spaces. The children expressed how they struggled with the absence of parental affection in their newly adopted family spaces. Whereas the much older children said that they would find ways of negotiating and overcoming instances of mistreatment, they argued that younger children had no say when they experienced mistreatment. From this excerpt, children revealed that mistreatment took the form of physical beating and scolding. It is during such moments that children felt unloved and expressed an ardent desire to be with their lost parents and family members who believed and appreciated them. Furthermore, such moments of rejection also evoked feelings of great loss for children of their parents and family members, which I argue could have impacted on their ability to adjust to life as refugees in new spaces. I found this to resonate with the findings of Boyden and Mann (2005), in respect of children separated from their parents in Sierra Leone, who lacked support from caring guardians and felt that they had been branded and were susceptible to discrimination and hostility.

In the same vein, other children highlighted that their moments of discrimination emerged from threats of denial of food as a repercussion for not fulfilling certain obligations. In further exploring this, fourteen-year-old Majok had this to say about the foster space he regarded as home *"when we just came here, life was too hard, they send us to fetch water very far, and even collect firewood. They say that if you don't go, they would not give you food to eat."* The compelling factor of food, as revealed in Majok's situation, arguably overshadowed his concerns as to how far away the water source and the firewood gathering point were. Whereas Majok and other children later revealed that they did not mind engaging in such domestic chores or responsibilities, and this I discuss further in Chapter Seven, I am specifically drawn to his reference of time *"when we just came here,"* and opines about not being familiar with his new geographical space, Majok's reluctance could have been founded on such grounds, but he had to act differently if he were to get food. In another incident related to food, Akech shared experiences from earlier moments where they would go to school without being given porridge for breakfast and had to wait until lunch time for a meal

The formation of class-like relations between accompanied boy refugees and those unaccompanied by adults

Additional concerns emerged from the indifference from peers, particularly those who had arrived with their parents and other family members. As highlighted in the introduction to this section, some of the boys in my study reflected on being stereotyped in derogatory ways and discriminated against by other refugee children because of their perceived deviation from normative constructions of childhood and family life. These other refugee children, who were accompanied by adults, presented themselves not only as different but also superior, much to the consternation of Majok and Riak in the interview I conducted below.

Majok:	We are different with other refugees' children…So, most times it is difficult to get something you want from your relative. At least if my dad was there, he would give me.
Riak:	Others say you are different because "for you, you have no family like us, why are you among us?"
David:	So, they feel that because you who do not have parents or people to look after you, you should not be among them?
Riak:	Yes
David:	So, what do you do when they tell you things like that, do you go away from them, do you be with them, who are the people who tell you these, is it big people?
Riak:	Me I just leave when they tell me. And it is mostly my friends who say this.
David:	Where, at home here, at school?
Riak:	Here in the camp
David:	Okay, any other places where they tell you about these things from?
Riak:	Normally places where people can gather many like the market or the centre.
David:	What about the places where you play, do they tell you these things?
Riak:	Sometimes, but not like places like school
David:	So, when they tell you these things, how does it make you feel?
Riak:	I feel sad because someone is happy, and I am not. It is better to leave.
David:	So, do they always tell you these things or sometimes?

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Riak: Sometimes.

David: So, do you go back to them again?

Riak: I go because I cannot chat alone, I chat with them.

Through the example of Riak, the out of home spaces within the settlement were used by their peers to assert how their alone childhood made them different from the others. These constructed and perceived differences made children like Riak feel unwanted and not welcome to interact with his peers. Although he perceived his peers as his friends, it is clear that the desire for acceptance within peer social groups possibly justified the construction of peers within such groups as friends, even when elements of rejection were visible. In exploring how places facilitated such conversations among the children, Riak further explained that the trading centres and marketplaces were some of the public places where their peers ridiculed them because they would appear in these places alone while usually their peers would be in the company of a family member.

Additionally, the playgrounds were also revealed to be spaces where, when alone, boys for instance, initially felt excluded from engaging and interacting with their peers. During an informal dialogue with Riak at the football playground, he further revealed that it was difficult for those who were alone and unaccompanied to move around and about the settlement freely, as some of their caretakers did not think it was safe for them. This happened as opposed to their peers who had the opportunity to explore the different spaces within the settlement and moved fast to build new social relations and networks, which would later exclude alone boys like him. This, he argued, contributed to a mutual exclusion, for example, when peers chose players who qualified to play in a football game. On several occasions he said that he was never chosen to play over other boys, and he strongly believed that this had to do with his being alone.

In further exploring with Riak and his reflections on some of these moments, I was drawn to his feelings of sadness, but also his actions of walking away and persistence in returning to them another time. I argue that his actions portrayed his unwavering resilience to being accepted within an excluding social network. Whereas he argued that some of the "alone" boys easily gave up and never returned to the playground, he felt it important to return, even if he did not get the opportunity to play, he could at least watch them play. It is also important to note was that Riak retaliated to the concern of loneliness within his other spaces in the statement *"I cannot chat alone,"* which is revealed as a strong propelling factor for his return to the spaces like football playgrounds where he had not been accepted. As he had elevated levels of

resilience, Riak eventually found his way into the social peer groups and could participate in the football games, something he was passionate about.

In my further reflections of Riak's experiences and thoughts of other boys like him in the settlements, I am drawn to argue that social relations built within small social groups can be enormously powerful in reinforcing their survival. As these social groups, such as those of boys who played football together, strove for a continued existence, the tendency to hold on to the principles that facilitated their setup and existence were important. It is possible that when social groups such as this start, their parental status may never have been one of the dynamics that brought them together, but it soon took root and gained strong ground in reinforcing its existence. That said, the persistence of an outsider like Riak to become part of this group does question strong group dynamics, which I argue that the boys started to reconstruct when they admitted him to their group eventually.

Memories of a South Sudanese childhood; pre-migratory histories

While the pre-migratory experiences of children were not one of the areas that I prioritised or anticipated while developing this research, the children raised this as a prominent issue and set it on the agenda for discussion. In so doing, this resonated with the argument put forth by Lems et al. (2020), namely, that to gain a more nuanced understanding of unaccompanied refugee young people's lived experiences requires continued engagement with the growing body of research that deploys ethnographic approaches.

The themes from the children's pre-migratory experiences in South Sudan continuously emerged from specifically their earlier engagements and narratives relating to the journeys undertaken and their adjustments to migratory life. These pre-migratory experiences were largely founded on memories of childhoods lived and experienced originally in South Sudan. As I explored the children's earlier migration experiences, there was a strong interaction between their early migration experiences with their pre-migratory histories. The openness and emotions evoked by reminiscence of their pre-migratory histories, did suggest missed childhood moments. This resonates with the work of Hopkins and Hill (2008), specifically, their experiences with unaccompanied children in which they displayed a high degree of openness, while discussing their previous experiences prior to migration.

As an agenda set by the children themselves, I argue that their pre-migratory histories were crucial in helping me to understand earlier and preceding moments of the children's forced migratory experiences. Forced migratory literature on unaccompanied children has equally

shown how understanding children's pre-migratory experiences can be an added advantage in helping researchers explore present and lived experiences of children (Clacherty, 2006; Hopkins & Hill, 2008; Menjívar & Perreira, 2019).Children's perspectives of their pre-migratory moments were informed by narratives from focus group and in-depth interviews which I discuss below. Also, important to note, is that the final part of this discussion reflects on how children used drawings from their artwork activities to illustrate and share their pre-migratory childhood moments.

Lost family ties and how children valued them

While recollecting a South Sudanese childhood, some of the children argued that their childhoods included the implementation of distinct roles and responsibilities, some of which they had since found difficult to engage in since arriving in Uganda. For instance, the boys in their focus group discussion argued that unlike back at home where they would sometimes engage in paid farm work to subsidise their family incomes, such opportunities were scarce since their arrival in Uganda. This meant that they had to rely entirely on relief support.

Additionally, both boys and girls highlighted how the absence of their parents and other family members had altered their lives.

> *…in South Sudan, my parents were employed, and they took me to a better school but now here am studying just here in the camp…in South Sudan they took me in boarding, but here there is no employment because of being refugees. (**Tele-FGD 2020, boys only**)*

Drawing on two comparative thoughts from two different focus groups, the boys in their discussion reflected on how their parents' employment in their home country had guaranteed some of them a better education as opposed to the one they were receiving in Uganda. By so doing, the boys, through their focus group, acknowledged the vital role their families played in enhancing their previous childhoods. Although they recognised the continuation of some of the things like education, just as in their pre-migratory childhoods, their emphasis was on its quality in comparison to perceived inadequacies of the free primary and secondary education they were experiencing in Uganda.

"…we have lost all our rightful parents and we have been brought right here as an orphanage now the challenge is since when we have been staying with our parents when they were still alive, everything was provided for us now, we have lost our parents and we have no voice to ask for such help from this place…" **(Tele-FGD 2020, boys &girls)**

In further exploring the significance of the parents as a support system in their previous lives, the boys and girls in their focus group explored how the absence of their family members had gotten them placed into foster care systems. Whereas some of the children had since learned of the death of some of their adult family members, including their parents, others still did not know their whereabouts since their separation. As reflected in the excerpt above, absence of the parent, meant absence of supporting the provisional needs of the children to their satisfaction. The children further felt that, unlike when they lived in their homes in South Sudan, they now had no voice when it came to asking for the support that they felt they needed. In exploring this further in the playgrounds with the boys through informal dialogues, some of them related their lack of voice to their inability to demand a change of meals which did not only consist of the daily maize and beans. To others, their issue was with not getting enough food during a meal. They argued that demanding more food meant exhausting their ration of food before the next provision arrived.

Severed social interactions and friendships

Within their social spaces, children are known to establish and build social relations through their everyday interactions. These social interactions allow children to build social relations with both adults and their peers. Also, important to note, is that children, like adults, also build relations with their social spaces, especially if they interact with these spaces for an extended period of time. As some of the children recalled their childhood moments in their homes, they narrated the social engagements that they had shared with friends. Of particular interest to Tong, for instance, were the memories of tethering goats back in Eastern Equatorial and the continuation of this practice in his "new" foster home. This, he argued, helped him to reconnect with his memories of the same activity back home. What was important to him in this goat tethering responsibility then and now was not only the tethering process as such, but the moments this provided him to go to the bushes and get some playtime while there. In a way, this activity provided Tong with the satisfaction of blending his previous and present worlds.

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In executing this activity in the past and present, Tong draws attention to this as a fulfilling and important aspect of his everyday life.

Relatedly, another boy's (Akur) recollection of his pre-migratory childhood included his hunting and fishing experiences with his friends. He argued that while in South Sudan, he used to live freely with his friends. This was to imply that there was no restriction to interaction with the different spaces within his former home community. Although he discovered that there was a river near the settlement, he gave up on his fishing activity following the hostility of some of the host community members. *"…I could go with my friends to hunt and fish but now here even if you go across that river your being disturbed by the citizens even fishing is difficult no proper fish there."* Both these activities showed the desire for both boys to connect with their previous childhood. It is worth arguing that some of the children ventured in finding activities similar or close to those that they had engaged with in their previous childhood. This, I further argue, suggested that children desired to remain connected to their previous childhood through such activities, which evoked memories of their South Sudanese childhoods.

Equally important to note is the value that children placed on previously constructed social relations and friends that had since been lost. This is not to imply that children did not construct new social relations, they did, and I elaborate further on this in Chapter Six. The emotions children espoused when they spoke of these lost friendships suggested that children valued the friendships they constructed with their peers. For instance (Keji) explained how she was separated from her childhood friends with whom she had travelled all the way from Eastern Equatorial. She thought that her friends were probably taken to Bidi-bidi and Maaji settlements. Although she very much wished to see them again, she was not sure where they were and, said that she could not afford the costs of going to visit them.

> David: Why did you put a tree in your picture?
>
> Keji: We were playing under this tree.
>
> David: You said that in the picture, you are playing with your friends in South Sudan
>
> Keji: Yes
>
> David: Who are these friends of yours?
>
> Keji: My sister and friend Andama
>
> David: Do you have other friends here like Andama?
>
> Keji: No, I have not found a friend like Andama.

David: Do you hope that you will see Andama again?

Keji: I don't know.

David: So, your friend Andama, why was she a very important friend of yours?

Keji: She had good behaviour. She was just like my sister

Children's recollection of their journeys

My interactions with children revealed that forced migration into Uganda followed the outbreak of the armed conflict in South Sudan. While some of the children expressed the general fear of being caught up in the middle of an armed conflict, others were specific of how they had experienced a war previously, even costing some of them a family member, the journey to Uganda was constructed by all children as a journey to safety. While reflecting on these undertaken journeys, it was worth noting that each child's journey was distinct from the other. Children revealed interacting and overcoming different circumstances as they undertook these journeys, and from my interactions with them, what struck me most was the resilience and hope children described in their stories of a continued and even better childhood awaiting them in Uganda. It is for this reason that some of the children found themselves negotiating the demanding situations that they experienced on their journeys.

Leaving South Sudan and arriving in Uganda

As the armed conflict in South Sudan intensified, children revealed that the urge to leave their homes was immediate. This did not allow many of them or their family members time to prepare for journeys. Through repeated interactions with the children in my study, I learned that whereas some of the children fled from their homes on the backs and rooftops of trucks, others walked long distances to the Nimule-Elegu border post. The examples below are from my conversations with different children on how they left their homes in South Sudan and how they arrived in Uganda.

Tong: Okay, in Sudan, we were staying in an area called Arapi, it is near with Pageri, that is in eastern Equatorial state... We used a car to come here in Uganda…

Alek: We came from Juba, with me with my mother, sister, and brothers. We came to Elegu by vehicle, then they put us in another vehicle to Nyumanzi reception.

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> Lam: From South Sudan to Elegu, there are others who walk there are others who ride bicycle as for me I used vehicle, but it was a small vehicle that they load luggage on, and we sit on the top and sometimes if the driver over speeds and you are not serious, you can even fall off.

In the examples illustrated above, all the three children spoke of how they were able to leave their homes using vehicles. With each one of them leaving from a different part of South Sudan, their point of arrival was the same (Nimule/Elegu). Although Lam said that he travelled to Uganda by car, he revealed the risk and difficulty he underwent while traveling in it. His description of the vehicle size and the luggage load suggested that the vehicle carried beyond its capacity and the possibility of falling off when it moved faster was even higher. In describing the transportation means of other refugees, Lam said that some of them had to ride bicycles while others, as reflected below, walked for parts of their journeys.

> Abuk: we waited for the three days for a vehicle to come and when we failed to get a vehicle, we started the journey by walking. We found a lot of burnt vehicles in some places and we would fear and cross into the bush and walk from the bush. When we reached Pageri, we got a vehicle, and we came to Nimule. From Nimule we walked again to Elegu.
> Majok: From Mugale, we walked up to Elegu where the reception where they gather the refugees and then we came with a bus from Elegu to Pagirinya.

While Abuk and Majok affirm Lam's experience of some of them walking on their journey to the Nimule and Elegu border points, Abuk further revealed how difficult it was to find a means of transportation out of South Sudan. He had to wait for three days and eventually began his journey on foot, which reaffirmed the difficult circumstances described by Lam for those who managed to get vehicle transportation. Additionally, Abuk's experience revealed that although some children travelled by vehicles, they also walked for some part of their journeys. For Abuk and Majok, when they each found vehicles in Pageri and Mugale respectively, they had to enter Uganda (Elegu) on foot. Akur, and his brother, took a truck from their home in the East equatorial and for their remaining part of their journey into Uganda, they had to walk. From our further interaction, Akur revealed that his uncle provided him and his brother with some

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money when they were leaving home but because the transport costs were exorbitant, they could not afford an additional truck fare into Uganda.

Emotions and feelings that emerged from uncertain and unaccompanied journeys

Equally important to note were the fears the children expressed that were linked   with their foot travels. Abuk for instance said that when he arrived in places where vehicles and property had been destroyed, he would be gripped by fear. Together with the people he was walking with, he would abandon walking by the roadside for the bush for fear of being ambushed by the rebels. In further exploring the fear that children espoused on their journeys, most of them said that their immediate desire was to be secure again. To them, they felt that Uganda would offer them the refuge from the then escalating war in their country. In-depth interviews with Tong and Akur also revealed how the different roadblocks along the highway generated a lot of fear and uncertainty for them. Tong who was thirteen years old when he arrived at the Ugandan settlement revealed that he went through several military roadblocks before arriving in Uganda. In both Aswa and Gorran checkpoints, he revealed that the government soldiers had ransacked their belongings, looking out for any suspicious items and to ascertain if they had any guns with them. Whereas he said that he was sure that his property did not contain any suspicious items, Tong argued that he could not be certain of the other people who had been traveling in the same vehicle as him. His biggest fear was that if any of them were to be found with any suspicious item, then they could be easily linked to the rebel groups and they would all be arrested and taken to jail or even killed.

Akur described one roadblock as follows; *"they asked the driver, where are we going. Then they talk there, they say we shall not go. Then we stay there around 30 minutes, then they say we can go now."* In helping me to explore this situation further, Akur explained that his uncertainty and fear were first based on the assumption that the roadblock was mounted by the rebels pretending to be SPLA government soldiers. Having seen the ruins of the war such as burnt vehicles and destroyed buildings he had previously described, he expressed fear for both his and his brother's lives if they were to be arrested by the rebels. However, in this incident, he worried that the soldiers, having stopped them, would instead ask them to return to where they had come from. This he said would jeopardise the only chance they had of safety elsewhere other than South Sudan.

How children experienced refugee reception centres

In this section, I explore how children experienced the immediate moments when they crossed into Uganda. In their reflections, children recalled the reception centres[7] as the first spaces which mattered to them. In helping me to understand how they experienced these spaces, the children recollected how these served as places of refuge for them, while, at the same time, presenting them with tough experiences. As refugee children coming from South Sudan into Uganda through the Elegu border point in Adjumani district, the children passed through Elegu, Nyumanzi and Pagirinya reception centres. It is important to note that while Nyumanzi, for instance, was later upgraded to a fully-fledged refugee settlement, it initially operated as a major reception centre. Although Pagirinya refugee settlement was a fully-fledged refugee settlement, it did have a reception centre, which served the purpose of receiving all refugees who had been allocated to it. This reception centre received refugees from other sending reception centres and points like Nyumanzi and Elegu. It is worth noting that the reception centre in Pagirinya has since ceased its function and part of it now serves as a food distribution centre for the settlement. This food distribution centre is discussed in the next chapter as one of the children's important places. This emerged from their artwork activities. While reflecting on the lived experiences in the reception centres, the emerging issues that children raised in the discussions from access to basics such as food and accommodation to safety and managing the rainy[8] conditions.

Coping with the inadequacies of food on arrival at reception centres

Within forced migratory studies, the concerns of refugees upon their arrival are often reflected statistically (cf: Menjívar & Perreira, 2019). Emphasis is placed on the immediate provisional needs of refugees as exemplified by Bruce (2001). I found the children's narratives collaborating the provisional needs aspects. However, the children, in addition to this, revealed their experiences of accessing these basic needs upon arrival. From their own perspectives, the reception centres were described as places that received several new refugees daily. These vast numbers thus pitted children against not only adult refugees but also other child refugees who

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7 Within the Ugandan refugee context, these are established points that receive asylum-seeking persons, register and process them as refugees, and resettle them to established refugee settlements.

8 The protracted civil war South Sudan was responsible for huge numbers of refugees that arrived in Uganda mid-2016. Most of the children who participated in this research vividly recalled arriving at the different reception points in the months of July to August 2016. In Uganda, these two months not only inform the second rainy season, but it is also argued that they are the peak months of the rainfall. Children's descriptions of arriving to these different places amidst the rainy conditions further corresponds to their arrival within this period.

were in the company of their family members. Almost all the children arriving alone and unaccompanied described how difficult it was for them to access food on arrival at reception because there were so many people. Akur, who for instance arrived at the Pagirinya reception point with his brother, recollected his experience as follows.

When we were coming from Elegu, we reached here in the evening. We did not know where people were getting cooked food from here, we slept without eating food on that day. Early in the morning, we saw people getting porridge, we also joined the line to get porridge, but porridge got finished before and people started fighting for the saucepan. (Akur, in-depth interview 2020)

I found the experience of Akur closely related to that of some of his peers, for example, Akifa, who said that when she arrived at Pagirinya reception point, she missed out on the porridge that was being served because the queue was too long. Apart from this, her earlier experience of arriving at Elegu also involved not being able to get food. Akur recalled being given biscuits, which he said were not enough to satisfy him. In sharing their food experience, Nyawech also said that she only had a biscuit to eat on the day she arrived at the reception centre. When I asked Dak if he was given anything to eat upon arrival at Elegu reception centre, he replied that he was given only two packs of biscuits.

These moments related to feeding revealed children's first moments as refugees in Uganda. In so doing, these feeding experiences revealed the struggles children had to go through to access food within the reception centres. Some children's stories revealed that during these moments at the reception centres, only two meals were prepared, one being a porridge breakfast and another being lunch, which was served in the late afternoon. From Akur's experience, queuing up for any of these meals did not guarantee one a meal. He further revealed that sometimes, they would wake up incredibly early to queue up for breakfast, only to arrive at the serving point when the porridge was finished. In such situations, he further revealed that no additional porridge would be made for them. Akur also revealed that because the reception centre was the only place where he and his brother could get food after they had run out of money, they would sometimes have to remain queued up in the food line until lunch was ready to be served. This, he revealed, would be at about three o'clock in the afternoon. In reflecting on how Akur felt about having to queue for several hours waiting for food, he argued that this was the only

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guarantee of getting food, especially on days when he and his brother had missed breakfast. He also argued that unlike other unaccompanied children, he and his brother would take turns to line up and help one another. This, in essence, suggested that the brothers negotiated emerging migratory challenges by assisting one another, a social support system that I argue allowed them to prevail prior to transitioning to the orphanage that fostered them later.

How children reflected on their shelter and safety within reception centres

In further exploring how children remembered their lives at the reception centres, children revealed that they lived in the reception centres at various times before being finally relocated to their present refugee settlement. Despite the variations in time at these places, children did not have pleasant memories of their accommodation and housing experiences. For most, securing where to sleep, for example, within the huge tents, was difficult owing to the enormous numbers of refugees. For Dak, who among all the other children spent three weeks at Nyumanzi reception centre before coming to Pagirinya, revealed that he and his siblings had to build a makeshift tent where they lived while waiting to be relocated. During this time, the said that they were soaked by the rain almost every night. In another example, Kuol also shared his experience in another reception centre, as illustrated below.

> Kuol: From Nyumanzi to Pagirinya, we arrived in reception centre, the houses
>   were not there for us to sleep
> David: So how did you sleep?
> Kuol: We slept outside, that night it rained, and my clothes and property were wet.

As refugee situations are often treated as emergency situations, such experiences as exemplified by the children suggested difficulties in managing an emergency response for refugees, especially in their earlier days. Notwithstanding the exclusive refugee policy that Uganda boasts of, these children's accounts of their experiences in arriving in the reception centres, suggest the need to explore further options that facilitate better reception options for arriving refugees. Whereas the refugee situation triggers the vulnerability of child refugees – more so when they embark on journeys to Uganda for instance – it is arguable that a weak emergency response at the inception stages as revealed in the children's experiences, further heightened the vulnerability of unaccompanied or "alone" children. Children's mechanisms of adapting to forced migratory childhoods revealed here suggests that well-tailored early

emergency response plans could help alone children commence a bounce back progress from tough forced migratory experiences. This I further argue could facilitate a continued worthwhile childhood for alone children within their forced migratory childhood.

In further exploring children's everyday moments at reception centres, two important safety concerns emerged. The initial perspective stemmed from the children's point of them that their arrival into Uganda actualised their safety. This was the main reason for the different journeys they each had undertaken and experienced differently. On the other hand, children in my study constructed the reception centres as the unsafe zones that threatened their safety within their first days in Uganda. This was after some of the children revealed that they had either lost their personal belongings, had to spend nights in makeshift tents and the adults could not guarantee their protection. These perspectives from children suggested that the alone child was in fear and in need of protection, possibly from adults that they could trust. For instance, in two different conversations, two girls in two separate reception centres asserted their safety.

David: Now that you were at Nyumanzi, did you finally feel safe?

Nyawech: Yes, I felt safe. There were soldiers from Uganda protecting us.

David: Did you now feel safe while there?

Atong: We were very secure, but the food wasn't enough. but in that place, they built a very big house for girls and even for boys, so we were sleeping together with girls only

In both examples, the girls' assertion of their safety a few days after arriving in Uganda also justified and confirmed my earlier discussions with children that they sought a secure and safe environment which their native homes had since then ceased to provide. In Nyawech's excerpt, she expressed how safe she felt because Ugandan soldiers provided security at the reception centre. In further exploring the role of soldiers in guaranteeing children's safety while on their journeys and upon their arrival, children like Akur and Tong expressed how tensed up and uncertain they felt whenever they came in the presence of soldiers on the journeys. This is discussed further in this chapter. However, what is important to note is children constructed the role of armed forces depending on how they interacted with them. Through these interactions, soldiers evoked different feelings among children, some which made the children feel unsafe, whereas others made them feel secure, a feeling that the soldiers were on their team and provided for their security. In Atong's reflections of being secure, she does not relate her

security to any armed personnel but confirms the feeling of being secure upon arrival at a Ugandan refugee reception centre. She further revealed that as a seventeen-year-old girl, being provided separate accommodation in a facility different from the boys even made her feel more secure from sexual and gender-based violence. Although she confirmed that she had not experienced either of these, she just felt that having to stay and share accommodation with male persons she did not know, was not safe for her.

In exploring how unsafe the reception centres might have been for some of the children, I sought to understand this from the experience of Gatwech whose perspective I captured through an informal dialogue moment at a playground.

