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## GENDER IN REFUGE: WOMEN'S LIVES, SPACES AND EVERYDAY EXPERIENCES IN NAKIVALE REFUGEE SETTLEMENT IN UGANDA

**ABSTRACT** Although the whole refugee population is heavily affected by precarious life, uncertainty, and unsafety, women are particularly vulnerable in the situations of exile. Throughout their whole migration route – from a war or disaster inflicted country of origin, over their migration journey, to their destination countries – they are at a disproportionately higher risk of harm, especially gender-based violence. This includes refugee camps as well, where harassments, rape, abuses, and exploitation are common in refugees' everyday life. This paper focuses on one of those camps – Nakivale refugee settlement in Uganda. The paper uses some theoretical tools of feminist geography to look at the gendered experience of life in a refugee camp, and see how gender shapes women's experiences of space, movement, changing surroundings and cultures, family relations, etc. in it. Moreover, through the voices of refugee women, it uncovers how gender, intertwined with other social locations, marginalize refugee women even further, alarmingly jeopardizing their safety and wellbeing in the camp.

**Keywords:** refugee women, refugee camp, gender-based violence, Uganda, intersectionality, feminist geography

### INTRODUCTION

In mainstream migration studies refugee population is often understood as a group of abstract but homogenous disembodied subjects, that is, in practice, modelled by male, heterosexual experience. As a result, “traditional” scholars can often stay blind to this subject to gender, ethnicities, religions, sexuality, (dis)abilities, and other social positions that define refugee experience. Humanitarian interventions follow this trend, often blurring all the

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nuances within the refugee population, which can result in an inability to map and respond to the specific needs of the most vulnerable populations. Although the issue of gender and gender-based violence (GBV) in emergencies is increasingly attracting attention in humanitarian body of literature, in practice GBV field is still undermined, and the professionals in this area face a lot of reluctance and challenges in the effort to mainstream gender in all humanitarian clusters. In this respect, the first aim of this paper will be to embody refugee experience and deconstruct the notion of abstract refugee subject present in the mainstream academia and humanitarian body of literature. Employing the lessons from feminist geography, and with special focus on the gendered experience of space and intersectionality, it goes to depict specifics of life in refugee camps, and show the extent to which recognising these specific experiences is important for life and security of women living in refugee camps.

On the other hand, in the last decades, the niche of migration studies that started employing gender lenses has begun to emerge and develop, attracting a range of authors and disciplines. Gender and integration, gender and asylum process and policies, gender and conflict, GBV and refugees – those are just some of the topics that are increasingly being covered in this corner of academia. However, while we are departing away from colonial history with time, some authors have wondered whether colonialism quietly moved in this field of migration studies itself. About two decades ago, Jennifer Hyndman analysed the state of academia in the field of migration and, with referring to Gayatri Spivak’s ground-breaking article “Can Subaltern Speak” (198), stated: “Refugees appeared as subaltern subjects” (Hyndman 2000, xvi). Later, the question followed: “How is it that the voices of refugees themselves are so rarely heard in academic journals...?” (ibid., 119). Indeed, in spite of the lessons from feminist thought and methodology, the voices of refugees – women especially – are still rarely present in research. Just like Spivak’s Sati, it seems that a refugee woman became the battlefield, but this time between academic experts’ opinion, or humanitarian programming on one side, and efforts to scapegoat her in order to preserve deeply patriarchal cultures, and inherited gender inequalities or even violence, on the other side. Whether through academia or humanitarian worker’s resources, female voices can make a crucial contribution: most importantly, in the field-

work with informing the *life-saving activities* of GBV programming. This point is precisely how this paper seeks to contribute to the existing body of literature – using the developed feminist tools, but primarily aiming at creating the space for refugee women’s voices.

Finally, the paper aims to counterpart the media attention the current European “migration” crisis attracted, putting the mass influx of migrants and refugees (mainly from MENA region) at the centre of interest of European population. Although less visible to their eyes, the vast majority of the displaced population lives throughout the developing world, some of them even spending decades in refugee camps, forgotten from global politics and media. Nakivale refugee settlement in Uganda, which will be explored in this paper, is one of such places.