*While chatting with Gatwech 14-year-old at the playground, a passing by police patrol pickup truck with armed police officers got us talking about safety issues. Gatwech reminded me that the settlement was now safe unlike before. He revealed that on his first night at the reception centre in Pagirinya, his bag containing all his personal belongings were stolen. Gatwech said this made him feel bad and he began to dislike the place immediately. When he noticed several people, the next day moving with their belongings everywhere they went, it occurred to him that he should have done the same. (**Field diary excerpt, 2020**)*

Gatwech like other children had constructed Uganda as an entirely safe zone. It is arguable that his experience as illustrated in the diary excerpt of losing his property was founded on the trust of safety that he had mentally constructed while on his journey. To leave his belongings unattended for example, was further based on feelings of now being safer in Uganda. While his thoughts about this changed after this incident, he also revealed that it was a lesson learnt as he later noticed how other people held on to their belongings. Also, Gatwech, like Nyawech was quick to note that the settlement was now safer than before, and his dislike for it as reflected in the excerpt had since then changed.

Children's perspectives on foster care within refugee settlement

While developing the selection criteria for participation in this research, I placed emphasis on children with similar or shared characteristics. This I thought would enhance participation with ease as I would explore and build on the existing relationships among the children. Some of

the children who participated were children living in orphanages and foster care households. While children discussed the various aspects of their forced migratory lives, foster care emerged as an important aspect of their everyday lives. Important in their discussion of fosterage was how they found themselves in foster households and orphanages, their lived moments in them and how this affected their childhoods.

How children were admitted to foster homes

When I met and interacted with some of the children who were experiencing foster care, my first thoughts were that they had lived in the same foster household from the first time they arrived. While this was true for some of the children, other children had experienced more than one foster[9] home. Nyawech was one example of such a child. Having arrived in 2016 at Pagirinya settlement, where she was given a plot[10] of her own and lived alone for a while until a refugee woman whom she referred to as *auntie* asked her to move into her household. In her narrative, Nyawech said that *"at first, I was living alone but this auntie decided that I go stay with her because I was young and far away from home."* While under the care of this *auntie,* Nyawech further revealed that she felt loved and comfortable while under her care. Additionally, as she was perceived as being young and far away from home also revealed how compassionate some of the adult refugees were to alone children. Later, while engaging with children between the ages of eight to thirteen years, I recruited child participants from the household of a single mother who had taken in three foster children in addition to her four biological children.

In further exploring Nyawech's foster care experiences, she revealed that when her foster parent relocated to Maaji refugee settlement, she reverted to her "alone" situation until a religious foster family invited her to live with them. Although she was glad to be living in another foster home, she argued that her situation was rather more difficult than compared to when she lived with her previous foster parent. In helping me to understand the context of the difficulty, she explained that her new foster home had many children, unlike when she had

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9 I interchangeably use foster home, care, and household to imply alone and unaccompanied children who have been institutionalised or adopted to live under the care of certain adults or institutions within the settlement. Important to note is that these arrangements are locally arranged and possibly supervised by refugee agencies like OPM. My use of foster home, care or household is to further protect the identity of some of these institutions and homes that can be easily identified with the use of specific key words.

10 A plot is a piece of land that each refugee family is given at arrival into a settlement in Pagirinya the plot size was estimated at about 108 sq. meters

been alone previously. This large family size, she argued, came with not having enough food as well as having to depend on two meals a day. On one of the days when I visited this foster household, I witnessed the children sharing a late afternoon meal of smoked fish and posho (maize grain). In a brief informal dialogue, I had with them, the children not only invited me to join them for their meal, but also revealed that this was their lunch and supper. Among the children sharing in this meal and in dialogue with me was Nyawech. This brief informal dialogue with the children during their mealtime also resonated with what Nyawech had earlier shared in her narrative with me.

Throughout their journeys, through to their arrival in reception centres, children demonstrated how they struggled with food insufficiencies. As further reflected in Nyawech's example, children continued to struggle with limited food rations through some of their refugee lived experiences. Drawing on other examples from children who were living in another foster home, Gatwech for instance revealed that while they sometimes had three meals a day, sometimes it would be only two. Like Nyawech, Gatwech was also concerned about the limited amount of food that he and his peers received. He argued that after playing football for instance, he felt very hungry, and the limited food would not satisfy him. In trying to understand the underlying principle behind the limited food, Gatwech revealed that when he and everyone else had received their dry food rations from the distribution point, the food was all put together and had to be apportioned in such a way that it would be enough to last until the next distribution period.

Yet another foster care experience was that of Akech. Within this chapter, her narrative related to arriving in Uganda alone following the return of her father to South Sudan in search of her grandfather which she said led to his death. The anticipation of the return of her father placed Akech into foster care temporarily initially as illustrated in the excerpt

> *"I don't know where to go! And this [***][11] decided to bring me here. They brought me here, they told [***] to protect me here, when my dad is back, they would come and they and take me to him"* **(Akech, in-depth interview, 2020)**

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11 [***] I use this here and elsewhere within the thesis to conceal participants' personal identifiable information such as organisations, persons and titles which could make the homes of the children easily identifiable and the people they quote and refer in text easily known.

After the death of her father, Akech found herself having to negotiate life as an alone child in extended foster care. As reflected in her narrative, adjusting to foster care was never an easy option for her as she previously revealed that she had been left to suffer. Of interest to me, was a further understanding of how she felt about being at the foster care long after learning about the death of her father.

"You know like it is okay, our life has changed a bit but there is a problem whereby when since when we are here, we reach here in 2016! This elder people like [***], they didn't even abuse us but this year they abuse us. Me and Majok, Akur, and another boy they used to abuse us that we are not his [***], we are just brought here by [***] if they want, they will call those people and they will take us away from here. We are here just for emergency that's why at times I am not feeling well here." **(Akech, in-depth interview, 2020)**

In her recollection of her foster life in the foster home, Akech reluctantly revealed that her life had changed and went on to draw a comparison between earlier days and the present. This comparison highlights a shift from compassionate care to incidents of mistreatment which she revealed commenced early in 2020. As a child who had been placed into temporary foster care, her narrative suggests how the supposedly caring adults started to make her and three of her peers unwelcome in the foster home. They were referred to as *"just for emergency"* to infer that their presence in that foster home was a temporary one which had otherwise been prolonged by circumstances such as the death of Akech's father and the inability of Majok reuniting with his parents, even if he had been told that they were in another refugee settlement in Yumbe. Akech further expressed her feelings, asserting how uncomfortable she felt living in this foster care. While some of the children appreciated the impact of foster care in their earlier and present lives, other children like Akech, Majok and Abur had rather unpleasant experiences.

In further exploring how children found themselves in foster care situations, some of the children revealed that the decision to be admitted to a foster care home was one that was beyond them. Using the example of Majok and Gatwech as illustrated below, they respectively revealed the role of the UN refugee agency because they were young at the time of arrival. From both their illustrations, the actions of the refugee agency and their being young situated both children

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as needing adult care. In further reflecting on the circumstances that led both boys to foster care, it is arguable that moments such as these had children perceived more as completely vulnerable beings, in need of adult care and protection. Not to dispel in totality how important it is for a caring adult in such moments, what is important to note also is that such moments could become the defining moments for silenced agency of alone children in forced migrations.

David: What was it like in the [***] foster home?

Atong: It was somehow hard because we were staying alone and even, I am taking care of my own brothers there…

David: So now, how did you end up here (foster home)?

Majok: UNHCR are the ones that brought me here, that I should stay with him since this was [***] foster home.

Gatwech: No, it is not me alone, for me since I was young, they brought me in this compound.

Some of the ways in which children adapted to difficult moments within foster homes or in other foster care experiences, elder siblings highlighted how they had to assume a parental role for their younger siblings. For Atong for instance, who initially lived in Bidi-bidi settlement in Yumbe district before relocating later to Pagirinya, she shared her experience of having to ensure that her two brothers were always well, despite them all having an adult caregiver in the foster home. Atong's experience resonates with that of Dak, who took on the carer role for his two sisters and a brother after the death of their mother. He revealed that although Save the Children facilitated their transition to foster care, he found that there were many other children within the same home, and his siblings could not compete for the attention of their foster carers with other children, who had already built relationships with the carers. Owing to this, Dak, who was fifteen at that time, argued that he had to take on odd jobs within the settlement to raise money to support his siblings, both financially and emotionally.

In further analysing his experience, Dak's example additionally illustrated the tough moments within the children's lived experiences amidst the absence of their parents and the struggles of adjusting to new caring adults in new foster spaces. Additionally, both Atong and Dak's example further showed that sibling children also developed their own support and adjustments mechanisms, which the was reliance on one another emotionally and financially, as revealed in the example of Dak. Whereas this was not initially the case with children who had joined

foster care homes individually, the narratives from some children, such as Akech, suggested that such children also built relationships with others within their foster homes and relied on these relationships as a coping and support mechanism, especially during tough moments. This is, for example, reflected in Akech's case where together with Majok and Abur they experience resentment from particular caring adults in their foster home. This resentment, as a shared experience, is a unification factor for these three children as they negotiated their experiences around it.

Resilience and adjusting to life within the refugee settlement, post-migratory experiences

In this section of the chapter, children shared and reflected on their earlier moments in the settlement. Important in this section is how children constructed themselves as resilient beings while adjusting to new life in Ugandan settlements. Having shared their perspectives of their journeys, and life at the reception centres, it is worth noting that these previous experienced moments-built children's resilience going forward, when they commenced their lives in the settlement –the places that many of them had called their homes since they arrived in Uganda. Through their reflections, children were able to share different experiences immediately arrived they arrived at Pagirinya refugee settlement. Important to note is that all children revealed that their first place of arrival in Pagirinya was the reception centre and their perspectives on this and other reception centres were discussed earlier in this chapter.

Dak's experience of turning a bushy plot into a home

From Pagirinya reception centre, children revealed that they were allocated pieces of land that they commonly referred to as plots. Each child was allocated to a plot either as a family or as part of a foster care system they belonged to. One of the moments highlighted in their narratives was the transition from the reception centre to the plots.

Dak: Immediately they gave you your plot, you had to come to your plot

David: How was your plot like?

Dak: It was just a lot of stones.

David: So, you would come and build in your plot and go back to the reception centre or?

Dak: No, you sleep there, you cannot again go at the reception, you will find

when they have given the plot.

David: Were you able to build a house in one day?

Dak: No, you cannot.

David: How many days did it take you to build a house?

Dak: I think three days.

David: So, you were sleeping outside in those three days?

Dak: Yes, we have made a second tent using a carpet.

David: No rain?

Dak: Serious rain.

David: Did it destroy your property?

Dak: Yes, even it removes carpet away.

Through the example of Dak, as illustrated above, it was revealed how being allocated a plot necessitated an immediate transition to it, irrespective of the state of the newly acquired plot. From Dak's experience, having to spend nights outside in temporary shelters which could not withstand the heavy rains saw him and his siblings construct a house within three days. In further engaging with Dak, I was concerned as to why he and his siblings could not return to the reception centre every day until they had completed putting up their shelter. He revealed that they risked losing their plot and the items they were using to build their house. His fears resonated with those of Tong who also said that he had spent his first days sleeping in a temporary shelter in the plot while he erected a structure. His fear of returning to the reception centre followed the experience of his neighbours, whose property was stolen in the night while they were away at the reception centre. The example of Dak presented a situation where children's forced migratory experience was characterised by negotiating different emerging situations as they sought to begin a new life in Uganda. How children overcame some of these situations became of interest to me. For instance, Dak's perseverance showed by spending nights out in the rain, putting up a structure within the shortest possible time revealed how resilient he was at the time. This also resonates with the findings of McCormack and Tapp (2019) in their work with refugee children, where they opine that several of their participants were empowered by their experiences, they utilised their resourcefulness, and hopelessness to activate their problem-solving abilities so as to improve their lives.

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Moiba and Lam's persistence during their home construction moments

In further exploring how other children experienced living on their plots during their first days, Moiba's story below was almost the same as that of Dak. In his narrative, he revealed how bushy the plot he had been allocated was. With no option of returning to the reception centre, Moiba illustrated how the tarpaulin that he had been given had to serve a dual purpose as both beddings and shelter from rain.

Moiba: From Nyumanzi to Pagirinya, we arrived in reception centre, the houses
          were not there for us to sleep.

David: So how did you sleep?

Moiba: We sleep outside, that night it rained, and my clothes were wet and
          property.

David: And how did you end up here in block E, when you arrived in Pagirinya,
          was this where have they showed you?

Moiba: No, from there they start giving plot, then they give this one for us, and at
          that time this place it is bushy.

David: When they gave you this plot, did you come here straight away, or you
          first had to come and clear and then go back to reception?

Moiba: From the reception centre here, they just send once, there is no reason to
          go back, even though there is no house, you will sleep, you lay this one
          carpet they give you one side, then one side, you pull on you so that rain
          does not pour on you.

David: Without shelter on top?

Moiba: Yes.

David: So, you just slept in the open?

Moiba: Yes, in the bush here, even the place is open

While I argue that such experiences present alone refugee children as resilient, some of these moments were described by some children as defining moments of their childhood. In a way, they prepared some of the children for any adversity that they anticipated could happen within the migratory childhood experience. Lam, for instance, revealed that he had not imagined living in another country for part of his childhood. He shared how disappointed he was when he arrived at the settlement, only to be welcomed by bushes which made him wonder if people

could live in such a place. However, Lam argued that he was quick to adapt, helping to clear the bushes and establish the place that later became his foster home. From his perspective, he argued that he had already experienced the worst he could through his migratory experience and argued that he could withstand any tough situation. I further sought to understand some of the other situations that Lam thought would not be worse than his previous experiences. He said that sometimes the food he received was not enough to satisfy him. He also argued that, as a refugee child, he felt segregated in the boarding school he attended in Adjumani town, since most of the children were Ugandans. To him however, these did not bother him as much as having slept out in the rain and clearing bushes to build a home.

Adapting to the politics of "are we the ones who sent you from there?"

While children had to deal with adjusting to living with other refugees within their shared spaces, they also had to deal with the different perceptions of the indigenous Madi community. In group discussions, children shared some of their experiences in this regard

*"When we came here, we faced a lot of challenges like no water and when you go to the bore hole you find that there are too many people, and when we are asking things from people, they are ever telling us are we the ones who sent you from there, so it becomes difficult to ask." (**Tele-FGD 2020, boys &girls**)*

The narrative from the excerpt revealed how the refugee community initially had to share some of the services with the indigenous host community. It thus implied that there was often interaction between refugees and the host community which the children revealed as complex. Important to note is that most domestic chores, such as fetching water, and gathering firewood, are roles relegated to children and women in such societies. It is, therefore, in fulfilling such roles that children exposed some of these experiences. When having to deal with many people, for instance at the boreholes, was challenging enough for them, having to deal with an indifferent attitude from indigenous host community members in such places was an equally challenge. To understand the extent of this indifference as illustrated in the excerpt, I drew on the in-depth connotation of the statement *"...they are ever telling us are we the ones who sent you from there..."* when the children sought some information or assistance. In this statement, the assertiveness of the indigenous community is revealed as they opine that they are not

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responsible for the refugee situation the children are in and neither are they responsible for their presence in their own community. The children argued that this indifference made it difficult for them to seek information or build relationships with their host community.

Chapter conclusion

This chapter has looked at the reflections of children's pre- and early forced migratory experiences. It has drawn on children's narratives of their memories of their lived experiences in South Sudan in the times before the outbreak of the conflict that forced them out of their respective homes in South Sudan. In it, I have argued that reflections of the children's pre-migratory memories are crucial in understanding the children's earlier experiences including the feelings they espoused about leaving their homes, what they anticipated in Uganda and how different they found life in Uganda to be. In this chapter, I show how I learned from the children that coming to Uganda meant being safe and secure from the conflict in South Sudan where they originated from. These thoughts of safety, motivated children to embark on long journeys to Uganda, some of them undertaking these journeys entirely on their own, while others moved in the company of siblings, neighbours, or other family members.

Additionally, in this chapter, I have reported on the tough experiences many of the children underwent during migration. Among these was children's struggles with the inadequacies of food and how they negotiated past them. As is reflected from the onset, children's narratives reveal how they were harshly separated from their family members and homes, with some not knowing   the whereabouts of family members and others finding out about bereavements in their families when they returned to South Sudan in search of other relatives.

Furthermore, in this chapter, children have revealed how they experienced different spaces in the early migratory moments. These included the reception centres, foster care systems or homes, the settlement and peer social spaces. What has stood out in all these spaces has been the children's ability to prevail in such moments. How they managed to negotiate moments they described as tough, present children as resilient beings capable of adjusting to different adversities. Children also revealed that overcoming things such as heavy rains and having to spend nights out in the cold in their plots pushed some of them to work tirelessly to erect shelters in their plots within a brief time. While others have described building new relationships and engaging in similar activities as those found back at home as a way of connecting their present childhoods with their previous childhoods.

Finally, the chapter has also explored the notion of being a refugee as constructed and perceived by the children. In so doing, the children have positioned themselves as refugees and have related to issues that forced them to become refugees. Important to note in their understanding of a refugee situation, is the fact of being away from one's home country, which they have associated with the emergency of armed conflict. Similarly, they have argued that being a refugee is a situation that was out of their control, but they were quick to add that it was not a permanent situation.

Apart from this, was their thoughts on being alone and unaccompanied, which they have revealed positioned them differently from their peers who lived with their family members. Through their pre-migratory experiences, they revealed how important the complementary adult family member role was to them. In the absence of their parents, for instance, they argued that they had a limited bargaining power with their guardians, which made it difficult for them to express their needs and feelings, something which they said made them feel different from their peers who lives with their parents. Conclusively, this chapter has explored how children, through their agency, allowed me to explore deeply the early migratory moments of their lives, in ways that children had not experienced before. In analysing the first-hand opinions of the children, it explored and valued the role of reminiscences, as used by the children to explore their early forced migratory experiences.

Chapter 6 : Reflections of everyday and present experiences in Uganda as refugees

Introduction

In this chapter, I discuss the everyday lived experiences of children in the Ugandan refugee settlement. The chapter draws on different emerging themes informed by insights from the children. It specifically explores how children manufactured relationships among themselves, with those around them and in the different institutions that they interacted with regularly. In looking at these relationships, the chapter further explores the meanings that were constructed and emerged from these relationships. Additionally, the chapter also explores how children attached importance to their aspirations and dreams. In so doing, it offers insights about the future ambitions children had held and places learning through formal education as a crucial aspect in supporting these ambitions.

 The chapter also addresses the different uncertainties that children battled within their lived experiences and explores the different ways in which they negotiated and overcame them. Specific to note is that it highlights how, in the wake of Coronavirus pandemic, the closure of schools placed the children's aspirations at risk. This section further discusses how some children cope with the loss of a parent and how older siblings step up to assume responsibilities previously shouldered by their parents. Also discussed within the chapter is the aspect of religion, the relationships built out of it and how important it is in enhancing the lives of the children. In this section, I discuss how children relate to the church as an institution and why some aspects of their religious faith are important to them. Within the institutional discussion there are also the humanitarian and refugee agencies, where I discuss how children perceive these institutions, what they mean to them, including the relationships they had built with them over time. The ethnicities of the local refugee host communities and the stereotypes directed to the refugee populations are also discussed in this chapter. Here I use insights from the children to illustrate how complex their interactions with the Madi people of Uganda were. This chapter concludes by discussing refugee children's two crucial important spaces, how children interacted with them and why children constructed them as important in their everyday lives.

Children's personal aspirations beyond being refugees

This section explored children's lived experiences that stretched beyond their present situation as refugee children living in Uganda. In it, I show how children reflected on their future lives,

the dreams they espoused about a life beyond just being refugees. Through these fantasy projections, children were able to reveal and share their different future plans, something that some of them argued they had never had the opportunity to do. From their reflections on what it means being a refugee (see chapter five), children constructed the situation as only being a temporary moment in their lives. From this perspective, it is argued that this temporal moment allowed children construct their lives beyond the refugee situation they lived in.

The hope of reunification with lost family members

Children's perspectives of their forced migratory journeys and early life experiences in Uganda revealed the circumstances under which some of the children assumed the status of being alone or unaccompanied. Further reflections from some children also showed that some children had lost their only caring parent while already living in Uganda, a situation that positioned them thereafter as alone refugee children. Others shared heart-breaking stories of the times, they learnt that their parents had been killed back home in South Sudan. At the same time, some children believed that some of their separated family members were still alive in South Sudan. For instance, Gatwech who got separated from his parents just before his journey to Uganda, learnt from his foster parent that his real parents were living in Bidi-bidi, which is another settlement in Yumbe district. Although he revealed that he had not asked to be reunited with them yet, he said that he had been given the opportunity to speak with them on phone. Gatwech further revealed his desire to be reunited with his parents someday, arguing that he would not mind going to live with them in Bidibidi.

For children such as Gatwech, knowing the exact whereabouts of his parents built high anxieties regarding hopes of reunification. At only ten years, Gatwech recalled the pain of being separated from his parents, not certain whether he would ever be able to see them again. To him, to know that his parents were alive and in Uganda, was a dream come true, even if he had not yet been reunited with them, he believed that he would eventually be reunited with them.

In further analysing the children's hopes of reunification with family relations, some children revealed how they had experienced short-lived moments of reunification before eventual separation again. This was the case for seventeen-year-old Atong, who upon arrival in Uganda with her two brothers resettled in Bidi-bidi refugee settlement. She revealed that she learnt about the presence of her auntie in Pagirinya settlement from another refugee. Coupled with maltreatment by the foster parent in Bidi-bidi, Atong revealed that she found her way with her

two brothers to Pagirinya. The short-lived reunification was ended by the burning down of the family's only house and the insufficient food ratio initially allocated to what had been classified a family[12] size two, who now had to feed three additional members who were not part of the previously established relief support system. This caused Atong's aunt to return to South Sudan with her two brothers and her cousin, leaving her behind in foster care again with the promise of their return. Like other children's stories about parents who returned home, Atong's aunt never returned, despite her knowing that she had arrived home safely. Atong's ambition is to return to her family someday when she has completed her schooling.

Returning to South Sudan at the dawn of peace

In the moments I spent with children, I noticed that some discussions evoked a nostalgia about home. This was very pronounced during conversations about circumstances that led to separation from family members. As the children narrated how their childhoods and other social aspects of their lives had been disrupted by the conflict leading to the forced migration, the emotions and desire to return home were visible on their faces. Yet, the uncertainty of finding their homes intact – and their relatives alive – was a dream much desired yet not possible to achieve immediately. Other children got past this homesickness through a promise to themselves that they would return home at the dawn of peace.

This was the case for seventeen-year-old Lam, who had just joined high school prior to the lockdown. Lam strongly believed that his life's ambition of becoming a pilot would be fulfilled only when he returned home "When *I finish senior four of course I want to go and join South Sudan University because for me I want to be a pilot."* From his narrative, Lam argued that it was important for him to complete his ordinary level (O levels) secondary education because this was a precursor to his dreams of joining South Sudan University. Furthermore, he anticipated that by that time, the conflict back home would have ceased, and this would facilitate his return home.

In further exploring how strongly Lam felt about his ambition to return home, he engaged in self-study one month after the government locked down schools in Uganda. This he did by using school textbooks that he had borrowed from some of his friends nearby. At a follow-up with him a few months later, to ascertain how he was getting along with his self-study activity,

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12 The family size is a phrase used within the relief support system in the settlement to define the name of persons in a family or household. This system is used to track and manage the distribution of relief especially food. My reference of family size two in this case is to mean a family or home with two known individuals.

Lam highlighted that he had made some progress, but still needed the help of teachers to explain some topics in some of the subjects he had difficulty with. Equally important to note is that it was he who argued that there was no need to invest in Uganda by accumulating property such as houses yet, as there would be a time when they as "foreigners" would have to return home. In so doing, Lam saw the situation of their forced migration as temporary. From Lam's perspective, it is worth noting that although these lived experiences were dreams, they were highly significant in generating hope, and keeping the momentum of returning home someday. Most children, in my study had already spent over four years in Ugandan settlements and yet these dreams and ambitions of returning home kept them connected to their homes. Lam's experience exemplified how important home was to the children, despite being away from it during critical moments of their childhood.

To demonstrate further how important peace was in enabling children's return to their homes, I draw additional examples from children's artwork and the narratives that emerged from one of Dawa's drawings about her life in the settlement. Through her drawings, she presented an analysis of her life in the settlement and her life when she left the settlement. In so doing, she drew the comparison between her present life and the future. Her pictorial representation of the future included a flying helicopter whose seats were visible. It also included a house, a boy playing football and another group of three children skipping. At the corner of this picture was her mother and sister.
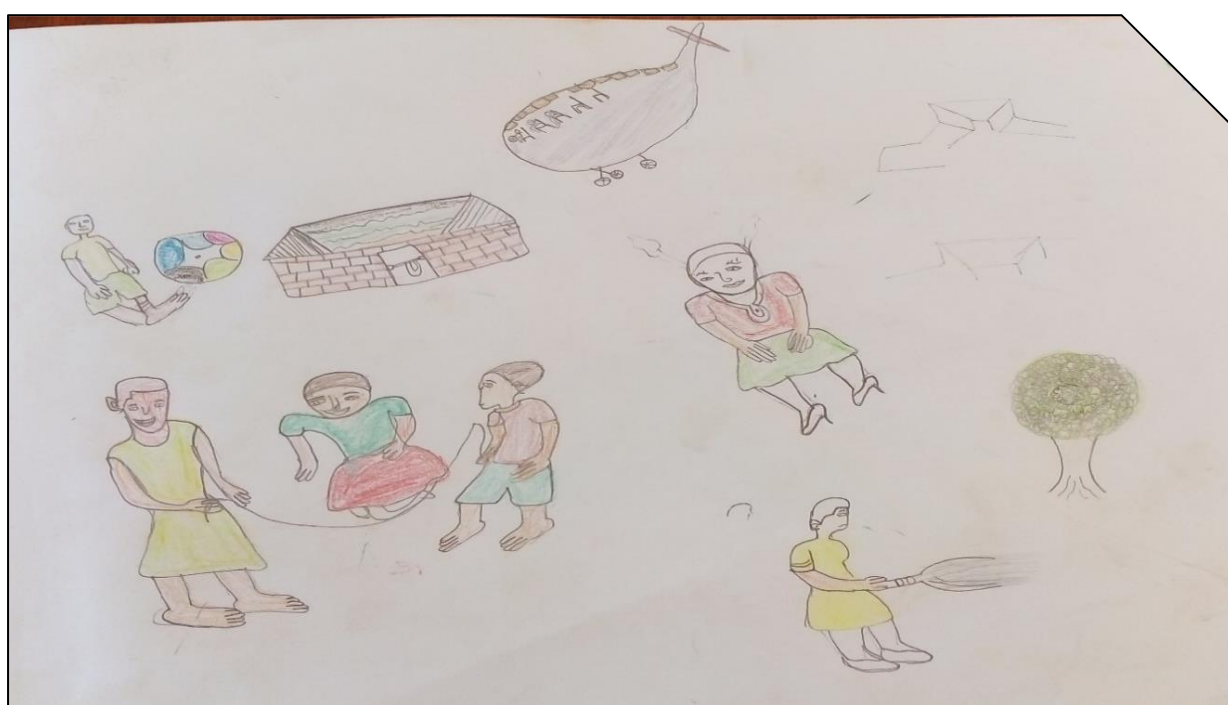
Figure 7:Drawing of Dawa's projection of her life in and out of the refugee settlement

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In her reflections about her drawing, Dawa argued that this was a representation of her and her family when she returned home once the war is over. Her illustration of the helicopter was to identify with the moment of returning home. She believed that when the moment to go home came, UNHCR would provide big aeroplanes, like the one in her picture, to return them home. In my diary reflections on the discussion of this picture with Dawa, I argued that thoughts of returning home created excitement among the children, even when it was evident that there were still many unknowns.

In further reflecting on both the events that the children had lived and experienced as refugees, as well as their dreams and anticipated lives ahead of them, it was evident that in both moments, children were overcome by different emotions. While in their reflections about coming to Uganda, children shared mixed emotions, which included lots of uncertainties about how their lives would turn out in Uganda, their anxieties about their future seemed much more relaxed as opposed to the fears of coming to Uganda. Their expectations about returning home when the civil war in South Sudan ended, evoked different sentiments, including excitement. While children did not know when the war would come to an end or even how soon they might be able to return home once the war ended, the thought of it alone created excitement and some of them could not help but express their feelings and thoughts. What stood out from thoughts about their eventual return home, was the confidence with which children spoke about this. There was more certainty in their voices, which I am drawn to argue emerged from the confidence of returning home, a space and place they were familiar with. This, however, is not to say that these places could since not have changed from the time when the children departed from them, but some of them felt at ease despite my concerns about these possible changes, with some children even reminding me that their being refugees in Uganda was temporary and that South Sudan was home and that was where they belonged

"I also go to school", Atong's newfound hope arising from a schooling opportunity

The promises and uncertainties that come with forced migration can be overwhelming. This is much reflected in children's personal experiences. When children reflect on how they imagined their lives would be in Uganda, most of them revealed that they had high expectations of a better life in Uganda. While this promise came to pass for some children, their lived moments of the days as refugee children in Uganda was daunting. As is revealed in the previous chapter, children shared moments of having no shelter, having to go several days without food and even

the loss of their personal properties. Drawing on the example of Atong's migration experience, forced migration restructured some children's lives for the better. From the conversation below, Atong revealed how, while back in South Sudan, her life was characterised with uncertainties. However, there was one certainty, as she had no doubt that she would have been married off.

David: So, when you see your life now in Uganda and the way it was in South Sudan, what do you think? Do you think your life is much better here than it was in South Sudan, or it is worse?

Atong: It is better than that one in South Sudan.

David: What makes it much better here?

Atong: Because I am safe here and I also go to school.

David: So, in South Sudan, you were not going to school?

Atong: I may sometime go and sometime stay because I did not have money for school fees.

David: How would you imagine your life now in South Sudan?

Atong: I would be married now, because of no money for school fees

In this revelation, the possibility of Atong being married by now is evidently high because of financial constraints that could not facilitate her continued stay at school. Her comparison of her life at present and before, are contrasts that show how the two different spaces have impacted on her life. In a further discussion with her about her aspirations (highlighted in this chapter section too), she opined that both returning home to her family and studying were important to her. However, from her previous experience of not being in school continuously back at home, Atong feared to return home, because she would have to be married off instead. What is more important in analysing this lived experience further, is the ability of Atong to set her priorities in a manner that she constructs as relevant to her life beyond the settlement. Her perception of the opportunity to have an education is in itself a chance, to pursue dreams of an education. I argue that the choice to return to South Sudan after her receiving an education reconstructs several situations in her life; significant among these is the shift in power and authority to make certain decisions, such as marriage, which previously she did not have.

Children's career dreams and ambitions

One of my most critical reflections while developing this research was to deconstruct the biases that come with an assumed status. For children like these, caught up in forced migratory

situations, the status of being a refugee creates several perceptions. Among these is the tendency to problematise refugee children as entirely vulnerable. Of importance to me before engaging with the children was to construct them as children first and then use their perspectives to analyse their vulnerabilities, but also to highlight exceptional moments within their lived forced migratory moments. The shared moments with children about life beyond the settlement positioned them as active beings (Prout & James, 1990b), even within their refugee childhood moments. This was reflected in the way children narrated their career plans. Childhood must be perceived as a moment in life that presents children with an opportunity to create dreams of their future. It is worth noting that children in forced migratory situations, like other children, have dreams – such as career plans. What remains is to support and afford children the opportunity to actualise them. Research processes such as these serve the purpose of allowing children to share their dreams so others might appreciate and forward or enable such children's agenda.

Children's career dreams and ambitions were driven by the fact that they were all receiving a formal education from the time when they arrived in Uganda. It is this formal schooling that informed some of their choices about their future careers. For Majok, his dream was to become a teacher. Like Lam, he anticipated that that he would return to his country when the war was over and find a job. In a group discussion with girls, they equally revealed their views of a promising future if they completed school. These are reflected in the following excerpt.

> *It is true we shall go away from here. So according to me my thoughts are once I complete my studies one day I will go away from here and have something to do by my own self, like when I complete my studies maybe I will get job. I am planning to become a nurse…I want to become a teacher. I also want to become a nurse… (Girls' tele-focus group discussion 2020)*

In the conversation, the girls shared their perspectives of their diverse career dreams. Accompanying these thoughts was the fact that these dreams, like those of some of their contemporaries, are to be fulfilled in other places. The children's construction of education as a prerequisite for career success, can equally be argued to be influenced by the predominant thoughts in the wider societies that children have interacted with in pre- and post-migratory experiences.

How can I live in Uganda but not as a refugee?

The concerns of Akifa were how she could live in Uganda, but not as a refugee. She was among the children housed in a foster home run by a religious institution. From my diary excerpts, I noted that Akifa dashed to me, as I made way out of their foster home after having completed conducting some interviews with her friends. When I conducted interviews, I recalled observing her in an argument with two other girls. I was drawn to think that the question she asked, *"how can I live in Uganda but not as a refugee?"* was at the centre of discussion. While I was taken aback by this question, not knowing exactly how to answer it, I was equally drawn to think that my encouragement to children to ask any questions during and after our interactions, was yielding results. To answer her question, I sought to probe Akifa first to understand the background to the question. Just as I had thought, the three were involved in an argument where the two girls challenged Akifa that it was impossible ever to live in Uganda as a non-refugee. This was contrary to her thoughts and dreams of wanting to live in Uganda without the label of being a refugee. Further drawing on the children's perception of refugees, they argued that it was a temporary situation. On these grounds, I am drawn to believe that Akifa made a fair argument on the basis that the temporary refugee status was in essence supposed to cease at some point.

In an answer to Akifa, I stated that there could be ways of her living in Uganda, but not as a refugee. One of them was the acquisition of Ugandan citizenship. Furthermore, I also revealed to her that since South Sudan had been admitted to the East African Community block, she could later live or even work freely in any of those countries, including Uganda. While nursing the aspiration of remaining in Uganda is perceivable as crucial to some children, such as Akifa, the need to do this outside the assumed status of being refugees is evidently important. From their lived experiences as refugee children, it is very likely that Akifa's reservation about having the status of refugee attached to her, meant a longer stay in Uganda could possibly affect the way she imagined her life independent of being refugee, which I think is both a dream and a comparison drawn with the lives of non-refugees, from her lived refugee experiences.

Dealing with uncertainties

In this section, I explore the children's lived experiences about uncertainties that emerged while in Uganda. Drawing from different situations, this section further discusses how children dealt with these uncertainties. Important to note is that the children's earlier migratory situation, as reflected in Chapter Five, positioned children in the way of several uncertainties. These ranged

from lack of information about where they were going while on their journeys, the separation from their families and uncertainty of about their future. While children shared these experiences, they equally showed ways in which they dealt with some of these uncertainties, with most of them arguing that they eventually got along after some time. However, the extent to which uncertainties continue to emerge in children's lives, is something that can be argued as way beyond their control. However, what I found equally important, was children's ways of bouncing back past the uncertainties.

Deaths of parents and children parenting children

Through narratives, children relived moments that saw them arrive in Uganda unaccompanied. Some of their experiences showed that they commenced their journeys alone, while others were separated from their parents. However, some of their narratives led me to explore another category of children who assumed the "alone status" following either the death of an only parent, or upon the return of an only parent to South Sudan, leaving the child or children under the care of others. While I have discussed the situation with examples from the latter group, it is equally important to explore the perspectives of alone children who assume the alone status following the death of an only parent in a Ugandan settlement.

At only fourteen years old at the time, Ajak (female) who is now seventeen years of age, became family head in their household following the death of her mother in 2018. The household now comprises four brothers and three sisters. As the eldest child, Ajak has been placed at the helm of this family – a responsibility that she described as very heavy for her. Their deceased mother is buried within the compound of their plot because it was too risky to return her to South Sudan following the ongoing insurgency. Whilst it was important for me to understand how the emotions surrounding the passing of her mother might have impacted on her and her siblings, it was evidently clear that she was still overwhelmed by emotions, often hesitating, or remaining silent. A change in the discussion, to how she was able to fend for her seemingly large family of siblings, provided an avenue through which I understood how Ajak handled the pressures that emerged from the death of the family head.

David: What are some of the things that you do to be able to see that you manage to provide for your brothers and sisters?

Ajak: I am just relying on the food they have given to us, sometime even I exchange that food. I take to market and sell it, get money to change the diet.

David: So, what is your current family size number?

Ajak: Seven

David: How does it feel acting like parent to your brothers and sisters? how do you feel about this responsibility?

Ajak: Sometime I feel okay, sometimes I have a lot of thoughts, I get stress.

David: How do you manage this stress? What do you do about it?

Ajak: I visit my friends sometimes and interact and chat with them. Sometimes I just pray.

As reflected in my dialogue with Ajak, her struggles include having to measure up to the roles previously performed by her mother. As she must rely mostly on food rations distributed by the relief and refugee agencies, Ajak must explore the option of selling off some of this food to supplement the dietary needs of her family. Additionally, the family also used its small potato garden to further supplement the food demands. For a young person like Ajax, the likelihood of balancing her own interests and those of her siblings can be tough. This is even reflected in her revelation of how stressful such moments are for her. Equally important to note is that having to assume a parental role as an adolescent could mean having to unlearn and learn certain aspects associated with parenting, very quickly. I opine that while in the case of Ajak, her siblings might have high expectations of her, possibly equating her with their mother, the society in general equally views her from that lens. Like most young people, Ajak says how important her friends to her are as a stress reliever of her assumed parenting role.

In further dealing with the uncertainties from their mother's death, Nyalam (who is a younger sister to Ajak) reported how good she felt about having her sister assume and fulfil their mother's role. While she acknowledged the pressure her sister goes through to fend for them, she expressed her gratitude, citing that she and her other siblings were lucky to have such a responsible sister. By appreciating the role of her sister, it can be argued that children (and siblings, in this case) can develop their own support mechanism, which they can rely on when overcoming some uncertainties. In showing her gratitude for the efforts of her sister, it can be argued that Nyalam was part of the coping strategy necessary for her sister to manage some of her stress issues.

Relatedly, Dak (male) found himself in an almost similar situation before he and his three siblings were fostered by a religious leader who took them into his home. Like Ajak and her siblings, Dak also lost his ailing mother in September of 2018. In dealing with the aftermath of this uncertainty, Dak, and his sister Alek shared memories of when they had to take turns nursing their mother in Adjumani hospital. During the times taken to nurse their mother, Alek

further revealed how Dak and she would have to miss school for several weeks. Even when either of them was not attending to their mother, they would be caring for their younger brother and sister at home. These experiences emphasise the sacrifices children can make when family members are incapacitated. These sacrifices can include drastic steps, such as skipping school, or dropping out of school entirely. Such undertakings by children remind us of the important active role that children contribute to supporting the fabric of society.

Additionally, what I found equally important in exploring Dak's lived experiences were the ways in which he assumed the parenting role for his siblings. While it has been noted that Dak was constantly in and out of school in the period when his mother was ailing, Alek also made it known that their mother advised Dak, as the eldest child in the family, to stop school and assume the responsibility of fending for them, as she could not fulfil the role of family provider, given her poor health. To assume this role, is to show the important role older siblings assume over their younger ones. Through this research, different sibling children revealed how their older sibling had to step up in their alone and unaccompanied situations. It would also be worth noting the culturally constructed place of an older sibling especially in the absence of a parent. In assuming his rights as her eldest child, it did suggest that Dak's mother was reaffirming the cultural importance attached elder children as apparent heirs to their parents.

In addition to dropping out of school, Dak also reported how his three siblings had to drop out as well during their third term of school, because their school fees had not been paid. The desire to have his siblings return to school drove Dak to engage in odd jobs to earn money. From this illustration, *"…I go to dig in people's gardens and when I finish that work, they would pay money…just one piece of land, they would give 5000 shillings"* Dak reaffirmed his commitment towards ensuring the welfare of his siblings, including having his sister Alek to support him sometimes in completing such garden work more quickly. Although some of these family responsibilities were later taken away from Dak when they are attached to a foster home of one of the religious leaders in the settlement, Dak observed that this came with its own challenges. Some of them included the difficulty of adjusting to the many children under the same care. He further opined that, as there were many children, sometimes the food was not enough. In other situations, he felt that although there was now a significant family head in the foster home, he still needed to support his siblings emotionally and financially.

How closing schools put children's aspirations at risk

While exploring children's lived experiences about their aspirations and dreams, they asserted how these dreams were linked to learning processes facilitated by experiencing a formal education. Different corroborating experiences from children, suggested that the Ugandan formal education system was one step ahead in supporting the realisation of these dreams. While implementing this research, the government of Uganda had instituted several restrictive measures to help manage the spread of the Coronavirus. In the light of this, all education institutions in the country were closed and schooling was conducted in a phased manner for a while before total closure of these institutions followed again.

At the onset of school closure, children opined that this was done in their best interests. They supported the move because it promoted their safety from the Coronavirus. However, the prolonged closure of schools, also evoked discomfort among the refugee children. Many of the refugee children in my study were allocated to lower years than their Ugandan counterparts, because of the disruptions in schooling in their countries of origin, from which they had fled. They felt misaligned in relation to Ugandan learners of similar ages who were allocated by the school to higher years than the ones they occupied. They were also concerned that the effects of school lockdowns would disrupt their schooling even further and reinforce their experiences and perceptions of misalignment by virtue of their ages and the years to which they were allocated.

The refugee children in my study argued for the need to reopen schools before the end of 2020 to avert a situation where they would have to repeat classes the following year. One such example was Riak who was fifteen and in primary seven. He believed that he was too old for his assigned class, having already lost school time due to the migration, Riak was put almost two classes below when he resumed school in Uganda. To further understand Riak's concerns, it is important to illustrate how a child's age is constructed to be in tandem with the class they attend. For children in primary school, it is believed that the average age of completing this level of school is about thirteen years. This could possibly explain why Riak felt uncomfortable as he continued to age, without progressing in respect of his assigned class. Apart from this, the tendency to use a child's appearance to construct their social age, could equally have been a challenge for Riak whose physique suggested that he was considerably older biologically, than the normative age assigned by his school for the year group he attended.

Through reflections on informal dialogues captured through my diary notes, children shared their home schooling approaches. Atong for instance revealed that she would study on her own and then come together in group with other refugee children and discuss the work. However, she observed that this the group idea was not working, because it was difficult to come together regularly, let alone have a meaningful discussion. She, on the other hand, thought that if she could have school textbooks, her home schooling would get better. Other children said that they received home schooling support from their foster guardians. However, others argued that this was limited to children who were in the higher classes. For instance, Akifa argued that those in primary six and seven received remedial lessons from one of the foster guardians who was a university student.

To understand better how the school closure impacted on children's dreams, most children argued that since almost an entire school year had been lost by them remaining at home, there was a need to simply promote them to the next class. These were the thoughts of Ajok, who contended that their being at home during school time was not of their making and it was imperative that they be promoted to the following year. For Akur, there was no question as to having to repeat a class the following year. He argued that *"I cannot repeat P5 next year."*

Only Dak was accepting of the idea of having to repeat Senior two, contending that, since no learning had happened for almost the entire year, skipping a class would make it difficult to learn the things that were meant for a specific class. Additionally, he argued that alternative studying approaches, such as self-study, were difficult for him to use. Other alternative pedagogic practices using radios were not effective according to Dak because of poor radio connectivity whenever he tuned in.

In reflecting on children's thoughts about the closure of schools, it is important to acknowledge how children kept their dreams alive. The optimism shown by the children emphasised how important these dreams were. By revealing the different approaches that they used to enhance their learning while at school, children revealed their proactiveness in ensuring the continuity of their learning. Additionally, as an issue that related to aspiration realisation, I noticed that this issue was something that children spoke about very passionately, emphatically stating their position on this issue. It is no doubt that the closure of schools evoked fear and confidence in some of the children. This was their way of negotiating past this issue. To some children, they argued that their dreams were unshaken and that these dreams would still come to pass. The thought of schools being closed for all children in Uganda and not for them, specifically as refugee children, was a reassuring thought about their schooling in general.

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Children's relationships with institutions

In this section, I reflect on how refugee children constructed their relationships with several institutions in the settlement. Of particular interest are the religious institutions with their preference of the church and its leaders. The other institutions reflected upon are the relief and humanitarian agencies. Through exploring these relations, this section reveals the supporting role of these institutions in forwarding the everyday lives of children in the settlement. On the forefront in their reflections on this, is the relationship between them and the individuals within these institutions.

Children's reflections of the church as a place of importance

An important and emerging theme in my research concerned the significance the refugee children attached to religion in their everyday lives. The existence of church buildings was one defining factor that asserted how relevant religion was. In the foster homes, where some of the children resided, some places had been converted into worship spaces. In one specific foster home, the head of the home owned a church nearby. It was in this church space that I sometimes interacted with the children. During the mapping activity in which I asked refugee children in my study to point out important places for them in the settlement, the church buildings were frequently cited One of these children was Gire, and in the extract below she explains why the church was 'very important' for her.

David: Let's talk about the church. You told me that the Holy family church is a church for Catholics only.

Gire: Yes.

David: Are you also a catholic?

Gire: Yes.

David: Tell me, why do you like the Holy family catholic church and not the other one which is near your home?

Gire: (*Silence*)

David: Okay, tell me something about the church… why is a church also very important to you?... why did you choose to take me to the church?

Gire: That one is a place where people confess, and you pray to God if you do not have something, God can give you.

David: So, Gire, have you ever prayed to God, and you have received somethings that you wanted?

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Gire:	Yes.
David:	Okay! Like, what did you pray for, and God gave you?
Gire:	Yes, I prayed to God so that God help me to get clothes and clothes were brought to me.
David:	Who did God use to bring you the clothes?
Gire:	The priest
David:	Tell me more how the priest gave you clothes
Gire:	After church one day, they told all children to stay and get clothes
David:	Okay!
David:	When I look at your pictures of church, I see that you took a picture cross. Is the cross important to you?
Gire:	Yes
David:	Why is it important to you?
Gire:	They tell us that the cross is Jesus
David:	Who tells you that?
Gire:	They tell in church, the priest
David:	Okay! Tell more about Jesus and the cross
Gire:	He died on the cross for our sins
David:	Okay!

In this dialogue Gire elaborates on the importance of the church for her in the context of her life in the settlement, I get to know from her the importance of the church in her life. From our conversation, it is important to understand how Gire emphasised how much the church operated for her as a place where both her physical and spiritual needs are fulfilled. She opined that the cross was a representation of the crucifixion of Jesus and the forgiveness of sin. Furthermore, she asserted how important prayer was, affirming that her prayers had been answered. I asked her why she preferred this church as opposed to the one nearer her home. She argued that Holy Family Church was established before the other church, and that most of her friends worshipped in this church. This revelation signified how the church fuelled the manufacture of children's social relations. The refusal to switch to a closer church showed how important these relationships are to children. This further exemplified that when children build social relationships, they also work towards ensuring their survival. Refusing to switch to a closer church was Gire's way of ensuring the survival of her social networks.

In the same way, I explored how the church as a place evolved into a child-friendly space that allowed children to express themselves freely, through music and dance. Although this was in

presentation for a wedding ceremony, I observed how in church grounds, children organised themselves into music and dance groups. Important to me was how children had come to dominate a space that is usually dominated by adults. In utilising the church for children alone, we were reminded, as adults, how children can establish functional systems within their own child spaces. This I noticed from the way the practice was being organised into smaller groups, with each grouping singing and dancing to a different tune under the instruction of lead singers who were also children.

Religion as a space that facilitated the building of relations with children

As a space, I learned from children how they had to rely on their spiritual beliefs in their depressed and difficult moments. While reflecting on different issues, they would often say that they would pray about the situation they were in, often for it to get better. Drawing on the example of Dak and how he argued that prayer helped him not to despise but have hope in tough situations.

> *…I would just pray to God so that he can help us in future, so that my two sisters can study…the time we were been staying there in block C, we did not know who will come and pay for our school fees, at night when we are going to sleep, we just praying to God so that God can send to us a person who can help us. Then God brought to them pastor who brought us to his home…he cares for us even pays our school fees…* (**Dak, informal group dialogue 2020**)

From the excerpt, it is evident how sometimes the refugee children were overwhelmed by uncertainties about their lives and how some of them made and practiced strong investments in religion. Through this example, children showed that some of them had a strong existing relationship with their religion. This relationship, as portrayed through prayer, offered a supportive mechanism for the children. To be able to receive assistance as is in this case was reflected by the children as having their prayers heard. The ability to receive what some of them prayed for, reflects how dependable their religion was to them. For some children, religious space was one that they exploited in their down moments. Citing Akur as an example, he said that there were moments when the thought of being a refugee child made him feel bad. In such moments, he argued that prayer was his refuge and further revealed that it would help him feel better. In yet another example, prayer was seen to healing and revoking demonic spirits. These were the thoughts of Abuk who reflected on how several people were getting sick and others even dying in their early days in the settlement. He further said that this was

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because the Madi people of Uganda, whom he referred to as *Madi oba* (crazy Madi people), were not happy with their coming to Adjumani and as such evoked demonic spirits that made them sick. Akur was convinced that prayer was the only way to deal with this spiritual issue since eventually people stopped getting sick or dying.

Children's relationships with religious leaders

While reflecting on some of the issues that would facilitate the easy implementation of my field work, I was reminded of how important I considered it to explore existing relations among the children themselves. These I have further argued as having eased my entry and being accepted by the children into their spaces. I paid specific attention to including children with shared dynamics such as siblings. While in the field, I utilised available opportunities, such as children fostered into different homes. What stood out in using this approach was two homes where religious leaders had taken on the role of caring for alone and unaccompanied children. In these discussions, children shared the existing relationships they had with these institutional heads, whom many of them constructed as and equated to their absent parent, because of their impact on their lives in the refugee settlement.

David:	Right now, you are living here at pastor's home and living with five other children who are like you, how did you end up here?
Nyawech:	I used to come here to pray with my auntie. We would find many orphans the pastor is taking care of. I came here after the pastor asked me to come and live with other children.
David:	What made you come here yet you had your own plot?
Nyawech:	The pastor came to my home and pastor started said that as a young girl staying alone is dangerous for me because my auntie had had moved to Maaji.

Nyawech in this conversation revealed how an act of compassion from a religious leader changed her life. In reflecting upon the actions of the pastor, it worth arguing that his suggestion to have Nyawech move into his home was exemplifying moments when adults' actions consider children's best interests. In this discussion, the most immediate concern is that of her safety. After she had lost her family's property in a fire and the decision was made by her aunt to return to South Sudan, she found herself in a situation where she was living with a neighbour. Her struggles to fend for herself while living at the neighbour's house, drove her to the pastor's home after she had learned that he took care of orphaned and alone children. In religious leaders

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undertaking such responsibility for children, the children held most of them in high regard, seeing them as people who had their interests at heart.

To other children, when asked how their lives had changed in the settlement since some of these religious leaders had taken charge of their wellbeing, some of them said that they were experiencing a fulfilling life. For instance, Dak revealed that he felt that his life was much better because the pastor was paying his school fees and buying food and clothes for them.

The ethic of honouring Sundays as the sabbath

The ethic of honouring Sundays as the sabbath emerged from children's construction of the things that they did on Sundays. For most of the children, Sunday was constructed as a holy day that was characterised by several faith-based activities. Predominant among them was the Sunday church service, of which each child had their different experience. For Riak, Sunday church service was important because it gave him the opportunity to hear the sermon from the priest. Atem revealed that he had attended all Sunday church services before being stopped due to the pandemic. For other children, such as Atong, it was the day she attended all the services because she was one of the choir members in the church, whereas Ajak helped with the children's church service (Sunday school).

To appreciate further how important Sunday was in the children's Christian faith, I honoured an invitation to attend one of the Sunday church services in one of the churches of their choice. Because the service was conducted in the local Madi language, which I could not understand, one of the children offered to translate the sermon for me. In reflecting upon my own Christian teachings, which informed my own beliefs, I related very well with the children when they spoke about their own religious beliefs. For instance, it was easy to understand how children related to the church, why Sunday as a sabbath was constructed as a holy day. It was upon such an understanding that I restricted my engagements with the children on Sundays, only appearing in the football play spaces late in the evenings. Equally, my attendance at church was also a way of listening to the children's views and experiencing life from their perspective. While throughout, it seemed as if I was the one in need of knowledge from them, it was also important to experience some of the spaces that the knowledge which they shared with me was generated from.