## CONFLICTS, DISPLACEMENT AND THE CASE OF AFRICA

The number of armed conflicts has skyrocketed since the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, which reflected on the increase in the number of internally and internationally displaced persons (UNHCR 2008, 5). The assessment shows that there are 68.5 million displaced people in the world, as a result of persecution, violence, and violation of human rights (UNHCR 2018, 2). Only in Sub-Saharan Africa, there are 26.4 million displaced persons (35% of global total), with five countries alone (Uganda among them) hosting 89% of this number (UNHCR 2019). On the other hand, majority of the world’s most complexed, devastating and neglected conflicts are situated in Africa as well – Congo, South Sudan, Somalia, just to mention the few (*ibid.*). African continent, in general, showed to be extremely prone to violent conflicts and crises throughout contemporary history, which, as a subject, attracted many authors. Different reasons were traced for these frequent conflicts: natural resource dependence, weak and poorly functioning political institutions, ethnic fragmentation and polarization and endemic poverty (Besley and Reynal-Querol 2012, 4). However, many agree with a Kenyan historian and scholar, Ali Mazrui, and his statement that root causes of almost all African problems can be sourced in Western colonialism and imperialism (Mazrui 1986). Indeed, numerous colonialist interventions left their hazardous consequences, still present to this day. The borders drawn in the Berlin

conference 1884 by colonial powers had little or no reflection of existing cultures, languages or interests existing in Africa (Thomson 2010, 14). This either broke same ethnic groups in different countries or left historical enemies in the same territories, which caused the long and violent dispute over territories in the modern African states after independence (e.g. dispute between Kenya and Somalia). Besides physical borders, colonial rulers caused a lot of ethnic division by privileging one over other ethnicities, in order to better rule and control colonies, that in turn led to heightened tension and local conflict (e.g. Rwandan Genocide as the infamous culmination of decades-long inherited conflicts between Hutus and Tutsis) (Bujra 2002, 29–30). Fight over resources in the colonial time spilt over in the post-colonial economies in African countries as well. As noted in one of the Secretary General's reports on Africa:

“the character of the commercial relations instituted by colonialism, also created long-term distortion in the political economy of Africa. The consequences of this pattern of production and exchange spilled over into the post-independence state. As political competition was not rooted in viable national economic systems, in many instances the prevailing structure of incentives favoured capturing the institutional remnants of the colonial economy for factional advantage” (UN 1999, 3–5).

Within global capitalistic dynamics and markets, African countries continue to be a source of cheap raw materials and labour force, further weakening African economies, and leading many countries to poverty. And poverty on its side has shown to be an active catalyst for civil wars and unrests. Those are just part of many debated topics on the role of (post)colonial Western role in African conflicts, although the list continues on the arms market, oil wars, Cold War consequences and support of African dictatorships by Global North, etc. In such a complex historical and geopolitical framework establishing simple linear cause-consequence patterns becomes hardly possible. However, the simple fact is that many of these have continued to culminate and breed conflicts that exist still today, even after direct Western influence, causing million people to die or flee from their homes.

## UGANDA AND NAKIVALE

Uganda is one of the countries that received the most significant amount of refugees in recent years globally, and the highest in Africa (UNHCR 2018). The highest number of refugees in the county comes from South Sudan, Somalia and Congo (UNHCR 2015). These high numbers are the result of, on the one hand, the geographical position of Uganda, which is placed in the centre of the African continent and surrounded by many countries inflicted by conflicts. On the other side, the political stability of Uganda in recent decades plays an important role as well in attracting people fleeing from war. For these reasons, even the population from more distant countries such as Eritrea, Ethiopia, and Somalia, seek refuge in Uganda, as they do meet some safety concerns in the neighbouring countries. Long experience in refugee response and a high number of arriving refugees pushed Uganda to develop one of the most progressive approaches to refugee management as well, mainly reflected in granting refugees with freedom of movement in the country, and supporting their livelihoods with land allocation for agricultural usage.

The country has several refugee settlements, and one of them, Nakivale, will be in the focus of this paper. Nakivale is one of the biggest camps in the country (and in the world), and at the time of conducting this research, it hosted between 90,000 and 100,000 people (UNHCR 2015). Most of its inhabitants came from Congo, Somalia, Rwanda and Burundi. All of them were fleeing from unrests in their home countries, whether ongoing or past – for example, some arrived from Rwanda after the Genocide in 1994 and never left, while the high influx from Burundi was produced by recent coup d'état attempt in 2015. This research mapped striking numbers of people in the protracted refugee population, while some of the respondents spent up to 20 years in the camp at the time of conducting interviews.