My further analysis of Sunday was in respect of the fact that the settlement appeared abandoned and quieter for most of the day on Sundays, except for different sounds of singing and chanting voices that emerged from the different churches in the settlement. Unlike other days, even the

trading centres which attracted several people were unusually quiet on Sundays, with only a handful of shops open. While exploring the ethic of Sundays, I sometimes took mid-morning walks, just to compare how different Sundays were from other days. While on other days, it was common to find women and children early in the morning heading to the boreholes to fetch water, and other people working around their small gardens within their plots. The boreholes were instead abandoned places on Sunday mornings, and few people were in their *shambas*[13]. Instead, I would meet several people smartly dressed on their way to church. This reaffirmed the children's argument that Sunday was a holy day. Its holiness as a sabbath was portrayed in the way people were absent from their usual weekly activities, preferring to spend more time in the churches. To further corroborate this, children also revealed that they were excused from their routine responsibilities like gardening and only did light work, which did not take most of their Sunday resting time after their church services.

How children viewed their relationship with humanitarian and relief agencies

Children's interactions with humanitarian and relief agencies are reflected as far back as to their arrivals at the reception centres and eventually into the settlement. In this period, these agencies were concerned with supporting the immediate resettlement needs of the children. But with each agency placing focus on the specific needs of the children, they soon identified with them and the spaces the agencies occupied within the settlement. How these relationships developed is worth studying, as is why the children saw them as important in their lives.

The food and relief distribution centre

The food and relief distribution centre were one of the most prominent places in the entire settlement. Children had fond memories of this place, which had previously served as a reception centre. This meant that all of them, upon arrival into the settlement, were received at this reception centre, and housed in tents for a few days before being allocated plots where they established their homes. During the mapping activity of the important places in the settlement, all the children chose this as one of the three most important places in the settlement to them. The children associated this distribution centre with two United Nations agencies. The first one was the Refugee Agency, which they associated with the distribution of the relief supplies in the centre. The other, the World Food Programme, made the food available at the centre. In

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13 Commonly used in East Africa to mean a cultivated plot of land, farmland, or plantation

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capturing photographs of specific points that they considered to be important, each child captured the huge storage facilities, pointing out that these were the places where food was kept. The other important point in this space was the shelter and shades which they revealed as being the points where they waited before receiving their rations.

The connection of this centre to the United Nations agencies suggested that children perceived these agencies as providers of foodstuffs to them. From my own experiences, on the days when there was a planned food distribution in the settlement, almost nothing else mattered. To get children to participate in an activity, for instance, was difficult as they all shifted their focus to the food distribution moments. Some of the defining moments of this activity was when trucks from the World Food Programme and others from the Department of Refugees commenced to deliver food items to the distribution centre. The presence of these trucks signified the beginning of the rationing of food and the sight of these trucks fuelled lots of conversation within the refugee community. One such conversation was reflected in the drawings of Kenyi (below), whose drawing included a truck loaded with foodstuffs. In his narrative, Kenyi revealed that this was a World Food Programme truck delivering maize grain to the food distribution point.
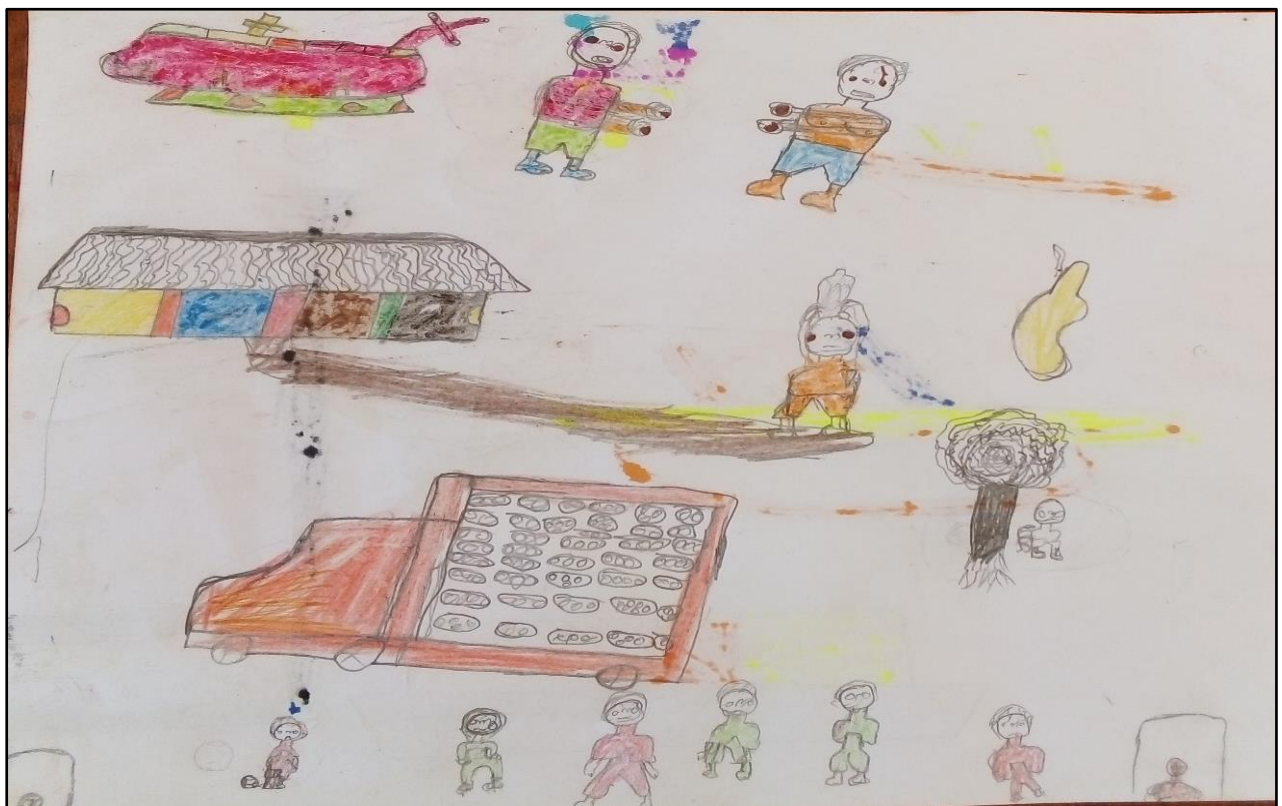
Figure 8:Drawing of Kenyi's reflection of relief food delivery to the settlement

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Through related conversations with children, they shared how the UN refugee agency facilitated their continued survival through food and clothing supplies.

David: What makes it okay?

Ajok: Because UNHCR are providing food for us

David: Okay! Who else is helping?

Ajok: LWF

David: LWF! What does LWF do for you?

Ajok: They are providing for us these clothes

While it is commonly understood that relief and humanitarian agencies provide relief assistance to refugee communities, it is not often spoken of how such acts of provision are perceived by the recipients. As exemplified through the children's experiences, relief and humanitarian agencies were seen in an important way, not necessarily as providers only, but as an assurance of the continuity of receiving support every other time.

Agencies as child protectors

While most agencies have their defining missions that guide them while rendering their service to children, I find it equally important for children to be able to define in their own terms why these agencies are interested in them. Such rules serve the best interests of children, as they are informed of how beneficial agencies are to them, and that they are not simply recipients of assistance, in which they have no say.   In the example where different alone children were relocated to faith-based foster care systems in the settlement, I argued, based on their stories, that they were made aware of the circumstances leading to their relocation. For instance, as children living on their own following the death of their mother, Dak and his siblings were connected to the foster care of a religious leader by Save the Children after learning that they were alone in a child-headed family. Similarly, other children also shared experiences of how agencies linked and placed them under the care of religious leaders. For instance, Majok who arrived unaccompanied was immediately identified by the UN Refugee agency and placed under the care of a priest.

In further exploring how agencies performed the protection role of children, I will draw additional examples from the child-friendly spaces. While I have discussed in Chapter Three how challenging it was to access a child-friendly space run by Save the Children, it is further important to note that these spaces were fully staffed, allowing children to access them in the

morning and closing them off in the evenings. These spaces were also enclosed by fences and accessing children in these places required following the procedures from the respective agencies that run them. In another child-friendly space, I was accosted by an adult staff member who noticed that even from outside the fence where I stood observing children play a game of football inside, my prolonged presence there arose suspicion. From his point of view, he argued that children in settlements were the targets for traffickers and that it was important to know the intentions of adults who hang around children's spaces unannounced. As an adult man, my presence near this children's space did not only cause suspicion of me but also brought to light some of the dilemmas adult men like myself experience in implementing research which attempts to engage with young people as active participants.

Figure 9: Photograph of the child friendly spaces, with emphasis to their protective setup and restricted access (source: fieldwork 2020)

The ethnicities of host communities and their stereotypes about refugees

One of the themes that emerged from children's accounts of their forced migratory experiences was how they interacted and related to their host communities. These interactions go back as far as when children were arriving in Uganda. For purposes of this study, I construct the concept host communities not only to include the immediate and surrounding local Madi communities but also the local communities that children interacted with in reception centres and elsewhere within the boundaries of Uganda. Important to note though is that refugees in Uganda are

hosted in established settlements. Bordering the settlements are villages of natives. Insights from children have shown that these two communities often interact. Additionally, because refugees are not confined to these settlements, they move freely and interact with their host communities. It is from the privileges extended to the refugee communities under the refugee statutory instruments and provisions that such interactions thrive.

In reflecting on some of their relationships with nearby host communities, some of the children reported that they had a rather complex relationship with them. Lam, for instance, revealed how sometimes, as refugee children, they were threatened by women they met in places where they gather firewood. Ajak's narrative equally corroborated Lam's experience. She also revealed how she had experienced hostile treatment when she went to fetch firewood. In her narrative, she further revealed that the Ayugi river was constructed as the boundary that separated them from the host communities. Crossing onto the other end of the river to gather firewood attracted harsh treatment from their hosts. Through her narrative, she additionally revealed that the host community was not forthcoming, clearly telling of how their side of the river was different and not for refugees. For this reason, she said that sometimes they would be chased away by their hosts.

From both Lam and Ajak's perspective, it is worth noting how the refugee host community constructed themselves to be superior to the refugees. While children acknowledged that there were shared spaces like schools, religious places like churches and even the marketplaces where they met and interacted with their peers and other members of the host communities, it was also evident that other spaces these communities constructed and perceived as theirs was out of reach for refugees. Perhaps, it could be perceived that the refugee presence was a threat to these communities and drawing territorial boundaries was one way of asserting themselves and protecting what they constructed as theirs.

Dealing with stereotypical tendencies of peers in host communities

While children revealed how complicated their relationships with their host communities sometimes were, they also shared how quickly they learned how to deal with stereotypes directed at them, specifically that which emerged from their peers. Prior to the lockdown measures that restricted their movement, children revealed that they met and interacted with their peers from host communities at school, marketplaces and even playgrounds. It was in these spaces that children revealed that some of the stereotypes were directed at them. Through the different tele-focus group discussions, I learned from the children that, to be reminded by

their peers that they were refugees, made them feel bad. This is for instance illustrated in this narrative extract "*they always say your refugees and you came to our land and that is the bad thing I am ever hearing, and I ever feel bad*".

In analysing how this further reflected on the everyday lives of these children, such stereotypical tendencies can be said to make refugee children feel further alienated in newly found spaces; places that would have otherwise been perceived as crucial in helping them to bounce back from the adverse effects of having forcefully left their home countries, including the different experiences that emerged from their journeys. The feeling of sadness and even anguish among some children was evident in the tone of their voices, with some children arguing that their being refugees was a situation that was beyond their control, and some of them dreaming that someday the dawn of peace in South Sudan would enable them to go home again.

In exploring this further, I got to learn from the children also that there were additional ways their peers stigmatised and referred to them. In the tele-focus group discussion with both boys and girls, Lam said that *"they insult us that we don't know how to behave, and they also give us pet names like kevu kovu[14]."* The name-calling thus emerged as peers from host communities referred to the refugee children. It is worth noting that by perceiving refugee children as behaving differently from them, the host community constructed them as other and identified them as those people who came to their country for a while and would be on their way soon again (*kevu kovu).* In the dialogue below with Lam, I further explored the meaning of the concept *kevu kovu* and how children felt about this constructed identity.

David: Is this name calling only at your school or even elsewhere?

Lam: Even the host community call us kevu kovu (*Lam laughs while saying this & I can also hear giggles from the other children in the background*)

David: What does *kevu kovu* mean?

Lam: Meaning they come, and they go.

David: What do they mean by 'they come and go'?

Lam: They mean us refugees, that we have come but we shall go away

David: Is there any other way they call you besides this?

Lam: They also use another word *Lukai* - meaning Madi of Sudan.

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14 Loosely translated as 'they come and then go

David: How do you feel about being called *kevu kovu or lukai*?

Lam: I feel bad but of course now since senior one now I have gotten used to
          it and of course, I know I cannot do much about it. For us we call them
          Madi   uppa meaning Madi fox or wild dogs *(giggles from himself &
          others in   the background & we're all drawn to a laughter at the
          mention of Madi   fox)* because they are mad at us and helps us to also
          feel good.

From Lam's experience, *kevu kovu* was a Madi phrase that was used to associate the temporary presence of refugees in Ugandan communities. This was also corroborated in the group discussion with only the boys where they also argued that they were often referred to as *kevu kovu* which they also said meant *those people come and later they will go and then they will come again.* In associating it with refugees coming and going, it closely related to Lam's reflection of how they were seen and constructed as being different from the Ugandan host communities. This difference is further seen in the construct *lukai* to emphasise both ethnical and geographical boundary differences. During my fieldwork time, I learnt that apart from the geographical boundaries between Uganda and South Sudan, both countries shared certain ethnicities, for instance the Madi, Kakwa, and even the Acholi. This possibly explained why *lukai* for instance was used emphatically to refer to the Madi ethnic grouping in South Sudan by their counterparts in Uganda.

Additionally, what I found worth noting was the emotions that were experienced during this discussion about name-calling. While it was easy to assume that children only felt hurt about the identities that they assumed from being labelled by their host peers and communities at large, children's actions also revealed the lighter moments that emerged from these name-calling instances. The discussion provoked laughter and excitement among children. Even from the other end of the telephone conversation, I could hear children chuckle and giggle as their friends related and discussed the concepts *Keku kovu, lukai* or *Madi uppa.* The lighter moments from the different discussions around this topic suggested how children had adapted to living with these identities. The emotions of anguish or annoyance that were previously provoked by such identities seemed to have been overcome, as reflected by the mood they displayed.

Furthermore, the refugee children in my study revealed their own retaliatory strategies against some of the negative stereotypes aimed at them. These, I argue, helped to build on and promote their resilience and enabled them to move beyond insults, as reflected in the excitement during

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the discussion. Lam revealed that they also called the host communities *Madi uppa* which translated into Madi fox or wild dogs. This he argued was their way of protesting against the harshness with which they were sometimes handled. Lam argued that a fox is a crazy animal, and the craziness of the host community was seen in moments when they stopped them from crossing Ayugi or even from fetching firewood. Additionally, Moiba argued that they sometimes referred to the host community as *Madi Uganda.* This he said helped them to emphasise in reference to the Madi people of Uganda, whom they also constructed as being different from them, the Madi of South Sudan. In the girls only group discussion, they argued that their way of protesting such name calling was by referring to the members of the host community as *raskiberi.* This, they explained, meant "big heads" and, like the boys, they further argued that they deserved to be called big heads because they were ruthless and unkind to them when they met in the bushes while gathering firewood or fetching water.

Children's important spaces in the settlement and how they related with them

It emerged from the different follow up conversations that there were spaces within the settlement that the children constructed as important to their everyday life. It thus became important to explore these spaces and understand from the children themselves what some of these spaces meant to them. As is reflected in Chapter Four, exploring these spaces involved an activity driving around the settlement with children taking lead on guiding this "tour" activity. While in these spaces, children took photographs of these spaces, specifically the points which they perceived as important to them. This they did together with sharing their stories and experiences of these spaces.

Figure 10:Picture collage illustration of children's important places in the settlement: clockwise, the playground, the trading centre, the school, and the food distribution point (Source: fieldwork 2020)

The food distribution point as a space that sustained children's need

While conducting fieldwork, I did learn that food distribution days were critical days, not only in the lives of the children that I worked with, but the entire refugee community in the settlement. The moments leading to the food distribution in the settlement were characterised by excitement, especially when the relief food delivery trucks started delivering food. From my further reflections, children refocussed their attention on food distribution and would either skip our appointments, or simply say that they had forgotten. One way of navigating this initially was to reschedule appointments, and, over time, I learned not to engage with the children directly but rather visit and have informal conversations with them at the food distribution point or if I met them on the way from there.

Food rationing and reception

The food distribution point was one space that all children identified as a special place, arguing that it supported their everyday moments in the settlement. During the group discussion about this space, Dawa revealed that this was the place where she gets her food rations every month. This aspect of receiving food from this space monthly was one that was shared by all the other

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children in the group discussion. In further exploring how important this space was to her, Dawa further revealed that it was the only source of food for her and her entire family. This revelation was thus very crucial in understanding why children's participation on food distribution days was irregular. While Dawa and Gire both argued that the food they received from this place was not enough for the entire month, they were happy that at least they did not have to buy food, because they did not have any money. In further analysing the conversations that emerged from the food distribution point discussion, I engaged the children in discussions around the type of food that they received and how they consumed it at home, bearing in mind that some children like Dawa and Gire had hinted at how little the food there was.

In this regard, Keji said that they were provided with beans, posho (maize flour) or maize corn with cooking oil. In the previous food distribution round, Keji argued that she could not know the exact amount of her own food ration, since it was always combined with that of the rest of the family members. Important to note is that food rationing was portioned out according to the number of people per family. Each family has an attestation form, which shows the number of people it comprises and this, as previously highlighted, is known as family size. A larger family size does get a larger food ration.

However, Mawut who was from family size seven argued that in order to sustain their food supply until the end of the month, they could only eat two meals a day. This he further illustrated as being a light porridge breakfast which he and his siblings took at ten o'clock and then an early evening meal at four o'clock. While children's food experiences varied, I found that there were a few instances where they faced the same situations. For instance, Gatwech had previously revealed how having to ration food at the foster home was used as a technique to ensure that it sustained them until the next distribution. From such experiences, it is worth noting that while children were appreciative of food rations they received, it sometimes fell short of satisfying them.

Additionally, Mawut argued that this space was a safe place to store and keep their food. From his perspective, Mawut further reflected on how during his earlier days in the reception centre, food was stolen, and this meant that some of them got even smaller rations. To emphasise how safe the place was, Mawut, in his photo coverage of this place, captured pictures of the perimeter chain fence that surrounded the storage facility specifically. He further revealed that during food distribution, one could only access the place if they had the family size card. He argued further that this card helped to eliminate those who want to cheat in respect of their allotted rations.

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Figure 11:Mawut's picture illustration of the food distribution point

A space for other relief rations

Whilst the food distribution point was largely associated with food rationing as is even emphasised in its name – the children revealed that this space was also used to receive other relief-related items. Dawa in her narrative about this space, also revealed how she received clothes from the facility. Like food, Dawa found the receipt of clothing important in sustaining her forced migratory life in the settlement. In further sharing this experience, she revealed that although clothing reception was not as frequent as food distribution, it made her equally happy, and she always looked forward to receiving new clothing. Additionally, she revealed that it was not as hectic as food distribution because most of the times clothing distribution targeted children and not adults, whom she argued would sometimes cause a commotion during the food distribution.

Memories of food distribution space as a reception centre

Apart from the relief-related items that children received from this space, this space also evoked memories of the first days in the settlement. Prior to being a food and other relief distribution point, this place served as the reception centre for all arriving refugees into Pagirinya. Children's earlier reflections and memories of this space have been reflected in detail in

Chapter Five. In recalling earlier moments from this space, each child identified the spot where they had settled, or at least where they thought they had settled, during the few days they spent there when it served as a reception centre. Both Dawa and Gire, argued that they had spent almost a month in this space and were very vivid in their description of spots they lived in during this time. While children's reflections of their earlier refugee lives in this study have shown the difficult moments children had to overcome, I also found the ability of children to engage in these discussions through reflective memories powerful, empowering children to position themselves as experts of their own experiences. While it could easily be taken for granted that refugee children may not want to talk about or reflect on moments, or even places, that remind them of the tough moments in their lives, reflections of this space as a reception centre bore memories of some of the hardships for children. Gire recalled the place being filled with hundreds of people which made it difficult for her as a child to access food and water then.

The centre as Mawut's important space

The Block C trading centre was one of the prominent places in the settlement and was a relatively large business centre. It was a space that I encountered on a daily basis throughout my fieldwork period, often visiting it to have a meal or even a chat. This was one of Mawut's important places in the settlement. To him, this space was the centre, a colloquial word to mean the trading centre. In his photographic capture of the centre, Mawut took pictures of shops, stationary taxis and boda-boda motorcycles. Important to note is that Mawut's photograph moments attracted the attention of several people in the centre. In asserting his agency, Mawut explained to the boda-boda riders in particular that the pictures were to help him show how important the centre was to him. In follow-up discussion about his conversation with the riders, Mawut assured me of how brave a boy he was, and it was for this reason that he was often sent to the centre alone. Additionally, I am drawn to argue that Mawut's comfort with this space aided his building of relationships. This, I further argue, was evidenced in his ability to navigate past the adults in the centre.

As an important space, Mawut also argued that he was sometimes sent to buy food items like sugar and greens. However, when not on any particular errand to the centre, he revealed that he visited the space to enjoy and have a feel of the many vehicles and motorcycles. He also told me that he had fairly had a good understanding of how to operate a motorbike. He revealed that he was learning this skill from two friends of his who were boda-boda bike riders. He hoped that one day, his friends would allow him to ride a bike and carry some passengers on

their bikes so that he can earn some money. Mawut's relationship with this space was evidently a strong one. In it, he revealed how it facilitated learning and relationship-creation. His inability to afford some of the things like toys that he admired at the shops in this space, did not deter his interaction with this place. In addition to this, Mawut also revealed that enjoyed visiting the centre to listen to music that would play in the shops. From his continued interaction with the centre, it can only be argued that the centre is diverse enough so as to allow him to engage differently and assert himself in this important space.

Chapter conclusion

The chapter explored mainly the lived experiences of alone and unaccompanied refugee children in the Ugandan settlement. In drawing on the different experiences from the children, it revealed that refugee childhoods have a chance at experiencing their lives beyond being refugees. In so doing, this chapter portrayed alone children as expressive beings, with dreams and hopes, and with a determination to work towards achieving them. It drew on examples from how important children took aspects of their school life, how they felt threatened by the continued absence of school owing to lockdown measures and how others anticipated a return of peace and sustained the hope of returning home. Additionally, the chapter also explored their uncertainties and how children navigated and negotiated them. Through this, the chapter portrayed children as resilient beings, who were able to bounce back from the different adversities of their forced migratory lives.

Furthermore, the chapter also explored the relationships the children built and shared with the different institutions. In so doing, it showed how the children constructed these relationships and how they positioned the role and importance of the different institutions. Important among these was their relationship with religion as an institution. The experiences from children revealed that religion was a strong pillar that provided hope to the children through their refugee childhoods. Significantly children emphasised how prayer was pivotal to them, showing instances where they relied on this. Also, noteworthy is the dynamics of the relationship between children and host communities, the complexities that come with them and the ways they manage to overcome some of them. Stereotyping by the communities included name-calling and made explicit discriminatory beliefs towards the children. The emotions and feelings this evokes in the children is reflected in the children finding solutions such as crafting names to counteract and overcome such stereotypical tendencies.

The chapter concludes with a discussion around important spaces and children's account of each space. It specifically dwelt on two spaces, the food distribution point, and the trading centre. In using these two spaces, children show their attachments to these spaces by sharing the things that connect them to them. From these spaces, children reveal their experiences, including the relationships built in these places.

Chapter 7 : Negotiating gender and age identities within new social spaces

Introduction

How the children experienced forced migration and life in the settlements was crucially influenced by gender (in conjunction with age).

In my study on how gender impacts on the lives of refugee children in the settlements, I address male and female not as categories which are rooted in nature and which describe who we essentially are, as in common gendered associations of toughness and vulnerability, with masculinities and femininities. Rather, drawing on Butler (1990) who argues that gender is something we do and construct relationally, and not something we have which reflects intrinsic features of womanhood and manhood, I explore, in this chapter, the performance and construction of gender through activities in work and play, and the delineation of these and the spaces they occupy as signifiers of femininity and masculinity.

My interest is in how certain activities and spaces are gendered and how children receive this gendering of their "new social spaces[15]" including the relationships I was able to establish with both girls and boys.

How the gendering of football opened spaces for interviewing boys but not girls

 My interaction with the children participants happened in several spaces around the settlement. What was important to me was to hold conversations with children in the spaces that they constructed as comfortable. To me, these were spaces where I thought children would have more control over the adult and would be able to express themselves freely. Whilst this was sometimes possible, sometimes it was not possible, especially in shared spaces at home. One of the ways I negotiated this, was to either postpone the interaction to another time, or ask if it was possible to meet with the children at another space, which was conducive for their participation. It soon became apparent to me that it was easier for the boys to meet me in

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[15] My use of new social spaces here is to refer to the new physical spaces after the post migratory journeys that children live in and interact with. These include spaces both public and private and are not necessarily limited to the refugee settlements but include other spaces outside, but which have shaped the children's every
day life.

alternate spaces than the girls. This was because many of the "alternate spaces" in the settlement, and notably football playgrounds, were constructed as boys' spaces by both girls and boys. On football playgrounds and the gendering of these, I quote from my field diary:

> *In the evenings, the football playgrounds are mostly filled up by adolescent boys who play a football game almost each day. I have come to notice the boys are particular about who plays with them. As they play, they're spectators spread out along the touch lines, majority of them also being boys. They cheer at their friends who play and dash into the pitch at half time to chat with their friends who are playing. For the past three weeks, I have spent most of my evenings either playing a game of football with these boys or watch them play. In one of the play spaces that is adjacent to the football ground is fitted with playing equipment for children. it is within this alternative play space that the younger boys also play their soccer games from. The only younger girls within this alternative football keep to the swings and slides, not bothered by the boys' game around them. This is also the only football play space where I noticed the presence of girls as the rest of the football playgrounds did not have any girls playing or even watching the boys play.* **(Field diary excerpt 2020, football playgrounds).**

The reflections from my diary excerpts about children's play spaces revealed how the football grounds were associated with the boys. While the boys' actions revealed how important this play space was for them, it was also through the boys that I got to understand why the girls never came to the football playgrounds – even as spectators – when the boys played. Through a series of informal dialogues with boys at the football pitch, some of them revealed that the girls stayed at home in the evenings because they had home chores to undertake. In another football playground, a boy revealed that most of their guardians did not allow girls to hang around in places like the football playgrounds in the evenings because they felt that it was not safe for them to be in such spaces in the evenings with boys.

Additionally, while the girls come to be constructed as vulnerable and in need of protection in discourses which present boys who play football in the evenings, in implicit and explicit opposition, as tough physically and emotionally. Further in these discourses, girls are also constructed as domestic beings, in opposition to boys, who are seen as at ease traversing public

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and domestic spaces in the evenings. This gender portrayal resonates with Butler (1990) argument that social norms and values, with respect to gender, become naturalised through repetitive performances so that they seem to reflect natural features of womanhood and manhood.

Why girls did not attend football playgrounds in the evenings

The gendering of football in terms of who was expected to play and who not, and the times and places in which football was played reinforced the associations of girls with domestic responsibilities and commitments. To explore, in greater depth, the reasons for the absence of girls in the football playgrounds in the evenings, I sought the perspectives of some of the girls, without pre-empting them on the thoughts of the boys. Fifteen-year-old Ajok on her own account seemed to agree with the boys that having to perform evening chores at home kept them away from moving out of their homesteads to the trading centres and even the playgrounds. She further argued that the only time when girls would be in the football playgrounds was when there were organised football competitions between their blocks, where they would have to go and cheer on their teams. This, she however revealed, had since then been paused since the outbreak of the coronavirus pandemic.

Regarding their restriction to the football playgrounds, some of the girls argued that in their foster home, their guardians would not allow them to visit the football playgrounds during the times when the boys were there. These restrictions, according to Atong, emerged from the fear of their engaging in boyfriend-girlfriend intimate relationships, fuelling "immorality" among the young people in the settlement. The girls in this case were perceived to be vulnerable and gullible to the presence of boys in these spaces, still girls were constructed as "vulnerable" in public and male dominated spaces in the evenings whether to men in general or boyfriends. Significantly, discourses about "fuelling immorality" presented women not men as "being in need of protection", as if young women, like children, needed this. Prohibiting them from accessing these spaces during the evening, was thus perceived as protecting them from intimate relationships that could possibly results in pregnancy. Interestingly some of the young women who participated in my research contested their restriction to private spaces in the evenings, and also argued against constructions of ''immorality'' associated especially with girlfriends in boyfriend girlfriend relations.

Additionally, it is arguable that engaging the girls in the evening with home chores was an excuse to keep some of the girls away from these spaces. Having to cook supper, for instance,

for the rest of the household members, was a responsibility that a girl would not escape if asked to do so under the guise of spending time either playing football with the boys or watching them play. On further reflection on the presence of the younger girls in the adjacent spaces where the younger boys played their football, it is worth noting that not only does gender take precedence in the football play spaces, but age also influenced structured play. In this particular case, the risk that was associated with the older and adolescent girls was not associated with the younger girls. This partly explained why they were in the adjacent playground on the swings and slides within the vicinity of both the younger and older boys. It is thus worth arguing that gender per se became particularly significant as a source of identification and dimension of power as the young people in my study got older.

In further illustrating the responsibilities that they undertook, whereas there seemed to be almost no definite responsibility based on sex and gender, children argued that some of their responsibilities were based on age. During the mixed tele-focus group discussion, they argued that the younger children were allocated less tedious and simpler responsibilities, among these were compound sweeping, while the older ones took on heavier and more challenging responsibilities. This analogy further explained the presence of the younger girls in the adjacent football play space because the responsibility that was allocated to the older girls in the evening was more laborious.

Boys constructing boys as rough and distancing themselves from girls through the medium of football

The game of football was instrumental in establishing and maintaining relationships among the boys. Indeed, as illustrated in the extracts below, (from a discussion with the boys) the construction of football as a boys' game entailed excluding girls, as if girls belonged to a distinct species with "their games they play".

David: …okay so Majok what things do you do here. You told me yesterday when you disappeared, you'd gone to play football., okay. Whom do you play football with?

Majok: My friends.

David: Who are your friends that you play with?

Majok: They're boys like me.

David: Okay! So, do you play football as boys only or do the girls join you also?

Majok: Yes, we playboys alone. Girls also have their games they play

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David: Tell me something, what are some of the things you like to do here?

Tong: I even play football.

David: What number do you play?

Tong: Number 7, striker.

David: Okay! should I come and play with you; I play number 9 with both legs.

Tong: *Laughs*…okay but will you manage the other boys

David: Yes, I think I can. Do you play as boys only?

Tong: Yes

David: How about the girls?

Tong: They do not play with us. Sometimes we play so rough

David: So, does roughness keeps the girls away from playing?

Tong: The girls just don't come to play. We are just boys playing ever.

In his construction of football as a boys' game, Tong associates football with being "rough," a notion often associated with masculinity. This resonates with Mayeza's ethnographic study of play in a township school near Durban, in which football was not only predominantly played by boys, but was described in ways which reinforced patriarchal assumptions about boys as being tough or rough and girls as weak (Mayeza, 2015). In the ensuing discussion Majok, further distances himself and other boys from the girls by categorically asserting that, as boys, they play alone and that girls have other games. These girls' games have been explored equally in this chapter. The negotiation processes vest high power stakes to the boys while at the same time, reinforce the notion of vulnerability for girls. The distancing of boys from the girls again speaks to gender spaces and how they are constructed and perceived. For instance, football is seen as a gendered space where gender is not only performed but also reinforced.

In the focus group discussions, the boys further asserted their love of football as a competitive sport that they engaged in through organised leagues with support from some of the relief agencies within the settlement.

> *Yah, as boys before the we like to play football before lockdown but now, we can't. In a group, we form a team. Even Organisations like LWF to organize football match competition whereby you play, and which promotes unity among us people living here. (**Tele-focus group discussion boys & girls 2020**)*

In discussions I had with some of the girls, their individual views about such arrangements drew mixed reactions. Nyalam for instance argued that she did not mind being a spectator at such leagues, as it was equally fun to watch and support the boys from their block who were playing. She further stressed that if they won a game, they all joined in celebrating the win. Ajok, on the other hand, thought that organising football for boys only excluded them as girls from participating. She argued that as girls, they could also play football – even better than the boys – if they were given the chance to play. In so doing, Ajok's transgressive behaviour challenges the seemingly strict gender boundaries which emphasise dominion of boys and their masculinities. This resonates with the Post-structural feminist argument that transgressive forms of gender performance reveal young people's agency in negotiating forms of gender values they interact with during their socialisation process (MacNaughton, 2000). While not undermining the role relief and associated agencies play in supporting the continuation of experiencing childhood in forced migratory situations, perspectives from girls like Ajok highlighted how some of the support agencies silenced their voices, excluding their participation as girls in an activity that some of them thought they could equally participate in, and possibly even better than some of the boys.

How boys respond to me joining in and watching football matches

I participated in some of the football games and also watched some of the other games. This is also discussed in the Playing Adult role I assumed in Chapter Four. Important to note is that all football games that I played were exclusively with boys who all knew each other. On the occasions when I was a spectator, I also noted that the players were boys only, as were the spectators. In one specific football game I played with younger boys in the child friendly spaces (see illustration below), the rule of the game was dodging the opponent and kicking the ball. As our football game went on, the girls who were in the same space, were engaged in other games. When I later switched to play on the swings with the girls, I asked them why they were not playing football with the boys. In her reply, one of the girls argued that football was for the boys and not for girls, they also had their own games. Skipping was one such a game that was

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constructed as a game for girls. Although skipping is mostly associated with the girls, the space where it was played was key in helping me to understand the gender notions behind the game of skipping.
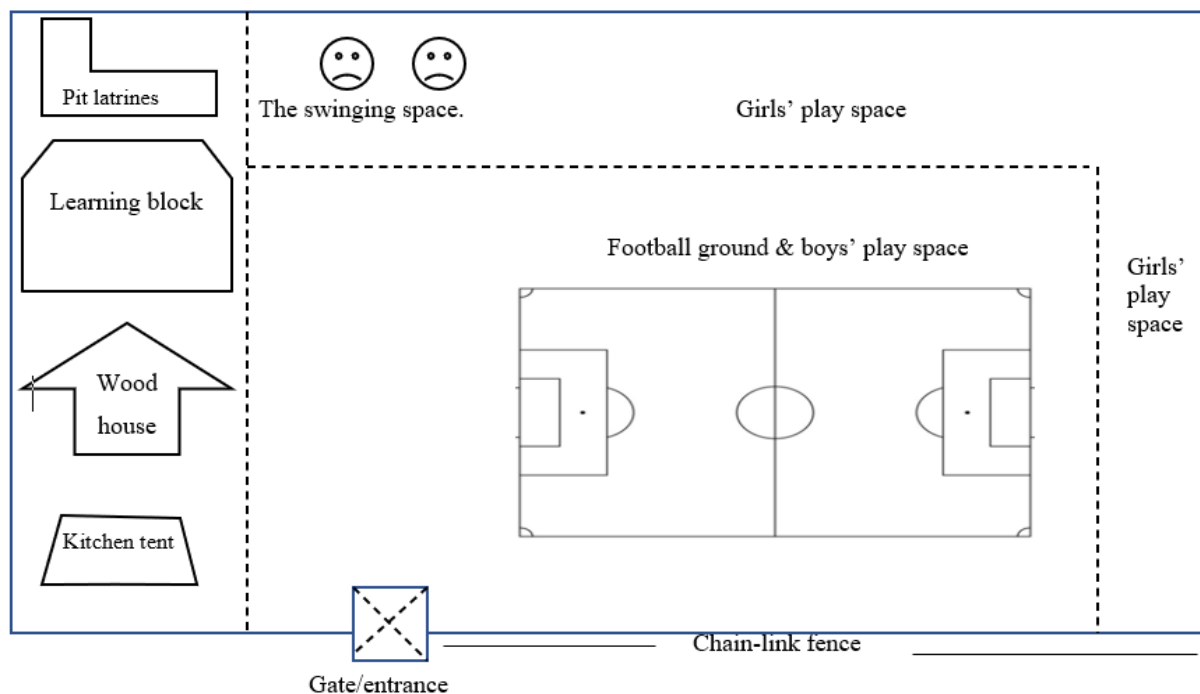

Figure 12:An illustration of a gendering sketch of play spaces in Block- E CFS

In further exploring the construction of football as a boys' game, I experienced the spaces where football was played, I reflected on my gender as a man and the gender attributes that came with it. In the first place, I found it easy to fit into the boys' football activities by virtue of being a male. Initially, the boys found it unusual for an adult male to play football with young boys, but it soon became acceptable and normal to them and myself. In moments when I participated in the games as a spectator, the boys also perceived it to be normal. Although I embodied two significant identities, as an adult and also a male, I am drawn to argue that my masculinity was easily more acceptable for the boys as opposed to my being an adult. This was very noticeable in the playgrounds, where I felt, the boys did not hesitate to tackle me during a football game or high five me when our side (team) scored. It was in mostly in the playgrounds (football pitch) that I felt the children (boys) accepted me more freely. Perhaps it can be argued that children constructed this as my free time, or time to relax, where I had not control of their actions and was simply joining in to enjoy playing with them.

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Playing "girl games" with the girls and how the girls with whom I played constructed me

My interest and participation in football opened up possibilities for me to form friendships and relationships with young men and to engage with them in ways in which inverted common assumptions about adult-youth relations are defined. However, this raised questions about possibilities and opportunities for developing friendships in the field with young women and girls who, unlike the young men I got to know through our common interest in football were, as I have pointed out, excluded from, and defined (by boys) in opposition to playing football.

I reflected on how possible it would have been for me to fit into the same gendered spaces and activities, such as the football playgrounds, if I had been a female researcher and not a male researcher, but also how, as a male researcher, my opportunities for engagement with young women as research participants might have been constrained by the gendering of spaces and activities on the settlement.

This meant I had to take the initiative and show interest, in my research, about the kinds of spaces and activities girls tended to occupy in the settlement, not only when conducting interviews with them, but also during the course of their everyday lives. These included games such as shoot ball and skipping, as well as domestic duties such as fetching water in a borehole, cooking, and cleaning.

While the girls allowed me to play shoot ball with them, the facial and bodily expression from women in the borehole was one that possibly regarded me as a deviant male. To play shoot ball in this borehole space was seen as participating in a girls' game and doing this as an adult male provoked mixed sentiments from both the girls and women in this space. Whereas the girls found the moment enjoyable and a memorable one, there were murmurs and laughter from a group of bemused women in the borehole. I soon became an attraction not only to women who came to fetch water but even to others in the nearby homesteads who had been told of a man in shorts playing a girls' game. To further understand the magnitude of my shoot ball act, my research assistant said the following day that some of the men in the trading centre had referred to me as the man who played girls' games. While my football activities in the evenings were more frequent, it did not attract attention from other community members, largely because of the masculinity identity that I shared with the boys. I was trying to be a "friend" to boys and girls in my study and the difficulties of girls reciprocating this in the presence of boys created several problems. My presence and active involvement in a female space seemed to be

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perceived as an attempt to reconstruct my own gender identity. Important to note then is that how children construct their social lives, and the performance and identifications they make in regard to gender and sexuality are influenced by the social values and expectations established within popular discourses in the societies in which they live in.

The concept of childhood friendships emerged from an informal group discussion with both boys and girls as to whether I had qualified to be a friend, as I had spent several months interacting with them. While the boys were quick to see me as their friend, with some of them even saying that playing with and watching them play football in the evenings made me their friend, I noticed the uncertainty and discomfort this discussion caused for some of the girls. Being mindful of this discomfort, I switched the topic of discussion and sought an audience with the girls alone at another time.

The girls, much more than the boys, were conscious of who was in their presence and this in turn determined the nature of the conversations one could have with them. This, I argue, reflected the significance of patriarchal discourses, a construct where older girls and women will be seen as potentially "promiscuous" and "immoral" should they show any kind of affection or friendship towards the boys and men.

In their presence, as girls only, the girls admitted me as their friend. When I sought to understand why it was impossible for them to do so in the presence of the boys, Atong said that *"some of those boys are deep thinkers,"* meaning the boys would attribute sexual connotations to girls admitting me as a friend.

This begs questions about the possibilities of making and sustaining cross-gendered friendships between older children in the settlement. Indeed, this problem was confirmed in single sex interviews which I conducted with both boys and girls.

Additionally, while reflecting on the dominance of the boys and the absence of the girls in the football playgrounds, it was revealed that such spaces were fluid grounds for girls to engage in unapproved boyfriend-girlfriend relationships. It is worth arguing that this notion is not only biased, but its existence continues to go against the best interests of adolescent girls, as it continues to reinforce reasons for their seclusion from such play spaces.

A girl depicting girls' multiple positionings in work and play and boys' interests in football and helping with skipping

In the drawings below one of the girls, Dawa (aged 11), demonstrates how girls' activities in the settlement are linked with tasks such as cleaning, cooking, and carrying water from the borehole, as well as playing, and in this case skipping, with boys' activities associated with playing football, and helping girls to skip by moving the skipping rope.

Figure 13:Drawing by of Dawa with emphasis on play/football

Dawa: This one is my brother Kenyi playing football.

David: Who is Kenyi playing football with?

Dawa: His friend Bol.

David: Where are they playing from?

Dawa: At home

David: You also said you were playing *kaliro* (skipping with a rope, typically
        a girl's game). Tell me more about it

Dawa: This is me playing *kaliro* with Kenyi and Bol

David: Do you also play football with Kenyi and Bol

Dawa: No!

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David: Why don't you?

Dawa: Because they tell me only boys play football

David: So, why do they allow to play *kaliro* with you?

Dawa: For them they don't skip, they only hold the rope for me

David: But isn't that still playing?

Dawa: No, you must skip if you play *kaliro*

David: Okay, I understand now.

In her drawing, Dawa reflects the different play moments she has experienced. In so doing, she not only includes herself in these play moments but also captures play moments of her brother Kenyi and his friend Bol playing football. Through this dialogue with Dawa, she further showed how she could not play football with the boys because they deemed it to be an all-boys' game. While the boys play with her in the skipping game, she further argues that their holding the rope for her while she skips, is perceived by the boys as not being part of the game of skipping. In other words, it seems that the boys accept playing *kaliro* passively, as the holders of the rope. This could further suggest that *kaliro* is perceived by the boys as a less engaging game, compared to football. In reflecting on this further, I draw on the concept "borderwork" (Thorne, 1993, p. 64) to opine how the children drew boundaries in their play spaces which were marked by gender. In this way, they constructed and performed gender through participating in gender segregated forms of play in specific spaces.

My own reflection of *kaliro,* as a game which has been played over different generations of childhood in Uganda, recalled the game as being associated with girls (cf: Martin, 2011). It was and is still common to see girls display an elevated level of expertise as they play this game, as compared to the boys. In the settlement, I witnessed several younger girls play *kaliro* as opposed to the boys playing *kaliro*. The involvement of more girls than boys in this skipping game qualified the perspectives from some of the children who argued that skipping was a girls' game. Equally of interest to note is the space "home" may provide opportunities for boys (and girls) to cross lines of gender. In this sense the home may facilitate constructing the idea of gender as not being fixed but in flux.

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Younger children crossing lines of gender through forms of play in open spaces during the day

While certain activities and forms of play contributed to young people's gendered experiences in the lived reality in the settlement, the occupation of shared play spaces during the day presented opportunities for social interactions and forms of play which crossed lines of gender, notably for the younger children in my research. These included what I referred to in Chapter Four as Child Friendly Spaces, which contained children's play equipment and offered a converging space for mostly younger children across lines of gender. The playing equipment could be equated to that seen in upscale urban children's play parks in Uganda, which often charged a fee for children to play in them.

While working with the younger children, these areas provided both the space and conduciveness that allowed children to be away from their homes and from their adults carers. During the work breaks, children retreated to these spaces to play and chat. Like the football games, I sometimes engaged with them, and at other times simply watched them go about their play. In illustrating my adult playing role in Chapter Four, I reflected on how I learned to play the plate tossing game with the help of the children. Important to note is that this was one of the games that both boys and girls played together. In this game, on this learning day, both the boys and girls tried to help me to learn the game. On subsequent days, when I observed the boys and girls play this game, they spread out in a huge circle with each child taking their turn to toss the plate into the direction of the other.

Similarly, when the boys and girls engaged in other games, they complimented one another. While on the swings, for example, I observed two boys helping the girls gain momentum on the swings as they pushed them back and forth until they eventually swapped roles. Likewise, doing the artwork activity about their important places in the settlement, all the boys and girls chose one of the child-friendly spaces as an important place to them. Prior to the conversations that emerged out of the discussion about this space, the children once again revealed how they supported each other in this play space, with the boys competing with the girls to swing from one edge of the bar to another, and later they played a game of hide-and-seek before we transitioned to the next space. From these experiences, it is worth noting that exclusion in gender is not always a given. While it can be argued that children are aware of the existing gender dimensions within which they live in and perform, it is equally important to acknowledge that children may choose to be transgressive thereby ignoring gender boundaries

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that confine them to being either boys or girls. In this example from the CFS, young children's construction of gender by way of their cross-gender engagements are fluid and not fixed.

While exploring the child friendly spaces further, the children revealed other insightful moments that transcended their socially constructed gender complexities. These stretched from friendships to moments and to situations where available playmates in the play space would be one gender at the time of visit.

David:	Do you visit the playground every day?
Dawa:	Yes
David:	Do you go alone or as group as we did?
Kenyi:	Sometimes I go alone
Gire:	Even sometimes as friends
David:	I saw you playing as boys and girls. Do you always play like this?
Dawa:	Yes!
David:	Tell me what makes you play as boys and girls together?
Mawut:	Because we are friends
Amadi:	Sometimes you go there and find its only boys. So, I play with them.
David:	How does playing as boys and girls make you feel?
Dawa:	Okay!
Mawut:	Good
Keji:	There is not any problem playing with boys.

When I asked in the mixed gender groups how the younger children in my study felt about being friends with either boys or girls, they responded very positively. Some of the boys, for example, said that it was okay, because the girls were sisters to some of their other male friends and this made them their friends too. The girls stressed the common identifications they shared with the boys: they lived in the same blocks with them, they went to the same schools, and they all came from South Sudan.

In reflecting on these cross-gender friendships, I am drawn to reflect on dynamics that I observed while working with younger children that suggested not just the existence of friendships, but they were strong friendships. I was particularly struck by the ability of the children to share their snacks among themselves irrespective of their gender. Although each

child received an equal share of the snack, I soon observed that during the break, the children would agree to share biscuits with two friends and keep the rest. This mutual understanding included both the boys and the girls. As I learned later, the kept biscuit snack was equally shared during a play time moment away from me with other friends at home.

How the children, in my study, constructed home as a place for acting as their mothers and fathers in role plays

The eight to thirteen-year-old children in my study, utilised the different participation platforms that this research encouraged, and this included their construction of role-plays in which they enacted the roles of mothers and fathers.

In one of the homes I visited, in which alone migrant children were fostered, 11-year-old Dawa and her nine-year-old brother Kenyi were role-playing with three other children, re-enacting their family lives and relationships. Upon discussing this later with Dawa, she revealed that they often played this game at home as a way of connecting with their parents who had been separated from them. In so doing, she further said that she felt good having to do the things her mother did while she was still with them in Juba. When I asked her what types of things her mother did that she remembered and included in her play, she quickly said that; *"my mother cooked food for us… She even washed our bodies and our clothes, and we sometimes we go to the garden and market with her..."* In playing the role of her mother, Dawa argued that she was able to act out some of the things that her mother did when they were still together. While playing the role of his father, Kenyi on the other hand revealed that his role in the game was to work and buy food for his family, and make sure that they were safe.

Children's assumed responsibilities and how reflective they were of their gender identities as boys and girls

In this section, I sought to understand the roles and daily activities that children engaged in within their home spaces. Of particular interest to me was to explore whether these roles were gendered and how children felt about some of them. While it is important to understand that these children experienced childhood across two different geographical spaces, in each space. I explored the existence and dynamics of constructed gender roles and how these reflected on the gender identities of boys and girls. Through the focus groups, I sought to know the different responsibilities that the children were assigned to and whether these had anything to do with their being boys or girls. The narratives from the first group discussion which comprised both

boys and girls highlighted some of the responsibilities that they were allocated in their foster care home.

Here we are given responsibility let me start with the boys, for boys we just work around the compound whereby you slash the tall grasses and also dig because they have given us small places for digging so you go and dig to provide vegetables and for girls, they also help in the kitchen side where they also have those farming, cooking and they also help in sweeping the compound. **(Tele-focus group discussion boys & girls 2020)**

We the girls here we are helping especially when they are cooking, and when it is morning hours, they call us to sweep the compound and also to wash the dishes and elder people at times when they are clothes are dirty, they tell us to wash them and also, we are helping them in fetching water for them. **(Tele-focus group discussion boys & girls 2020).**

From the first narrative, a seventeen-year-old boy illustrated the different activities that they engaged in as boys. His description of their activities as boys resonated with the known traditional gender roles that males are socialised to undertake in most societies. From his description, most of these activities took the boys away from their home space into the fields and bushes, while those of the girls as he further described, suggested that their responsibilities confined them within the domestic sphere of the home space. The responsibilities and place of the girls is further revealed by a seventeen-year-old girl who described other activities such as washing the clothes of their caring adults as part of their responsibility.

While children might have described the different responsibilities and activities that they engaged in as either boys or girls, their narratives further revealed that sometimes gender did not matter when they engaged in some of these activities. This is illustrated in some of the narratives below

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We wash latrines and also, we wash the shelter where we stay and at that time we also help in slashing, we join hands with the boys.
Sometimes they just give us work even if you boy, they can ask you to wash plates and even these girls sometimes go and tie goats with us. **(Tele-focus group discussion boys & girls 2020)**

Some we share. The boys take the cattle for grazing, they also sometimes cook, and build houses. **(Tele-focus group discussion girls only 2020)**

In these narratives from two distinct groups, the children revealed how they undertook any responsibility that was allocated to them. The girls for instance said that they sometimes helped boys and did work such as slashing, which the boys earlier on in the discussion had mentioned as their responsibility. In the first and next narratives which emerged from a girl and boy respectively, the aspect of shared and supportive responsibility is revealed by both. This shared responsibility was further revealed in the girls' group discussion, as illustrated in the final narrative above. From my diary excerpts, I noted how I had witnessed children engage in shared responsibility. In my repeated visits to one of the foster homes, I sometimes found the boys doing the dishes while the girls swept the compound. On other days, the boys would switch their previous activities with those of the girls. This reinforced the children's argument that they took on any responsibility and they supported each other in their tasks. These shared responsibilities transcend known gender norms. Additionally, it is worth noting that shared responsibility could be an attempt to reconstruct masculinity and femininity. Essentially, this suggests ways and modes of subverting gender and its construction within the spaces that children interact with every day.

Of interest to me, while exploring this further, was to understand from the children the existence of constructed gender roles, according to sex and even age. If they existed, it was important to understand how these roles possibly impacted on children's everyday lives, especially the activities that they engaged in. One critical thing that I learned from my interaction with the children was their ability to undertake any chore that they were asked to do without relating these to their gender. When I sought to understand the emotions expressed by them when engaging in some of the activities that were socially and culturally constructed as being intended for the opposite gender, most of the children said that they did not mind

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engaging in these activities. To them, engaging in these activities did not make them any less of boys or girls.