Nakivale is located in the southeast part of the county in the Isingiro district, and it covers 185 km<sup>2</sup>, divided into three zones (Rubdondo, Base Camp and Juru) with 79 villages (WRC 2014, 3). The settlement is administered by the Office of the Prime Minister (OPM), with the support of United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). OPM is responsible for reception and accommodation, basic living conditions, camps infra-

structure, protection, and livelihood programs primarily. Several national and international organizations are also involved in service provision in different sectors – protection, education, nutrition, water, sanitation and hygiene, etc. – employing mostly local population for service delivery. The Base Camp, where this research is conducted, is divided in smaller centres mainly organised by predominant nationalities, e.g. “New Congo” hosts predominantly Congolese populations, Somali population is concentrated in “Somali Village”, “Little Kigali” has been historically Rwandan, etc. And while they are geographically segregated, they interact on the daily level, mostly for economic reasons. This division logic is reflected in lot allocation to new refugees, in areas that can absorb new inhabitants, or in the cases of huge influx. In such cases, refugees would be allocated to the closest camp in Uganda (e.g. Burundians to Nakivale, Congolese to Rwamwanja, South Sudanese to Bidi Bidi, etc.). Upon arrival, and determination of refugee status, a person (or a family) would receive land and a kit for building a shelter, and then would be responsible for building their own accommodation. This is mostly done from bricks refugees would make themselves, using water from a nearby lake and specific type of soil. Each neighbourhood would have its local market, where people would sell goods they produce themselves through local income-generating activities, in most cases farming. Some of the habitants made their living through restaurant businesses with ethnic food. Depending on the area, mosques and churches are also erected, and a couple of the elementary schools and early childhood development centres are dispersed throughout the settlement as well. These are the main spots of gathering and socialization, although not equally gender- and ethnicity-wise. Especially in Muslim communities, women tend to occupy primarily private spaces; trading, gathering in restaurants, but also schooling, are usually not part of their everyday lives.

As in any refugee camp, GBV remains an omnipresent problem in Nakivale. Intimate partner violence, child marriage and rape are just some of the identified issues (RLP 2015). Barriers in responding to GBV in this camp are also mapped in terms of inadequate support and inappropriate services, impunity for committed crimes, language barriers, and cultural norms (Glass and Doocy 2013, 17–22). Recorded interviews in this study showed that many representatives of humanitarian organisations or police would

not react to violence unless receiving a bribe. Additionally, many do not believe survivors who report GBV, claiming that girls and women lie they experienced rape or other forms of GBV, in order to qualify for additional services or resettlement (RLP 2015, 45). On the other hand, in certain cases, the camp employees themselves can be the perpetrators. In such cases, access to justice is even more difficult, as the survivor risk their safety if they decide to report a violent incident. Such challenges will be discussed in the following pages, through the perspective of refugee girls and women themselves. However, before turning to their testimonies, it is essential to shed some light on the globally mapped challenges surrounding women in forced migration, as well as some theoretical lenses that will help understand this subject better.

## WOMEN AND FORCED MIGRATION

Although no one is safe in armed conflicts, girls and women are at disproportionately more significant risk from violence. Gender-based violence – rape, forced impregnation, forced abortion, human trafficking, sexual slavery, intentional passing of sexually transmitted diseases such as HIV/AIDS – became some of the main characteristics of contemporary armed conflict (UNHCR 2008, 5). Most of the female refugee population reports to survived traumatic experiences in the country of origin, and those mostly include surviving or witnessing physical or sexual violence committed against them, their families, or close friends (Fazel et al. 2011). Moreover, as Eileen Pittaway and Linda Bartolomei pointed out, the majority of disappeared or killed population in wars are males, which results in refugee population being dominated by women and children who are then particularly exposed to violence (Pittaway and Bartolomei 2001, 22). Moreover, women are often the target of ethnically motivated violence, as extreme forms of nationalism and fundamentalism perceive women as “bearers of culture”, making sexual violence against women a common manifestation of a political act of aggression (ibid., 23). Mass rapes and sexual slavery as the weapon of war (e.g. Bosnia, Rwanda) are just some examples.