In exploring this further, I asked the boys during the focus group discussion if they had activities that they undertook as boys only. All the boys said that there was no such activity that was constructed for them only in their community. From these discussions emerged some of the activities that the boys revealed they were engaged in.

David: Let us talk about something else as children living in this place, what
            are some of the things you do here?
Tong: I am helping my parents by fetching for them water and sometimes
            I can   wash the cooking utensils and also, I can sweep the compound
            yes, I do them willingly.
Moiba: I also wash cooking utensils and also if there is time for digging in
            the small pieces I go and dig, I also fetch water at times if the
            compound is dirty, I also go and clean. This is something we have to do.
Kuol: For me I take goats and tie in the bush to feed and also wash cooking
            utensils and if the compound is bushy, I clean.

In this narrative, all three boys revealed how they engaged in washing utensils, an activity predominantly constructed as that of girls and women. Moiba and Tong further revealed that sometimes they fetched water for domestic use. Whereas these narratives did question and rewrite the existing gender role trajectory within the Ugandan society where these boys had, at this point, spent about five years of their childhood already, it also provoked the need to understand how childhood interacted with other social structures like family and culture within some of the South Sudanese communities where these children had migrated from. In a separate discussion with the girls, they revealed that they fetched water, swept the compounds, cooked food, and washed utensils, gardened and tethered goats. Like the boys they revealed that anyone of them could take on these activities. However, important to note was the argument from the girls that most of these had been learned while in South Sudan; "*No, even in South Sudan we were doing this work, even together with the boys. These things we learnt them from our parents in Sudan before coming here.*" This argument revealed how gendered some of the children's childhoods were in South Sudan. In training children to learn the different supportive responsibilities within the home, the girls' perspective suggested that their learning stretched

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beyond their gender divides, and this explained why both boys and girls were able to undertake separate roles with ease.

Equally important to note was the role of the schools in constructing roles and responsibilities for boys and girls. In reliving some of his school experiences as a boy, Kenyi revealed how as boys they were given heavier punishments than the girls.

> *"If a boy comes late at school, they are made to slash or dig but if a girl comes late, they are made to sweep and fetch water. Both boys and girls should be made to do the same thing when they come late to school"* **(Conversation from artwork activity 2020: The things I do as a boy/girl).**

As is reflected in his perspective, Kenyi's argument reflected how differently boys and girls are treated at school, based on their gender. Throughout this experience, his thoughts reflected how boys were given tougher punishments as compared to the girls, as a corrective measure for their tardiness. In further analysing his perspective, to argue that both boys and girls deserve the same punishment, is to suggest the need for teachers to ignore gender at school, while rendering punishment as a form of corrective action. To further substantiate this argument, I am drawn to reflect on some of the children's perspectives (already discussed in this chapter) of the roles they assume together with the responsibilities undertaken. Some of the children, including Kenyi, revealed that they performed roles constructed as those the opposite sex and they did not mind doing this.

Social age and how it structured children's responsibilities

While children were reflecting on their responsibilities and the extent to which it was affected by their gender, they equally raised the question of age. Some of their states in respect of age were drawn from their comparisons of the amount of work they were allocated, depending on their social age. From the group discussions, one of the older boys, who argued that they took on more and heavier responsibility than the younger children, had this to say about age and their responsibilities, *"the young children normally sweep the compound, and the elders go and dig and when the plants grow and it's time for weeding, they also take the young ones to go and weed..."* In this illustration, the older boy is particular about their roles, showing that being older came with not only more responsibility, but also more strenuous work. The

discussions the young people had about accruing certain kinds of responsibilities in their families as they grew older, and the pride they derived from this, complicates ideas about family as patriarchal institutions contributing to gender power relations.

In my engagement with younger children, I agreed with them that we would always begin our research activity engagement from ten o'clock in the morning. This was because some of the children revealed that they had some work to do in the morning before they could get away from home. In their narratives, some of them said they swept the compounds, others tethered their domesticated animals while others revealed that they cleaned the utensils. Those who had younger siblings even said that they had to babysit while the other persons in the home were doing other chores. These described responsibilities resonate with some of the those described by the older children in the focus groups as "lighter work," designated for the younger children.

Chapter conclusion

The chapter explored how alone and unaccompanied children negotiated their gender and age identities within new social spaces. In exploring these identities, I placed emphasis on the theme of play that emerged from different discussions with children. Here, I sought to understand how children constructed and perceived play and how they structured it according to their gender and age. Football emerged in conversations I had with boys not only as a game played extensively and almost exclusively by boys but also as a signifier of toughness and as a medium through which they presented themselves as young men. This cut across the age ranges of the boys in my study, from 8 to 13 years and from 14 to 17 years.

Significant in reinforcing the masculinities that emerged from this game, was the spaces where football was played, which, from the analysis, showed that it favoured mainly boys, as these spaces allowed them to continuously construct and reconstruct their masculine identities and even express them. Furthermore, even within these masculinities, their identities were further constructed based on social age. The reflections from younger boys (8 to 13 years) about their football experiences in the out of home spaces showed that the game was structured along age, with the older boys (14 to 17 years) often playing among themselves.

 A further analysis of games children played through the lenses of gender and age also revealed how some games accommodated both boys and girls, for instance, in the home play space. Both younger boys and girls revealed how they came together to play, for example, football and skipping in their home and school compounds. What emerged from the discussion and analysis about this within the chapter is that this coming together reconstructed their gender

boundaries, and the utilisation of these spaces did suggest that no one challenged them in respect of why boys and girls were playing together. However, within this same reflection, it important to note that this accommodation of the other's gender did happen mainly among younger children (8 to 13 years). Similarly, within these play spaces which facilitated mixed play moments, boys and girls also revealed that they engaged in other games. Notable was the game of skipping, which, though constructed as a girls' game, was reconstructed as a shared game in these spaces.

The other issue that emerged in this chapter was that of friendship and the extent to which it was influenced by gender and age. From the children's perspectives and my analysis, friendships were structured along the lines of gender and age. Among the older children (14 to 17 years), cross-gender friendships were constructed as being intimate. In so doing, this resonated the common patriarchal discourse, which denies the possibility of cross-gendered friendships by sexualising these relationships (and notably, the women who take part in such relationships). The sociological significance of this was for me to show, how this impacted on me and my experiences as a researcher engaging with young women (as well as men).

Along the social age dimensions though, younger children (8 to 13 years) revealed that they did made friends with children of the opposite sex. This was revealed in their discussions and evidenced in moments of their play and through their artwork. This chapter revealed that younger children, although knowledgeable of their socially constructed differences as boys and girls, were less conscious or concerned about these as sources of identification and difference compared to the older children. It is worth noting that the analysis from this chapter about friendship and other interaction involving both boys and girls, drew on the conclusion that as children continue to experience childhood differently, they become more conscious and aware of their social differences including those that help them to define and reconstruct who they are.

  Finally, this chapter also explored the roles and responsibilities that were assumed in some of the spaces they usually interacted with each other. A common space that emerged from our discussion was the home space. Here children illustrated the different activities that they performed at home. A critical element from our discussion – which became pivotal in the analytical sections –was whether they associated these responsibilities with being boys or girls, and if their age mattered in the execution of these roles and responsibilities. In fact, most of them argued that their age was a determinant in assuming the responsibility they were allocated, with the older adolescent children taking on more responsibility than the younger ones. Not to

dispel entirely the gender debate, the children also argued that their roles were gendered. Although both boys and girls listed the different responsibilities they undertook, they argued that they sometimes found themselves doing the work allocated to the other gender. This they further revealed that did not make them feel less of boys or girls as their focus was more in getting the responsibility done. This is not to say that constructed roles or responsibilities along the gender domain did not exist within the spaces where the children experienced their childhood, but rather what is significant to highlight here is how children choose to overlook these gender roles and boundaries, focusing on supporting each other when they executed these responsibilities.

Chapter 8 : Summary of research findings, implications, and considerations

Introduction

In this concluding chapter, I summarise key themes that emerged from my interaction and discussions with refugee children throughout this research.

I begin by conceptualising the alone refugee child as a key figure that resonated with many of my participants and emerged in discussions, I had with them. This was a category which received no recognition in the academic literature which tended to subsume this under unaccompanied refugee child. I illustrate how this category differs from the unaccompanied refugee child.

I then discuss popular discourses which associate children, more generally, and refugee children more specifically, with "vulnerability." While recognising the importance of this, my research raises concerns about how to research refugee children in ways which present them as authority figures about their lives and not simply as people in need of protection. This raises questions which I address in earlier chapters, and pull together in this one, about how, as an adult man, I write myself into my research in ways which question rather than reinforce my presumed authority.

Within this same theme, I discuss how my relationship with children as an adult male researcher in their spaces, (specifically how the friendships and trust-built over time) helped me to understand how children experienced their forced migratory lives. I conclude the chapter by discussing the implication and considerations that emerged from this research. In these concluding discussions, I affirm how using child centred approaches to researching with children facilitates listening to their voices and opens up insights that are meaningful for action aimed at the improvement of the lives of children in refugee and other forced migratory situations.

I reflect, too, on how my research carried implications for developing important and appropriate ways of working with them to empower them and validate their experiences and concerns in social, friendly, and caring contexts. The chapter also advances the consideration of using children's first languages as tools of research. These, I argue, are critical in enhancing agency as they allow children to be as expressive as possible. These should be adopted, alongside well thought out translation plans which should essentially serve the purpose of being

an extended voice through which children can be heard. The chapter then discusses the role organisations working in humanitarian situations can assume to support child agency and children's wellbeing in general. These range from ensuring adequate food rations, which are provisional needs, to protection needs, including psychosocial support and facilitating and nurturing children's dreams of reunification with their separated families.

The summary of research findings

In this section, I discuss some of the major themes and key perspectives that emerged from my interactions with the alone and unaccompanied refugee children who were directly engaged in this research activity.

The divide between the alone and the unaccompanied refugee child

Through this ethnographic work, I found it important to build on the emerging thoughts that evolved from my everyday interaction with the children. Doing this meant allowing the children to set the agenda of discussion during the fieldwork and subsequent research processes that followed. One such key concept that emerged from this discussion was that of the alone refugee child. The alone refugee child therefore became an important part of this research work, in addition to the unaccompanied refugee child. While literature related to children in forced migratory situations extensively documents unaccompanied and separated refugee children, it does not speak to the alone children in settlements or refugee camps and the circumstances under which they assume their alone refugee child positionality. The alone child in other circumstances has been perceived as that whose aloneness arises from abandonment by the caring adults. Within migratory discourses, alone childhoods can emerge from the adult family members' mobility. These can include parents migrating elsewhere for employment with the hope of continuing to support their children in the places where they have migrated from, while others leave the children alone in anticipation of the children joining them as soon as they are settled. In further exploring how the alone child is conceptualised, social service and child protection discourses see the alone child as one who, having experienced difficult circumstances at home, are compelled to leave home or the families with the aim or hope of making their situation better. This can be exemplified by using children on the street who are often framed as being the victims of neglect and who lack adult supervision on the streets.

The emergence of the concept of the alone refugee child within this research work, was initially from my exploration of the children's earlier migratory experiences upon arrival into the

Ugandan refugee reception centres and their eventual allocation into settlements. It emerged from the in-depth interviews with children between the ages of 14 to 17 years, that some children had, after all, not arrived or commenced their migratory lives in Uganda alone. My further reflection and exploration of this insight led me to construct the alone refugee child as different from the unaccompanied refugee child contextually. Although it is arguable that both children within these forced migratory circumstances are without a caring family member or relative, important to me was exploring the time and circumstances when they were separated from their families.

Through their narratives, some of the children revealed the moments that led to their separation from such caring adult family members. Among such revelations was the death of these adults. In other related circumstances, some of the children revealed that adult caring members had returned to South Sudan, either in search of other family members, or had chosen to return to their former lives there. Such situations caused the children anxiety, stress, and grief, as some of them later learnt that some of these family members had since been killed, while others revealed that they had not heard from them since. This absence of a previously caring adult saw the emergence of the alone refugee child. The discussion around the sudden absence of a caring adult in the lives of the alone refugee children has been discussed in this research work as creating a void, which propelled the eldest siblings among these children to assume the parenting role of the younger siblings.

Re-constructing the notion of vulnerability in childhood forced migration

Children are often constructed as being in dire need of adult care and protection throughout their childhood moments. In situations such as forced migrations where children have been compelled to leave their homes, such children do not only assume a refugee identity but are also generally constructed as a vulnerable group. From this research perspective, the vulnerabilities associated with the refugee children in forced migration attracted a lot of gatekeeper restriction to accessing these children. In negotiating and constructing the vulnerabilities children experience in forced migration, I argue for the need to balance the implementation of children's "protection" and "participation rights."

Vulnerability driven agenda and how it risks silencing refugee children's voice

The notion that alone and unaccompanied refugee children are primarily vulnerable, was one that this research found to be exaggerated, and that it limited rather than created opportunities for young refugees to express themselves. Drawing on this, my research advocates that future research with refugee children adopt more contemporary and inclusive approaches to forced migratory experiences of children which move a step further from the known psychology and mental health approaches that construct such children as largely vulnerable (Ahearn et al., 1999; Hodes, 2002; Thomas & Lau, 2002).

The essence of listening to refugee children's voice has been emphasised all through this research process. Much emphasis was placed on a well-thought-out methodological approach that encouraged listening to children's views. Furthermore, the theoretical debates that advanced this research ("New" Sociology of Childhood, Child rights-based perspective) all emphasised allowing agency to thrive as one way of encouraging marginalised children's perspectives to be listened to.

While it cannot be entirely ignored that children in refugee situations sometimes found themselves in vulnerable situations, some of their narratives equally challenged the dominant construction of their being refugees entirely on vulnerability grounds. It must be noted that constructing refugee childhoods from an entirely vulnerable point of view is tantamount to silencing children's voice. This is because the adults position themselves as experts on the children's forced migratory situation, including their lived experiences. While the need for child protection in refugee situations cannot be ignored, the perspectives from alone and unaccompanied refugee children have revealed that their participation rights are of equal importance. Through working with refugee children in this research, the children proved that they are capable of expressing valid opinions about the issues that matter to them. For instance, through their voices, children were able to share how coming to Uganda had impacted on certain aspects of their childhood such as education, disintegration and loss of relations including friendship ties.

How refugee children's resilience overrides the vulnerability agenda

The provision of platforms for refugee children to be heard through research processes can contribute towards empowering children to share their views on their experiences and allows their views to be heard and listened to by others. At the same time, such platforms can further

be argued to be re-constructing the assumed stance, in this case that of the refugee children's positionality as vulnerable beings. While exploring the children's earlier lived experiences – which include long journeys undertaken and the continuation of their childhoods in new spaces (refugee settlements) in Uganda – children recalled and shared memories of tough moments. Some of these included traveling for several days without food, coming face to face with armed military personnel and the struggles to find food and shelter within reception centres upon their arrival. In remembering these experiences, some of the children were overcome by emotions and painful memories. Others chose silence or to abstain from further engaging in discussions of such challenging and emotionally intense moments. My reflections of such moments evoked emotions and empathy towards the children. It is worth noting that such situations made children vulnerable in the face of the forced migratory situation they found themselves in. In exploring how children felt about such moments, they revealed that these situations evoked anxiety, fear, and anguish at the things they were experiencing.

However, while these vulnerabilities evidently affected children's lives, it should be noted that they also reconstructed and determined parts of their childhoods going forward. It can be argued that they were partly responsible for the resilient nature of the children, a positionality that most of them adopted. This was partly evidenced in the children's construction of their refugee situation as being only a temporary moment in their lives that would eventually end someday.

The resilient nature of children in the midst of their forced migratory situation was further revealed by the children's ability to continue experiencing their childhood within Ugandan settlements. In exploring how they thought their lives were turning out in new spaces, some of them revealed how they had manufactured new relationships such as friendships, while others had enrolled into schools. Of significance in their bounce back from the adversity of migrating was the aspect of play and how this impacted enormously on their relationships, gender identities and interactions. This ability of children to get past their adversities when faced by difficult and extreme situations arguably overrides the dominant vulnerability lens from which refugee children are generally perceived and constructed. This resonates with the perspective of McCormack and Tapp (2019), arguing that children tend to adapt well and rapidly to new social environments.

Furthermore, the resilience of the alone and unaccompanied refugee children also manifested during the coronavirus pandemic in which numerous infection, prevention and mitigation strategies informed by the lockdown measures that were instituted by the Government of

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Uganda. Significant among these lockdown measures was the closure of schools for a period of almost two years. In this time, several uncertainties emerged among the children, specifically about their future, which from their perspective was dependent on the formal education that they were engaged in prior to the closure of the schools. Important to note from the children's perspective was the promise they saw in an education. From their reflections, children revealed how they would go on to qualify as medical workers, or teachers, among other professions, if they had a proper education. In so doing, this positioned children as dreamers with aspirations that they sought to achieve through schooling. The emergence of the coronavirus pandemic put these aspirations on hold and once again tested the children's resilient nature.

Drawing on the example of Boyden and Mann (2005), where they opine that children in extreme situations tend to be resilient and overcome the adversity they are faced with, refugee children revealed how they adopted coping strategies which enabled them to continue learning during the school lockdown period. These, among others things, included utilising the remote learning platforms on the radios that were provided by the Government of Uganda, and self-studying mechanisms using textbooks and continuous revision of their classroom study materials. McCormack and Tapp (2019) further opine that refugees' resilient adaptation is also compounded in the stability of protective factors for instance social support, community inclusion and access to education, among others. The availability of these can be argued to be a driving factor that compelled children to rise past their adversities. In doing so, the children believed that they were moving one step ahead in the right direction towards actualising their aspirations. This strategy, they further revealed, would get them promoted to the next classes. It is important to note how children negotiate past such vulnerabilities that emerged from uncertainties about the future. These endeavours reveal a determination to have their case heard by others, and affirms the active role the children choose to play in those matters that concern them

Relationships and the extent to which they sustain children's refugee childhoods

This research has highlighted the important contribution of relationships in the children's lived forced migratory experiences. From the moments when they commenced their journeys to Uganda, children revealed how they formed new relationships with other migrants. It is some of these relationships that children described as having empowered and supported them to survive the challenges they encountered while journeying to Uganda. It is also worth noting

that some of these relationships transcended beyond the journeys into children's early and present lives within their newfound spaces. How important their newfound relationships were to them, was premised on those relationships which had been lost, such as family ties and those friendships that existed and thrived in the pre-migratory moments.

Children's relationships with other adults and how it impacted on their lives as refugee children

As forced migratory situations placed alone and unaccompanied refugee children in situations that separated them from adult family members, the children found themselves in the company of other adults. Some of these adults assumed parental responsibility over them, while others played a gatekeeper and protective role over the children. This section summarises insights of other adult relationships and their significance in the children's everyday lives

Relationships with foster parenting other adults

The belief that children are always in dire need of adult protection will always create scenarios where adults will position themselves as protectors and providers of children. This scenario was well-exemplified in this research with alone and unaccompanied children. In situations such as these, where children found themselves alone, other adults volunteered to fill in the supporting adult provision and protection roles, while some assumed this responsibility with support from faith-based and humanitarian organisations. Under these circumstances, children found themselves in different home setups. For instance, there were those who found themselves in orphanages, while other groups of children were placed in foster homes run by faith-based leaders and others had been accommodated into individual people's homes.

Irrespective of the kind of place that came to be known as the children's new homes after leaving South Sudan, the children-built bonds and relationships with new adults who filled in the places of their separated adult family members. For instance, while reflecting on how they experienced their foster homes, most of the children who lived in these places highlighted that despite the hardships, they appreciated how committed their foster parents were in advancing their wellbeing. To illustrate this further, children's narratives highlighted how they were able to attend school as a result of support provided by their foster parents. The ability to support the children's bid to an education positioned these other adults as facilitators of children's aspirations, which was largely constructed by the children as achievable through schooling.

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Furthermore, children in foster and other homes illustrated how important their faith was in helping them to cope with the stresses of forced migration. From their reflections, it became evident that forced migratory situations were responsible for the emergence of anxiety, stress, fear, and other uncertainties for the children. All these have been shown through this work as negatively impacting the on children's wellbeing. This resonates with the argument that previous adversities experienced during pre-migration and flight moments strongly impact on the wellbeing of refugee families and that resettlement alone is not tantamount to psychological relief (Johansen & Varvin, 2019). Additionally, other caring adults within the foster homes used belief and faith as a strategy to help children to cope with the stresses that they experienced from their migratory situations. This has equally been highlighted by McCormack and Tapp (2019), citing how spiritual and religious beliefs can offer hope, solace and a sense of protection for some refugees. Some of the reflections from the children revealed how their religious caring adults taught and encouraged them to pray daily. For example, Moiba argued that prayer, for instance, helped him to cope with the loss of his mother. He emphasised how he felt better and stress-free after prayer.

However, it is also important to highlight that some children struggled with adapting to life within their foster homes. This was because some of them felt less appreciated and unwanted by their caregiving adults within these spaces. This is also exemplified in the argument that children and families in refugee situations could experience an unsupportive and unsympathetic post-migration resettlement environment (McCormack & Tapp, 2019). To illustrate this point, it is useful to draw on the example of Gatwech, who revealed that he felt he was treated differently from the rest of his peers because he was initially not meant to be resettled fully into the home. Related to this, I later learnt from Akifa, through a phone conversation, that she had escaped from her foster home because she felt equally unappreciated. Both Akifa and Gatwech were from the same foster home, where their shared experiences had brought them together as friends, and they supported each other. Such situations where refugee children live in fear and feel unwanted, deserve the intervention of other adults and organisations to provide such children with a reassurance of their safety and affirm that their childhood must continue and should be experienced even in migratory situations. Situations of maltreatment may be made known by children in ways not known to us and therefore professionals who are engaged in advocating and implementing the interests of refugee children in Uganda must adjudicate and make inquires (Schmidt, 2022) about situations of maltreatment or abuse, while bearing in mind that children could report or reveal these situations in complex and indirect ways.

My relationship with children as an adult man and how it felt different from the relationships with other adults

In researching with children, the need to build lasting relationship with them is important, if, as adult researchers, we are to have a fair understanding of children's worlds. I instituted different thought processes that would facilitate the creation and development of friendships with children during the entire duration of my fieldwork. This, as previously discussed, included the development of a well-thought-out methodology, which would have implications stretching beyond mere data collection, as it was utilised to build friendships and cultivate trust, which were pivotal in aiding me to explore and understand the children's refugee and forced migratory lives.

Appreciating children as active agents and contributors to understanding their social reality

My starting point of engaging with the children in this research was in appreciating them as agentic beings in their own right (James, 2009). This required ensuring that refugee children understood and appreciated the existence of their own agency and were inspired to make use of it. Doing this meant coming one step closer to achieving this research's objective of empowering children to voice their issues, by providing them with a platform through which they could exercise such agency. As refugee children, the initial perspectives of their voices were built around the adult as the expert of their lived experiences. In so doing, I found children's agency as not being absent, but as being passive, with the children having limited knowledge of its existence and how best they could utilise it. Furthermore, this passive agency also positioned the adult as the creator of knowledge and the child as the recipient of this adult knowledge. In this, the children envisioned the adult also as all-knowing, an attribute which reinforced the perspective that children in childhood are passive recipients of culture whose lives are determined by socialisation processes (Ní Laoire et al., 2010).

My stance, therefore, was to appreciate children as subjective beings who are actively involved in shaping their own sociocultural world (ibid). This was achieved by empowering children, helping them to bring to life their passive agency and to make use of it during this research process. This was one of my entry points into the children's lives, as trusting them to take charge of their issues was contributory to the build-up of a relationship that allowed children to open up and share their stories in ways not done within refugee childhoods in Uganda. As a

friend, rather than an imposing adult, this was one of the turning points in my relationships with the children, making it different from that of the other adults in their everyday lives.

Playing and "hanging out" with children

While I have extensively discussed how significant play is to the children, it is of additional importance to explore how play fostered my relationship with the child participants. In appreciating its contribution, I assumed the positionality of the playing and playful adult. While play is one of those activities that allows children to be as expressive as possible, the presence of a strange adult attempting to be accepted into children's play spaces can impinge on how expressive children can be in their play spaces. My way of consolidating the friendships built within and outside play spaces was through adopting an informal approach. This involved adapting no formal research tool material, for instance, note-taking or audio recording or even making interactions with the children sound like or resemble interviews. Furthermore, I prioritised what was happening in these play spaces, with only limited conversations, to avoid keeping the children from their play activities. It is such noninterfering approaches that sustained my presence in children's play spaces.

Additionally, a continued presence in children's play spaces soon earned me the privilege of playing some games with the children. For instance, the boys often invited me to play football with them. At the same time, the young children taught me how to play some of their games, while I also joined in to play games with the girls, which were constructed as being feminine. My presence and active participation in the play spaces can be constructed as hanging out with the children. During the times when I would hang out with the children, I was sometimes ridiculed by them, for instance, if I did not get the game instruction right. In the football games, we would all share in the joyful celebration of a goal scored or a win at the end of the game. In reflecting on the interplay of humour and ridicule, these experiences highlighted how comfortable and close children can get with an outsider adult, if the adult is prepared to play by the children's rules. Such friendships that children build with adult researchers can further be argued to be guided by the adult's acceptance to tilt the balance of power, with the children having more power and being in charge in the play space. In so doing, the children tend to accept or ignore the silent power the adult possesses, once he shows a willingness to take instructions from them.

Another perspective to hanging out with the children is one that I draw from the friendships that I shared with the girls. This attracted criticism, from the adult members of the settlement,

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particularly when I openly engaged with the girls in public spaces – for instance, during the shoot ball game at the borehole. Such criticism was an acknowledgement of the strong existence of the gender binaries and how powerfully they were used to construct the roles of masculinity and femininity within this society. Unlike the boys, the girls seemed much more welcoming in their spaces during the initial stages of fieldwork. They were open to discussion and easily made friends with me. As they ignored the biases of cross-gender relationships and the risk associated with it, the girls argued that they saw no problem with relating with me, nor with being my friend. They further argued that the boys were deep thinkers and that is why they constructed cross-gender relationships differently. From the subsequent times when I would "hang out" with the girls, they easily accepted me as their friend. This was not the case with the boys, as it took me several repeated visits and interactions with them before gaining their trust and being let into their worlds.

The study implications and considerations

Adopting child-centred methods as contributing pedagogic approaches of understanding children's views in Uganda

The objective of this research was to provide a platform through which alone and unaccompanied children's views could be heard in ways that had not been extensively explored in Uganda. Doing this involved deploying child-centred methodologies that allowed children to express their views, emotions, and opinions about their forced migratory lived experiences. By engaging children with different methods, based on their group dynamics such as age and gender, the research findings revealed that, for instance, the use of artwork methods were deeply engaging and allowed children to share memories about their journeys undertaken to Uganda. It has demonstrated how thought to be disadvantaged children have expressed their views, feelings and opinions about issues that matter to them, without having to do so through adults. In so doing, this research appreciated how important it is to gain first hand insights about forced migratory experiences from the children themselves through using enabling child-centred approaches that prioritise participation.

Pedagogic approaches to understanding children's worlds are a relatively new phenomenon that has not been fully appreciated within the childhood discourses in Uganda. This research work with refugee children has demonstrated the need for the adoption of these approaches, as opposed to dominant research paradigms which have for long emphasised research into or for children, with the adult voice dominating the children's voice. The child-centred

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methodologies advanced in this research work, emphasised the importance of listening to the viewpoint of children. This was illustrated by using the different methods not just as data collection instruments, but as processes of research that emphasised the creation of relationships, such as friendships and trust, which forwarded this research process. For instance, I have opined that the conversations from the tele-focus groups were crucial in not only opening up dialogue with children, but they also created room for empathy, laughter, and relationship-building to thrive.

While these methods allowed children to participate in the best ways they could, thereby allowing them to exemplify what it means to be experts and authorities about themselves, they also demonstrated that research processes are fun and humorous and should be enjoyed. In so doing, the child-centred approaches engaged in this research challenged the nominal ways of the question-answer approaches of collecting data. Rather, the creation and sharing of knowledge was occurring in the moments of play, in being ridiculed by children, and in their artworks. Such moments within research processes can be viewed as sustaining the children's agency.

Cultivating a gendered play culture within out of home play spaces

Through this research work, play emerged as an important theme that cut across the children's daily lived experiences. The different spaces both within home and out of home spaces facilitated the children's play activities. For instance, in their artwork activities about the important places within the settlement, children mapped the playgrounds and the Child Friendly Spaces as areas that facilitated their play activities. In further reflecting on the role that play took in children's lives, it is important to acknowledge that children constructed play as activities that brought them together and from them, social and peer networks emerged. However, an important aspect that emerged from out of home play spaces, was the gender and age binaries upon which play was construed. These excluded the girls from dominant and out of home play spaces, which were instead dominated by the boys. This was further supported by arguments that kept girls away from these out of home play spaces. For instance, there was a belief among many in the settlement that the adolescent girls (14-17 years) would engage in unapproved romantic relationships with the boys. Further, the girls took on domestic chores in the evenings that kept them away from these spaces. In thinking how such gender binaries can be restrictive and imposing on girls, I argue for the need to reconstruct the ways girls are viewed. It is useful to draw on some of their experiences, for example, where they argued that

they could play football as well, or even better than the boys, if given the opportunity. This could be considered a call by the girls to organisations to support and equally sponsor play activities for girls.

Adopting children's first language as a technique for researching with children

As I have argued throughout for the importance of child-centred methods in enhancing child participation in research processes, the pivotal role of first language in enhancing refugee children's involvement must also be emphasised. In further exploring the place of first language in this research, it is important to highlight how the children's use of their first languages allowed them to exercise their agency in several ways. From my earlier engagements with children, I immediately noticed how limiting the use of English as the only medium of communication in this research would be. From the informal telephone dialogues for instance, I sensed and noticed how uncomfortable and less expressive some of the children were when I engaged them in English as opposed to the ease with which they expressed themselves using their first languages. It is right to assume and argue that the dialects of Madi, Dinka and Arabic, that the children engaged with expanded their vocabulary and was significant in allowing them to set the discussion agenda, for instance detailing lived moments like limited food supplies, the fear experienced, and resilience exhibited while journeying to Uganda. I argue that that such detail is exemplified in the inductive thematic representation that cut across this work for instance gender and play spaces, career, and dream ambitions as well as resilience and coping. A further reflection of these first language dynamics did challenge my initial taken perspective, during the preparatory stages of this research, which assumed that the children would be able to accommodate English and Kiswahili languages only with which I was comfortable.

While allowing the children to express themselves in the languages of their comfort reinforced their participation, this tends to take the researcher out of their comfort zone. Consequently, there emerges a dilemma as to understanding each other during the fieldwork activities. Drawing from my experiences, researchers caught up in such dilemmas need to recruit the assistance of competent local interpreters to facilitate communication between themselves and the children. In this research therefore, I learned to appreciate my interpreters y as tools of the research who facilitated research process and not simply a medium of communication. It becomes especially important for the researcher to facilitate the building of relationships between the children and the interpreter. My reflections of this are that children learning to

trust additional adults (research assistant/interpreter) a side from the researcher is critical in easing tensions that can otherwise jeopardise the process of constructing meanings out of children's interpreted perspectives. One way I did this was by ensuring that the interpreter gave the children undivided attention just as I did. This involved taking turns to speak when were in the amidst of children, seating down to work with them as opposed to using chairs or assuming spaces and positions that would otherwise reinforce our adult being.

Furthermore, I have previously stated that researchers must move out of their comfort zones and devise approaches (in addition to child-friendly methods) which allow for children to participate directly in research processes – in this case, to encourage first language use and the engagement of interpreters. Otherwise, children with different competencies from those of the researchers (such as language) are at risk of having their voices silenced, as such outcomes could facilitate their being excluded from the research processes. My adaptation of this first language approach with the assistance of interpretation was an actualisation of the aim of this research were providing platform for listening to minority children's (refugee) voice was crucial for action. This resonates with Roberts (2017) argument that not only must researchers listen to children but must equally get better at hearing them by taking into account in meaningful ways what children tell us.

Finally, while adopting the first language approach can continue to manifest some uncertainties for the researcher, research which is ethnographic in nature will often negotiate past these uncertainties. From my experience, the dilemma of overcoming language complexities was not entirely vested in the use of interpretation but also in my ability to communicate visually with the children. Through this technique, I observed the emotions and feelings expressed as well as the gesturing and expressions of my participants during our interactions and connected these to what was being interpreted. Similarly, it is important to pay attention to the role relationships with child participation play in forwarding the research processes. While children appreciated the ability to be able to express themselves in their first languages, they appreciated my inability to accommodate their language. In so doing, this evoked an empathy in them so that soon some of them began relating to me in their limited English, which they had previously felt uncomfortable doing. Apart from this, some of the children took it upon themselves to translate group conversations, including the views of their peers who were not conversant with English.

How organisations could work differently with children in supporting their aspirations and in addressing emerging uncertainties

In exploring the relationships that children established while living in Uganda, there emerged a theme that explored children's relations with the institutions that supported their existence within the settlement. These ranged from faith-based to humanitarian and government institutions. In the ensuing interactions, the children espoused strong feelings of how impactful these institutions had become in their lives. Drawing from their reflections, this section discusses the considerations that organisations could potentially explore in advancing the agendas set by the children.

Adequate food rationing & feeding patterns

The forced migratory situations, such as the one the refugee children found themselves in, a destabilise family lives. One such destabilised element is that of food, specifically affecting the migrants' ability to afford sustainable food after they had been forced out of their homes. In the time that followed their separation from their family members, children revealed how they struggled to either sufficient food, or any amount of food at all. This was specifically evidenced at their arrival at the reception centres. In so doing, some of the children revealed their struggles to access a meal on their journeys and while at the reception centre.

Beyond the reception centres and into their everyday lives, children further revealed how they struggled with the inadequacies of food in their homes. While the food distribution moments evoked excitement among the children, as reflected in their drawings and discussion around the food distribution points, these emotions and reflections highlighted how the children sometimes had to struggle with limited food supplies. This was the reflection of some of the children who lived in the foster homes. For instance, Gatwech shared how he was never satisfied by the small amount of food he was served on daily. In another foster home, an informal dialogue with a group of children sharing a late afternoon meal revealed that it was the major and final meal of the day. During the artwork activities with the children (8-13 years), I had to adjust the snacking time with children to an hour earlier and also increase the frequency of snacking because children often left their homes at mid-morning either without a meal or after eating only a light cup of porridge.

While it is based on the children's reflections that their received food rations were not sufficient to sustain them until the next distribution time, which would usually occur in a month or two, it also became important to understand the home food dynamics. In foster homes, for example,

children revealed how their individual food rations were lumped together with everyone else's rations until the next distribution time. This highlighted the second point, where the children experienced food inadequacies.

Furthermore, while one of the rationales that inspired this research is founded on the exclusive Ugandan Refugee Policy that allows for the full integration of refugee persons into Ugandan communities, including their engaging in sustainable livelihoods, this was not the case for all households where the children came from. While it was somehow easier for children in homes to supplement their food with a few vegetables or potatoes grown on their limited plot of land, it was difficult to do so in foster homes or larger homes, as this type of space necessary was not available. From these reflections, it is worth noting that refugee children forced migratory situation did affect their eating patterns, specifically by limiting the quantity of food they, ate as well as affecting how often they had a meal every day.

Therapeutic role plays in terms of reconnecting children with relatives

While exploring how being unaccompanied and alone affected the children's childhoods and lives, children could not hide some of the difficult emotions that emanated from such discussions. Despite having adapted to their new lives in a foreign country, children never stopped dreaming about the hope of being reunited with their lost families. Even in situations where children knew that significant family members, like parents, had lost their lives during the armed conflict in South Sudan, the desire to be reunited with other relatives was a feeling that remained alive in them. While such hope can be perceived as having a therapeutic impact on the children's lives, some of the unaccompanied situations required action that would give children closure. For instance, some children like Gatwech, through his social networks (foster parent) had learnt about the possibility of his parents being in another settlement. Such thoughts evoked both excitement and fear in him. While this promised a future reunification with his parents which would give him closure on his aloneness, there was a strong fear in respect of undertaking a journey to Bidi-bidi settlement where his parents were believed to be. Gatwech further revealed that there was no attempt from his foster home or the institutions within the settlement to pursue his reunification agenda.

How to deal with the uncertainties that emerge from reunification was further exemplified in the experiences of Atong, whose efforts to reunite with family created a situation where they had to survive on the rations intended for a family size two. Such pressures only made the reunification moments short-lived, as reunified family members sometimes expressed fear of

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approaching the authorities to notify them of their between-settlement mobilities. Such fears propelled them to devise their own coping mechanisms. Drawing on the example of Atong and her two siblings reuniting with their aunt in Pagirinya, the challenges of having to cope with limited food and accommodation, drove the reunited family to separate once again, with four family members returning to an unsafe South Sudan, and Atong having to fend for herself, as an alone child.

Alone children dealing with the stress of parental loss in the settlement

Apart from some of the family members returning to South Sudan, parental death was the other contributor of children's aloneness in the settlement. Through the experiences of Ajak and her siblings, for instance, the death of their mother had created significant anxiety and emotional stress, which, as siblings, they found difficult to process. Apart from this, I have highlighted, using the examples of Dak and Ajak, how the death of their mothers respectively placed a heavy parental responsibility on them as the eldest siblings. While I found such children to be grappling with such issues emerging from their aloneness, their lived experiences of such moments suggested that they struggled on their own to overcome the stress and pressure of having to live a life without a parent. It is with reference to such situations that I argue that there is a need for organisations to tailor diverse types of support to children, on a case-by-case basis, paying specific attention to the diverse and unique experiences of alone and unaccompanied children. This should include navigating the new environments that children find themselves in, as these are strange and completely different from what they previously interacted with. Within these new spaces, as noted from the children's own experiences, are new people whose perspectives and opinions of refugee children have been revealed to be as not always welcoming.

In conclusion, I reflect on how my research, and the relationships I established with my participants, carried implications for developing important and appropriate ways of working with them in contexts in which they lacked material and cultural resources.

Importantly the findings from this research not only provide rich narrative accounts about their lives, interests, aspirations, and concerns, but also insights and implications for working with children in forced migratory situations and listening to their voice. These include adapting child-centred research approaches which support childhood agency, which empowers the child to construct and present their stories from their own points of view in contexts where they feel safe and validated as girls and boys of particular ages and refugee experiences.

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Appendices

Appendix I: Research Ethics Committee Approval

UNIVERSITEIT
STELLENBOSCH
UNIVERSITY

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COMPLETED PROJECT

Date: 10/06/2022

Project ID: 10562

Project Title: The Experiences and Perspectives of Unaccompanied Refugee and Asylum-seeking Children living in Uganda

Dear Mr D Okimait

The Social, Behavioural and Education Research Ethics Committee (REC: SBE) reviewed and accepted your final report submitted on 30/05/2022 16:50 **.**

The REC: SBE confirms that this project is now complete, and that the REC record is closed and archived for record-keeping.

Please remember to use your **Project ID** [10562] in all correspondence relating to this project.

If you have any questions or need further help, please contact the REC office at applyethics@sun.ac.za

Sincerely,

Mrs Clarissa Robertson

Secretariat: Social, Behavioural and Education Research Ethics Committee

National Health Research Ethics Committee (NHREC) registration number: REC-050411-032.

The Social, Behavioural and Education Research Ethics Committee complies with the SA National Health Act No.61 2003 as it pertains to health research. In addition, this committee abides by the ethical norms and principles for research established by the Declaration of Helsinki (2013) and the Department of Health Guidelines for Ethical Research: Principles Structures and Processes (2nd Ed.) 2015. Annually a number of projects may be selected randomly for an external audit.

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UNIVERSITEIT
STELLENBOSCH
UNIVERSITY

NOTICE OF APPROVAL

REC: SBER - Annual Progress Report

4 June 2021

Project number: 10562

Project Title: The Experiences and Perspectives of Unaccompanied Refugee and Asylum-seeking Children living in Uganda

Dear Mr D Okimait

Your REC: SBER - Annual Progress submitted on 03/06/2021 11:47 was reviewed and approved by the REC: Social, Behavioural and Education Research (REC: SBE).

Please note below expiration date of this approved submission:

Ethics approval period:

Protocol approval date (Humanities)	Protocol expiration date (Humanities)
4 June 2021	3 June 2022

GENERAL REC COMMENTS PERTAINING TO THIS PROJECT:

INVESTIGATOR RESPONSIBILITIES

Please take note of the General Investigator Responsibilities attached to this letter. You may commence with your research after complying fully with these guidelines.

If the researcher deviates in any way from the proposal approved by the REC: SBE, the researcher must notify the REC of these changes.

Please use your SU project number (10562) on any documents or correspondence with the REC concerning your project.

Please note that the REC has the prerogative and authority to ask further questions, seek additional information, require further modifications, or monitor the conduct of your research and the consent process.

CONTINUATION OF PROJECTS AFTER REC APPROVAL PERIOD

You are required to submit a progress report to the REC: SBE before the approval period has expired if a continuation of ethics approval is required. The Committee will then consider the continuation of the project for a further year (if necessary).

Once you have completed your research, you are required to submit a final report to the REC: SBE for review.

Included Documents:

Document Type	File Name	Date	Version
Research Protocol/Proposal	Unaccompanied refugee children proposal version 1.1 20.07.2019	01/06/2021	1.1
Informed Consent Form	Assent statement for children 8-13 years	01/06/2021	1.1
Informed Consent Form	Child informed consent 14-17 years	01/06/2021	1.1
Informed Consent Form	Legal Guardian- Permission	01/06/2021	1.1
Default	David Okimait justifcation for face to face research	01/06/2021	1.1
Default	David Risk management plan for fieldwork during COVID19 23.04.2021	01/06/2021	1.1

If you have any questions or need further help, please contact the REC office at cgraham@sun.ac.za.

II

Sincerely,

Clarissa Graham

REC Coordinator: Research Ethics Committee: Social, Behavioral and Education Research

III

Principal Investigator Responsibilities

Protection of Human Research Participants

As soon as Research Ethics Committee approval is confirmed by the REC, the principal investigator (PI) is responsible for the following:

Conducting the Research: The PI is responsible for making sure that the research is conducted according to the REC-approved research protocol. The PI is jointly responsible for the conduct of co-investigators and any research staff involved with this research. The PI must ensure that the research is conducted according to the recognised standards of their research field/discipline and according to the principles and standards of ethical research and responsible research conduct.

Participant Enrolment: The PI may not recruit or enrol participants unless the protocol for recruitment is approved by the REC. Recruitment and data collection activities must cease after the expiration date of REC approval. All recruitment materials must be approved by the REC prior to their use.

Informed Consent: The PI is responsible for obtaining and documenting affirmative informed consent using **only** the REC-approved consent documents/process, and for ensuring that no participants are involved in research prior to obtaining their affirmative informed consent. The PI must give all participants copies of the signed informed consent documents, where required. The PI must keep the originals in a secured, REC-approved location for at least five (5) years after the research is complete.

Continuing Review: The REC must review and approve all REC-approved research proposals at intervals appropriate to the degree of risk but not less than once per year. There is **no grace period.** Prior to the date on which the REC approval of the research expires **it is the PI's responsibility to submit the progress report in a timely fashion to ensure a lapse in REC approval does not occur.** Once REC approval of your research lapses, all research activities must cease, and contact must be made with the REC immediately.

Amendments and Changes: Any planned changes to any aspect of the research (such as research design, procedures, participant population, informed consent document, instruments, surveys or recruiting material, etc.), must be submitted to the REC for review and approval before implementation. Amendments may not be initiated without first obtaining written REC approval. The **only exception** is when it is necessary to eliminate apparent immediate hazards to participants and the REC should be immediately informed of this necessity.

Adverse or Unanticipated Events: Any serious adverse events, participant complaints, and all unanticipated problems that involve risks to participants or others, as well as any research-related injuries, occurring at this institution or at other performance sites must be reported to the REC within **five (5) days** of discovery of the incident. The PI must also report any instances of serious or continuing problems, or non-compliance with the RECs requirements for protecting human research participants.

Research Record Keeping: The PI must keep the following research-related records, at a minimum, in a secure location for a minimum of five years: the REC approved research proposal and all amendments; all informed consent documents; recruiting materials; continuing review reports; adverse or unanticipated events; and all correspondence and approvals from the REC.

Provision of Counselling or emergency support: When a dedicated counsellor or a psychologist provides support to a participant without prior REC review and approval, to the extent permitted by law, such activities will not be recognised as research nor the data used in support of research. Such cases should be indicated in the progress report or final report.

Final reports: When the research is completed (no further participant enrolment, interactions or interventions), the PI must submit a Final Report to the REC to close the study.

On-Site Evaluations, Inspections, or Audits: If the researcher is notified that the research will be reviewed or audited by the sponsor or any other external agency or any internal group, the PI must inform the REC immediately of the impending audit/evaluation.

IV

NOTICE OF APPROVAL

REC: Social, Behavioural and Education Research (SBER) - Initial Application Form

11 May 2020

Project number: 10562

Project Title: The Experiences and Perspectives of Unaccompanied Refugee and Asylum-seeking Children living in Uganda

Dear Mr David Okimait

Your response to stipulations submitted on 30 January 2020 was reviewed and approved by the REC: Social, Behavioural and Education Research (REC: SBE).

Please note below expiration date of this approved submission:

Ethics approval period:

Protocol approval date (Humanities)	Protocol expiration date (Humanities)
26 September 2019	25 September 2020

GENERAL COMMENTS:

1. SUSPENSION OF PHYSICAL CONTACT RESEARCH ACTIVITIES AT SU

There is a **postponement of all physical contact research activities at Stellenbosch University,** apart from research that can be conducted remotely/online and requires no human contact, and research in those areas specifically acknowledged as essential services by the South African government under the presidential regulations related to COVID-19 (e.g. clinical studies).

Remote (desktop-based/online) research activities, online analyses of existing data, and the writing up of research results are strongly encouraged in all SU research environments.

Please read the REC notice for suspension of physical contact research during the COVID-19 pandemic: http://www.sun.ac.za/english/research-innovation/Research-Development/sbecovid-19

If you are required to amend your research methods due to this suspension, please submit an amendment to the REC: SBE as soon as possible. Please contact the REC Helpdesk for instructions on how to submit an amendment: applyethics@sun.ac.za

INVESTIGATOR RESPONSIBILITIES

Please take note of the General Investigator Responsibilities attached to this letter. You may commence with your research after complying fully with these guidelines.

If the researcher deviates in any way from the proposal approved by the REC: SBE, the researcher must notify the REC of these changes.

Please use your SU project number (10562) on any documents or correspondence with the REC concerning your project.

Please note that the REC has the prerogative and authority to ask further questions, seek additional information, require further modifications, or monitor the conduct of your research and the consent process.

CONTINUATION OF PROJECTS AFTER REC APPROVAL PERIOD

You are required to submit a progress report to the REC: SBE before the approval period has expired if a continuation of ethics approval is required. The Committee will then consider the continuation of the project for a further year (if necessary).

Once you have completed your research, you are required to submit a final report to the REC: SBE for review.

Included Documents:

Document Type	File Name	Date	Version
Budget	Research Budget	14/06/2019	1.0

Recruitment material	Research flyer	14/06/2019	1.1
Assent form	Child informed consent 14-17 years	14/06/2019	1.1
Data collection tool	FGD topic guide	14/06/2019	1.1
Data collection tool	Note on in-depth interview	14/06/2019	1.1
Investigator CV (PI)	David Okimait June 2019	21/06/2019	1.1
Default	Prof Rob Pattman CV	30/06/2019	1.1
Data collection tool	Topic guide for the artwork tool	20/07/2019	1.1
Research Protocol/Proposal	Unaccompanied refugee children proposal version 1.1 20.07.2019	20/07/2019	1.1
Assent form	Assent statement for children 8-13 years	20/07/2019	1.1
Proof of permission	Gate keeper permission August 2019	23/08/2019	1.2
Default	Changes requested August 2019	23/08/2019	1.1
Parental consent form	Legal guardian permission	06/01/2020	1.2
Default	DAVID OKIMAIT TEMPLATE FOR RESPONSE LETTER	06/01/2020	1.2

If you have any questions or need further help, please contact the REC office at cgraham@sun.ac.za.

Sincerely,

Clarissa Graham

REC Coordinator: Research Ethics Committee: Social, Behavioral and Education Research

National Health Research Ethics Committee (NHREC) registration number: REC-050411-032.
The Research Ethics Committee: Social, Behavioural and Education Research complies with the SA National Health Act No.61 2003 as it pertains to health research. In addition, this committee abides by the ethical norms and principles for research established by the Declaration of Helsinki (2013) and the Department of Health Guidelines for Ethical Research: Principles Structures and Processes (2nd Ed.) 2015. Annually a number of projects may be selected randomly for an external audit.

VI

VII

Principal Investigator Responsibilities

Protection of Human Research Participants

As soon as Research Ethics Committee approval is confirmed by the REC, the principal investigator (PI) is responsible for the following:

Conducting the Research: The PI is responsible for making sure that the research is conducted according to the REC-approved research protocol. The PI is jointly responsible for the conduct of co-investigators and any research staff involved with this research. The PI must ensure that the research is conducted according to the recognised standards of their research field/discipline and according to the principles and standards of ethical research and responsible research conduct.

Participant Enrolment: The PI may not recruit or enrol participants unless the protocol for recruitment is approved by the REC. Recruitment and data collection activities must cease after the expiration date of REC approval. All recruitment materials must be approved by the REC prior to their use.

Informed Consent: The PI is responsible for obtaining and documenting affirmative informed consent using **only** the REC-approved consent documents/process, and for ensuring that no participants are involved in research prior to obtaining their affirmative informed consent. The PI must give all participants copies of the signed informed consent documents, where required. The PI must keep the originals in a secured, REC-approved location for at least five (5) years after the research is complete.

Continuing Review: The REC must review and approve all REC-approved research proposals at intervals appropriate to the degree of risk but not less than once per year. There is **no grace period.** Prior to the date on which the REC approval of the research expires **it is the PI's responsibility to submit the progress report in a timely fashion to ensure a lapse in REC approval does not occur.** Once REC approval of your research lapses, all research activities must cease, and contact must be made with the REC immediately.

Amendments and Changes: Any planned changes to any aspect of the research (such as research design, procedures, participant population, informed consent document, instruments, surveys or recruiting material, etc.), must be submitted to the REC for review and approval before implementation. Amendments may not be initiated without first obtaining written REC approval. The **only exception** is when it is necessary to eliminate apparent immediate hazards to participants and the REC should be immediately informed of this necessity.

Adverse or Unanticipated Events: Any serious adverse events, participant complaints, and all unanticipated problems that involve risks to participants or others, as well as any research-related injuries, occurring at this institution or at other performance sites must be reported to the REC within **five (5) days** of discovery of the incident. The PI must also report any instances of serious or continuing problems, or non-compliance with the RECs requirements for protecting human research participants.

Research Record Keeping: The PI must keep the following research-related records, at a minimum, in a secure location for a minimum of five years: the REC approved research proposal and all amendments; all informed consent documents; recruiting materials; continuing review reports; adverse or unanticipated events; and all correspondence and approvals from the REC.

Provision of Counselling or emergency support: When a dedicated counsellor or a psychologist provides support to a participant without prior REC review and approval, to the extent permitted by law, such activities will not be recognised as research nor the data used in support of research. Such cases should be indicated in the progress report or final report.

Final reports: When the research is completed (no further participant enrolment, interactions or interventions), the PI must submit a Final Report to the REC to close the study.

On-Site Evaluations, Inspections, or Audits: If the researcher is notified that the research will be reviewed or audited by the sponsor or any other external agency or any internal group, the PI must inform the REC immediately of the impending audit/evaluation.

VII

APPROVED WITH STIPULATIONS
REC: Social, Behavioural and Education Research (SBER) - Initial Application Form

3 October 2019

Project number: SOC-2019-10562

Project title: The Experiences and Perspectives of Unaccompanied Refugee and Asylum-seeking Children living in Uganda

Dear Mr David Okimait

Your REC: Social, Behavioural and Education Research (SBER) - Initial Application Form submitted on 23 August 2019 was reviewed by the REC: Humanities on 26 September 2019 and approved with stipulations.

Present Committee Members:

Dr. Bronwyne Coetzee, Dr. Herbert Davis, Mr Terence Erasmus, Dr. Lindiwemhakamuni Khoza, Dr. Anthea Lesch, Dr. Samantha Van Schalkwyk, Mr. Aden Williams, Prof Leonard Hansen, Dr. Theodore Nell, Prof Douglas Rawlings

Ethics approval period:

Protocol approval date (Humanities)	Protocol expiration date (Humanities)
26 September 2019	25 September 2020

PLEASE RESPOND TO THE FOLLOWING STIPULATIONS:

The researcher may proceed with the envisaged research provided that the following stipulations, relevant to the approval of the project are adhered to or addressed:

1. INFORMED CONSENT PROCESSES AND FORM

The researcher is reminded to please add the name of the counselling service to the Parental Consent Form in case of a negative reaction to participation after the researcher has finished the study or cannot be reached in cases of an emergency. [RESPONSE AND ACTION REQUIRED]

2. OVERALL RISK LEVEL AND RISK /COST-BENEFIT ASSESSMENT

The REC agrees with the applicant/ the DESC that the risk level of this project is medium. Participants are unlikely to benefit directly from the study, but results may well provide valuable information and hence the risk/ cost-benefit is considered acceptable

3. INSTITUTIONAL AND EXTERNAL PERMISSIONS

The researcher states that he will access identifier data from the Pagirinya Refugee Settlement. This data will specifically help him to identify the unaccompanied refugee and asylum-seeking children living within the settlement. The researcher has made a formal request to the Department of Refugee in the Office of the Prime Minister for this data. The researcher must still provide the permission letter in this regard to the REC. The researcher should also clarify how this will work on a practical level. What type of information will be obtained in order to identify the minors? Such information is expected to be sensitive and personal. Please also reflect on how this information will be managed and if there are any potential ethical concerns at play. [RESPONSE AND ACTION REQUIRED]

4. REC REVIEWERS COMMENT

This is an excellent proposal with the ethical issues at play well-articulated and unpacked. The researcher is commended for the thought put into the design of this study and the consideration of the ethical issues at play.

HOW TO RESPOND:

Some of these stipulations may require your response. Where a response is required, you must respond to the REC within **three (3)** months of the date of this letter. Your provisional approval will be withdrawn automatically should your response not be

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received by the REC within 3 months of the date of this letter.

For instructions on how to respond to these stipulations, please download the FAQ on how to edit your application and follow the steps carefully: HOW TO RESPOND TO REC FEEDBACK.

Where revision to supporting documents is required, please ensure that you replace all outdated documents on your application form with the revised versions.

Please take note of the General Investigator Responsibilities attached to this letter. You may commence with your research after complying fully with these guidelines.

If the researcher deviates in any way from the proposal approved by the REC: Humanities, the researcher must notify the REC of these changes.

Please use your SU project number (10562) on any documents or correspondence with the REC concerning your project.

Please note that the REC has the prerogative and authority to ask further questions, seek additional information, require further modifications, or monitor the conduct of your research and the consent process.

FOR CONTINUATION OF PROJECTS AFTER REC APPROVAL PERIOD

Please note that a progress report should be submitted to the Research Ethics Committee: Humanities before the approval period has expired if a continuation of ethics approval is required. The Committee will then consider the continuation of the project for a further year (if necessary)

Included Documents:

Document Type	File Name	Date	Version
Budget	Research Budget	14/06/2019	1.0
Recruitment material	Research flyer	14/06/2019	1.1
Assent form	Child informed consent 14-17 years	14/06/2019	1.1
Data collection tool	FGD topic guide	14/06/2019	1.1
Data collection tool	Note on in-depth interview	14/06/2019	1.1
Investigator CV (PI)	David Okimait June 2019	21/06/2019	1.1
Default	Prof Rob Pattman CV	30/06/2019	1.1
Data collection tool	Topic guide for the artwork tool	20/07/2019	1.1
Research Protocol/Proposal	Unaccompanied refugee children proposal version 1.1 20.07.2019	20/07/2019	1.1
Parental consent form	Legal guardian permission	20/07/2019	1.1
Assent form	Assent statement for children 8-13 years	20/07/2019	1.1
Proof of permission	Gate keeper permission August 2019	23/08/2019	1.2
Default	Changes requested August 2019	23/08/2019	1.1

If you have any questions or need further help, please contact the REC office at cgraham@sun.ac.za.

Sincerely,

Clarissa Graham

REC Coordinator: Research Ethics Committee: Human Research (Humanities)

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Investigator Responsibilities

Protection of Human Research Participants

Some of the general responsibilities investigators have when conducting research involving human participants are listed below:

1. Conducting the Research. You are responsible for making sure that the research is conducted according to the REC approved research protocol. You are also responsible for the actions of all your co-investigators and research staff involved with this research. You must also ensure that the research is conducted within the standards of your field of research.

2.Participant Enrollment. You may not recruit or enrol participants prior to the REC approval date or after the expiration date of REC approval. All recruitment materials for any form of media must be approved by the REC prior to their use.

3.Informed Consent. You are responsible for obtaining and documenting effective informed consent using **only** the REC-approved consent documents/process, and for ensuring that no human participants are involved in research prior to obtaining their informed consent. Please give all participants copies of the signed informed consent documents. Keep the originals in your secured research files for at least five (5) years.

4.Continuing Review. The REC must review and approve all REC-approved research proposals at intervals appropriate to the degree of risk but not less than once per year. There is **no grace period.** Prior to the date on which the REC approval of the research expires, **it is your responsibility to submit the progress report in a timely fashion to ensure a lapse in REC approval does not occur.** If REC approval of your research lapses, you must stop new participant enrollment, and contact the REC office immediately.

5.Amendments and Changes. If you wish to amend or change any aspect of your research (such as research design, interventions or procedures, participant population, informed consent document, instruments, surveys or recruiting material), you must submit the amendment to the REC for review using the current Amendment Form. You **may not initiate** any amendments or changes to your research without first obtaining written REC review and approval. The **only exception** is when it is necessary to eliminate apparent immediate hazards to participants and the REC should be immediately informed of this necessity.

6.Adverse or Unanticipated Events. Any serious adverse events, participant complaints, and all unanticipated problems that involve risks to participants or others, as well as any research-related injuries, occurring at this institution or at other performance sites must be reported to Malene Fouche within **five (5) days** of discovery of the incident. You must also report any instances of serious or continuing problems, or non-compliance with the RECs requirements for protecting human research participants. The only exception to this policy is that the death of a research participant must be reported in accordance with the Stellenbosch University Research Ethics Committee Standard Operating Procedures. All reportable events should be submitted to the REC using the Serious Adverse Event Report Form.

7.Research Record Keeping. You must keep the following research-related records, at a minimum, in a secure location for a minimum of five years: the REC approved research proposal and all amendments; all informed consent documents; recruiting materials; continuing review reports; adverse or unanticipated events; and all correspondence from the REC

8.Provision of Counselling or emergency support. When a dedicated counsellor or psychologist provides support to a participant without prior REC review and approval, to the extent permitted by law, such activities will not be recognised as research nor the data used in support of research. Such cases should be indicated in the progress report or final report.

9.Final reports. When you have completed (no further participant enrollment, interactions or interventions) or stopped work on your research, you must submit a Final Report to the REC.

10.On-Site Evaluations, Inspections, or Audits. If you are notified that your research will be reviewed or audited by the sponsor or any other external agency or any internal group, you must inform the REC immediately of the impending audit/evaluation.

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Appendix II: Institutional/ Gatekeeper permission

THE REPUBLIC OF UGANDA

OFFICE OF THE PRIME MINISTER

PLOT 9-11 APOLLO KAGGWA ROAD. P.O. BOX 341, KAMPALA, UGANDA
TELEPHONES: General Line 0417 770500, Web: www.opm.go.ug, E-mail: ps@opm.go.ug

In any correspondence on this subject, please quote No: **OPM/R/107**

August 8, 2019

Mr. David Okimait,
PhD (Sociology) Candidate,
Department of Sociology & Social Anthropology,
University of Stellenbosch.

RE: PERMISSION TO UNDERTAKE ACADEMIC RESEARCH IN
      PAGIRINYA REFUGEE SETTLEMENT IN ADJUMANI DISTRICT

Reference is made to your letter dated June 12, 2018, in regard to the above subject matter.

This is to authorize you to undertake academic research on *"The Experiences and Perspectives of Unaccompanied Refugee and Asylum-Seeking Children Living in Uganda,"* in Pagirinya refugee settlement in the period between August 2019 and March 2020.

You are requested to observe the rules and regulations governing the settlement and reception centre. Office of the Prime Minister Authorities in the settlement are hereby requested to accord you the necessary assistance.

Gerald Menhya
FOR: PERMANENT SECRETARY

C.C. Refugee Desk Officer
      Adjumani

OPM Vision: A Public Sector that is responsive and accountable in steering Uganda towards rapid economic growth and development.

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Appendix III: Consents and Guardian permission forms

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PARENT/LEGAL GUARDIAN CONSENT FOR CHILD TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

Hello,

My name is **David Okimait,** a student from the Department of Sociology and Social Anthropology at Stellenbosch University. I would like to invite your child to take part in a study I am conducting on the perspectives and experiences of unaccompanied refugee and asylum-seeking minors in Uganda. Your child will be invited as a possible participant because he/she was identified as an unaccompanied minor when they arrived into Uganda.

WHY ARE AM I DOING THIS RESEARCH STUDY?

The reason why I am doing this study is to understand how refugee and asylum-seeking children who arrive in Uganda unaccompanied experience their everyday lives here within the refugee settlements in Uganda. This research study will also want to understand the children's experiences of their childhood in their countries of origin and stories about their journeys to Uganda. Because my study is about children, it is important that the children be given the opportunity to tell their own experiences

WHAT WILL BE ASKED OF MY CHILD?

If you consent to your child taking part in this study, I will then approach the child for their assent to take part in the study. If the child agrees to take part in the study, he/she will be asked to participate in activities that will involve him/her describing or narrating their experiences of their previous lives in their countries of origin as well as their present and most recent live experiences in Uganda. These activities will include;
- One on one interaction with the child about their different experiences
- Drawing pictures about these experiences and the children narrating the stories behind the pictures they have drawn
- Group discussions in which the children will come together and freely share and discuss with me their experiences.

ARE THERE ANY POSSIBLE RISKS OR DISCOMFORTS OF BEING IN THIS STUDY?

There is no direct physical or psychological harm that will happen to your child if they participate in this research study. However, I understand and know that it may be difficult for some children to narrate and share some of their experiences. During my interactions with the children, should any child appear distressed or experience trauma resulting from their participation, you will be notified immediately. Also, with the child's permission, he/she will be referred to a counselor who will always be available and ready to assist the children throughout this research process.

Also, the child may feel uncomfortable answering some questions or talking about some topics. Should this happen, the child is free to let me know that he/she does not want to discuss that topic and the topic of discussion will be changed. The child can always stop the discussion at any time.

ARE THERE ANY POSSIBLE BENEFITS TO THE CHILD OR TO THE SOCIETY?

This research will give a first-hand opportunity to children to express themselves, share their views and thoughts about their migratory experiences in ways that is not usually done in Uganda. Also, it is possible the some of the issues that this study will capture could influence the way refugee children are perceived here in Uganda and beyond. Refugee agencies like Department of Refugees and UNHCR may possibly benefit from this research study as it could give them possible additional ideas on their everyday work with refugee children.

Parent/ Legal guardian consent template. REC: Humanities (Stellenbosch University) 2017   version 1.1

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WILL THERE BE ANY PAYMENT FOR PARTICIPATION?

Participation in this research is purely voluntary. There will not be any payment in form of cash or material items that will be given to you or your child for participating in this research.

HOW WILL THE CHILD'S INFORMATION, CONFIDENTIALITY AND IDENTITY BE PROTECTED?

Any information you or your child will share with me during this study and that could possibly identify you or your child will be protected. This will be done by removing the names of your child from the information collected and replacing it with pseudonyms. All information that your child shares with me will not be revealed to other persons not even to you the parent/guardian or the settlement management. This information will be safely stored in a personal computer that is inaccessible to other persons, notes and diagrammatic information will be sealed off in envelopes and water proof material and locked away.

It is important to note that even though this is a research, the well being of the child remains the sole responsibility of the adult. In accordance with the laws of Uganda, and with regard to the principle of the best interests of the child in the Convention on the Rights of the Child, should the child reveal information that is thought to put their wellbeing at risk, then such information will be systematically disclosed to the relevant authority in order to protect the child.

Also, during the children group discussions, I will use an audio recorder to capture the discussion. Permission will be sought from the children prior to the recording. The child participants will be given the opportunity to listen in to the audio recording after so that they can either review or edit their conversations. These recordings will be transferred to passworded computer that will be made inaccessible to other people. The audio on the recorder will be deleted after they have been securely transferred to the computer. Where children have drawn pictures, permission will be sought from the child before a photograph is taken of their drawings. Some of these drawings will be analysed and published in the final report however all possible information like names which may be used to identify the children will be removed prior to this. Throughout the report writing processes, the identities of the children will be altered so that no one can directly trace back the information they have shared when the research report is made public.

PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL

You and your child can choose whether to be part of this study or not. If you consent to your child taking part in the study, please note that your child may choose to withdraw or decline participation at any time without any consequence. Your child may also refuse to answer any questions they don't want to answer and still remain in the study. The researcher may withdraw your child from this study if;
- the child changes, he/her mind about participating and withdraws their informed consent
- the child presents signs of distress, psycho-social trauma as a result of being in this study
- the child reveals information that puts their life at risk and such information must be shared with relevant authorities in order to protect the child.
- the child is being relocated or reunited with their immediate family or relatives

RESEARCHERS' CONTACT INFORMATION

If you have any questions or concerns about this study, please feel free to contact
Researcher: David Okimait
Email: 23439203@sun.ac.za
Phone: xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx

Supervisor: Professor Rob Pattman
Email: rpattman@sun.ac.za
Phone: xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx

Parent/ Legal guardian consent template. REC: Humanities (Stellenbosch University) 2017   version 1.1

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RIGHTS OF RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS
Your child may withdraw their consent at any time and discontinue participation without penalty. Neither you nor your child are waiving any legal claims, rights or remedies because of your participation in this research study. If you have questions regarding your or your child's rights as a research participant, contact Ms Maléne Fouché [mfouche@sun.ac.za; 021 808 4622] at the Division for Research Development.

DECLARATION OF CONSENT BY THE PARENT/ LEGAL GUARDIAN OF THE CHILD-PARTICIPANT

As the parent/legal guardian of the child I confirm that:
I have read the above information and it is written in a language that I am comfortable with.
I have had a chance to ask questions and all my questions have been answered.
All issues related to privacy, and the confidentiality and use of the information have been explained.

By signing below, I _____ *(name of parent)* agree that the researcher may approach my child to take part in this research study, as conducted by David Okimait

_____   _____
Signature of Parent/Legal Guardian   **Date**

DECLARATION BY THE PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR

As the principal investigator, I hereby declare that the information contained in this document has been thoroughly explained to the parent/legal guardian. I also declare that the parent/legal guardian was encouraged and given ample time to ask any questions.

_____   _____
Signature of Principal Investigator   **Date**

Parent/ Legal guardian consent template. REC: Humanities (Stellenbosch University) 2017   version 1.1

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INFORMED CONSENT FOR CHILDREN 14-17 YEARS TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

TITLE OF RESEARCH PROJECT: The experiences of unaccompanied refugee and asylum-seeking children living in Uganda

My name is **David Okimait,** I am student. I would like to invite you to take part in a research I am carrying out. This research is about children like you who left their home countries because of several reasons and came to Uganda.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY
In this research, I would like you and other children living here with you to share with me your experiences. What was it like leaving your country to come to Uganda? And what is it like living in Uganda?

WHAT WILL BE ASKED OF ME?
I will request you to take part in discussions about the things you experienced before you arrived in Uganda. I will also like to know how you found life here immediately you arrived. How different is it now? Sometimes, I will want us to talk and share as a group; you, me and some of the other children living here with you. In these discussions, everyone is free to talk about their lives and discuss their thoughts. While we talk, I would want to record our conversations, but only if you are okay with it

ARE THERE ANY POSSIBLE RISKS OR DISCOMFORTS OF BEING IN THIS STUDY?
There is no direct physical or psychological harm that will happen to you by participating in this research study. But I know that it may be difficult sometimes to talk about things that we go through. During our discussions, should you feel uncomfortable or traumatised by these things, please feel free to let me know. I will arrange for you to talk to a counsellor within the settlement so that they can offer you advice on how to go about this emotional disturbance. You may also choose not to discuss any topics or answer questions that make you feel uncomfortable.

ARE THERE ANY POSSIBLE BENEFITS TO PARTICIPANTS OR TO THE SOCIETY?
There is no direct benefit to you if you participate in this study. But this research will give you an opportunity to express yourself, share your views and thoughts about your life experiences. It is possible that some of the issues discussed in this study could influence the way refugee children are perceived here in Uganda and beyond.

WILL THERE BE ANY PAYMENT FOR PARTICIPATION?
Participation in this research is purely voluntary. There will not be any payment in form of cash or material items that will be rendered to you for participating in this research

HOW WILL YOUR INFORMATION, CONFIDENTIALITY AND IDENTITY BE PROTECTED?
Any information you share with me during this study and that could possibly identify you as a participant will be protected. Information that could make you easily identifiable by others such as your name will be replaced by pseudonyms (pretend name). The information you share with me will be safely stored in my computer and nobody else will access them. The written notes from our conversations will be kept safely.

PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL
You can choose whether to be in this study or not. If you agree to take part in this study, you may withdraw at any time without any consequence. You may also refuse to answer any questions you do not want to answer and still remain in the study. I may excuse you from this study If;
- you change your mind about participating and withdraw your informed consent.
- you present signs of distress, or psycho-social trauma as a result of being in this study

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- you reveal information that puts your life at risk and such information must be shared with relevant authorities in order to protect you.
- You are being relocated or reunited with your immediate family or relatives and must leave the settlement

WHO CAN I CONTACT INCASE OF ANY ADDITIONAL INFORMATION?
If you have any questions or concerns about this study, please feel free to contact
Researcher: David Okimait
Email: 23439203@sun.ac.za
Phone: xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx

Supervisor: Professor Rob Pattman
Email: rpattman@sun.ac.za
Phone: xxxxxxxxxxxxxxx

RIGHTS OF RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS
You may withdraw your consent at any time and discontinue participation without penalty. You are not waiving any legal claims, rights or remedies because of your participation in this research study. If you have questions regarding your rights as a research participant, contact Ms Maléne Fouché [mfouche@sun.ac.za; +27 21 808 4622] at the Division for Research Development.

DECLARATION OF CONSENT BY THE PARTICIPANT

As the participant I confirm that:
- I have read the above information and it is written in a language that I am comfortable with.
- I have had a chance to ask questions and all my questions have been answered.
- All issues related to privacy, and the confidentiality and use of the information I provide, have been explained.

By signing below, I _____ *(name of participant)* agree to take part in this research study, as conducted by David Okimait.

_____   _____

Signature of Participant   **Date**

DECLARATION BY THE PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR

As the **principal investigator,** I hereby declare that the information contained in this document has been thoroughly explained to the participant. I also declare that the participant has been encouraged (and has been given ample time) to ask any questions. In addition, I would like to select the following option:

	The conversation with the participant was conducted in a language in which the participant is fluent.
	The conversation with the participant was conducted with the assistance of a translator (who has signed a non-disclosure agreement), and this "Consent Form" is available to the participant in a language in which the participant is fluent.

_____   _____

Signature of Principal Investigator   **Date**

	STELLENBOSCH UNIVERSITY

ASSENT FORM FOR CHILDREN 8-13 YEARS

TITLE OF THE RESEARCH PROJECT: The experiences of alone refugee and asylum searching children in Uganda

Hello,

My name is David Okimait. I am a student. I am carrying out a research about children like you living in Uganda.

What is RESEARCH?
Research is something we do to find out about people. And in my research, I want to find out about children like you and what it's like living in Uganda.

What is this research all about?
My research is about you, and other children who have left their countries to come to Uganda. What was it like leaving your country to come to Uganda? And what is it like living in Uganda?

Why have I been invited to take part in this research?
I have invited you because you are one of the children who arrived in Uganda without your parents, brothers and sisters. And you can best tell me a lot what it is like coming to Uganda. I believe that I will learn a lot and understand about you and others like you.

What will happen to me in this study?
I asked your guardian if it was okay for you to take part in this research. If you want to take part, I will ask you to do some artwork like drawing or painting some pictures about your journey here, your life here when you had just arrived, and your life here now and the activities you do as boy/girl here. I will ask you questions about your artwork (pictures, paintings) like who or what you have included in your art, what games you were playing? And who you were with? And how these artworks made you feel.

I will also ask you and other children like you to take part in a discussion about your lives. I can record the discussion if you all agree and then you can listen into the discussion after we have finished. You can even choose to remove or add somethings when listening to the recording after.

Can anything bad happen to me?
Nothing bad will happen to you but if you feel you are not comfortable to talk about some things, it is okay, you do not have to tell me about them.
Also, if you feel that your taking part in the study is making you have bad memories like bad dreams, you feel hurt, please come talk to me. I will take you to someone who will help you

Can anything good happen to me?
I hope you will enjoy taking part in this research and sharing you stories with me. You will help us adults understand better things about children like you. This is important because we can work towards making life better for children like you.

Will anyone know I am in the study?
Your participation will be kept secret, except to the children you will participate in the discussion together. I will not mention your name in the report that I will write

Who can I talk to about the study?
If you want to know more about this study or you have any questions about this study, feel free to contact me or my teacher

Researcher: David Okimait
Email: 23439203@sun.ac.za
Phone: xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx

Supervisor/Teacher: Rob Pattman
Email: rpattman@sun.ac.za
Phone: xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx

What if I do not want to do this?
You can refuse to take part in the research even if your guardian has agreed; there will be no problem. You can stop at any time without getting into trouble.

Do you understand this research study and are you willing to part in it? | YES | | NO | take

Have I answered all your questions? | YES | | NO |

Do you understand that you can STOP being in the study at any time? | YES | | NO |

_____   _____
Signature of Child   Date

Appendix IV: Confidentiality agreement

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RESEARCH CONFIDENTALITY AGREEMENT

Project title: The experiences and perspectives of unaccompanied refugee and asylum-seeking children in Uganda.

I_____ have been enrolled as a research assistant and will be engaged in the following activities during the fieldwork processes

_____

I agree to undertake the following during my engagement with this research;

Keep all the research information that will be shared with me confidential by not discussing or sharing the research information in any form or format including disks, tapes, or transcripts with anyone other than the Researcher.

Keep all research information in any form or format (e.g., disks, tapes, transcripts) secure whilst it is in my possession.

Return all research information in any form or format (e.g., disks, tapes, transcripts, consent forms) to the *Researcher* when I have completed the research tasks.

After consulting with the *Researcher,* erase or destroy all research information in any form or format regarding this research project that is not returnable to the *Researcher* (e.g., information stored on computer hard drive).

_____   _____   _____
  Name   **Signature**   **Date**

_____   _____   _____
 David Okimait (Researcher)   **Signature**   **Date**

version 1.1

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Appendix V: Information Sheet

What is this research about?

- This research about alone refugee children who have left their countries to come live in Uganda.
- It is about the journey from their home countries to Uganda
- Also about their first or earlier days in Uganda after they have arrive.
- This research is also about understanding these children's current life in Uganda like the things they do, the people in their lives and how they feel about their current lives.

Should you have any questions or want to know more about this research please contact

David Okimat (Researcher)

Mob: +256 772831723

Email: 23439203@sun.ac.za

© www.kickstarter.com

Participation in this research

- Participation is purely voluntary. No child will be forced to take part in this research and there will not be any consequences for not participating if you choose not to.
- Guardians of children will be requested to allow children under their care to take part
- Every child will be given detailed information about this research such that they can decide whether to or not to part
- Participation will be through picture drawing, group discussions and individual discussions.

Rights of the participants

- Information shared with the researcher will not be disclosed to anyone.
- You can decide to stop your participation if you do not feel like continuing.
- No harm will happen to you or any member of your family, friends or relatives because of your choice to participate or not participate
- Boys and girls 8 to 17 years who are alone refugee children in this settlement will participate in this research
- All opinions, thoughts and drawings are very important to this research. To this research, there are no wrong answers because all opinions matter

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Appendix VI: Research tools

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Child FGD topic guide for children 14-17 years

1. What does it mean to be a refugee to you? *(probe for how identity is related to this)*

2. What does it mean to be an alone refugee child in this place? Do you feel that there is any difference between you and other refugee children in this place?

3. What were some of your experiences of traveling to Uganda? *(probe for exit journey from home country, crossing into the borders, arrival into the settlement)*

4. How do you recall your earlier days here in the settlement? *(also probe for immediate welfare concerns, sense of belonging and others)*

5. Do you ever imagine and think of your lives outside of this settlement? What are your imaginations of your life outside this place*? (also probe for imaginations, and thoughts of life beyond the settlement or as refugees*

6. Are there things that you come to do together as refugee children in this place? If yes, what are these things? And do they mean anything to you as refugee children?

7. Are there any specific tasks or roles that you're given as refugee children? If yes, does they have anything to do with your being a boy or a girl? What about your age?

8. How different or similar is your life here in Uganda from that in your home country of South Sudan?

9. How do you relate with other members of the settlement? Do you sometimes meet the local community members? What do they think and say about you?

**Topic guide for artwork for children aged 8-13 years**

This topic guide is developed in sense as to allow children have fun as they participate in this research. The topics are related to the main research questions of the study and have been developed alongside the other tools so as to create thematic connections during the data coding and analytical process

Topic I: My Journey to Uganda

Topic II: My first days in the settlement

Topic III: My friends and me/I now in the settlement

Topic IV: The activities I do as a boy/girl

Appendix VII: Artwork activities gallery

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