Girls and women continue to face numerous challenges when they leave their countries as well. Dangers of smuggler abuse, trafficking, rebel groups,

are among the dangers they meet during their migration journeys, especially when they are travelling alone. Even when they reach the first countries of origin or destination countries, their troubles do not stop. This especially goes for refugee settlements that host a large number of people. They are places of insecurity, inadequate accommodation, often overcrowded, with insufficient hygienic conditions and lack of private spaces. Not only this environment affects the health and wellbeing of all refugees, but it specifically jeopardizes the safety of women (Martin 2004a; RLP 2015).

## THEORIZING WOMEN IN MIGRATION

The theoretical framework of this paper is predominantly borrowed from feminist geography, that made a significant contribution in analysing these phenomena. Research in this field brought to attention that it is not possible to understand how people act in migration processes without taking into account how they are situated in the context of different power hierarchies (including gender ones), and how these different power hierarchies function in the context of geography, place and space. Linda McDowell framed well the goals of this interdisciplinary field as having the goal to analyse and question the relations between the categories of space and gender and to “uncover their mutual constitution and problematize their apparent naturalness” (McDowell 1999, 12). That is, feminist geography is based on the notion that different people experience the same places differently. It further analysed notion that space is not just a static “stage” or “emptiness” in which people and things are placed; rather, spaces are produced by “set of relations that delineates sites which are irreducible to one another and absolutely not superimposable on one another” (Foucault [1967]1984, 3). Although they might seem like locations isolated from time and space, refugee camps as well are not, but any mean, empty stages. The power relations are interwoven in all their possible aspects, amongst others from camp authorities to refugees, from one ethnicity to other, between classes, and of course, between genders. Moreover, for those women whose security is endangered by those spaces, they are nothing but “neutral”.

The age of globalisation is more and more presented as the era of accessibility of commodities, spaces, and opportunities, while in reality, the world



is a global village only for the privileged ones – the makers of global politics, presumably middle class of global north (Massey 1994). In describing the *geometry of power*, a category she uses to describe the agency of people who influence and are influenced by above-mentioned processes, Doreen Massey states that this *geometry* determines not only who can move and who cannot, but also the power in relation to the flows and the movement. As she concludes:

“Different social groups have distinct relationships to this anyway differentiated mobility: some people are more in charge of it than others; some initiate flows and movement, others don’t; some are more on the receiving-end of it than others; some are effectively imprisoned by it. ... [There] are the groups who are really in a sense in charge of time-space compression, who can really use it and turn it to advantage, whose power and influence it very definitely increases. ... But there are also groups who are also doing a lot of physical moving, but who are not ‘in charge’ of the process in the same way at all” (ibid.).

Refugees belong to the group of those not “in charge” of their mobility – as the term *forced migration* states itself, their movement is involuntary. The choice of the countries they are fleeing to is more the necessity than choice, and it can, as we will see, bring them danger together with the shelter. And, as stated above, this involuntary journey exposes women to risks of violence disproportionately more than men. At the same time, for many women, it is impossible to flee from their countries and migrate even if they want to, due to financial dependence, care for other family dependents (Freedman 2016, 20). The same can be said for their mobility in refugee camps, as will be shown.

Massey’s analytical framework is further developed by Sarah Mahler and Patricia Pessar, with their concept of *gendered geographies of power* (Mahler and Pessar 2001), useful for this paper’s topic as well. They see transnational spaces as the places where gender identities and power relations are being re-defined. To Massey’s concept of geometry of power that focuses on agency and possibility of people to move, Mahler and Pessar add (1) spatial and societal dimensions of gender (e.g. body, family, state) in the context of

transnational spaces (reproduction of practices, traditions, and gender roles in migration) and (2) social location (hierarchies of power and gender, class, ethnical and other (un)privileges) (ibid., 446).

Including *spatial and societal dimension of gender* is one of the most crucial aspects of understanding the topic of this paper as it allows us to consider both female experience and the complex notion of refugee camps – and their interplay. On the one hand, we need to understand a refugee camp as a place that, although located in a certain state, does not represent its part; as a place where time seems to be stopped for all those people spending years in it while waiting for a solution for their situations. Moreover, we need to grasp the sense of “in-betweenness” it produces, and the way in which refugee’s personality is “shaped by [this] liminality, the sudden foregrounding of agency, and sometimes dramatic tying together of thought and experience” (Thomassen 2012, 31), in the process in which a person becomes “nameless, spacio-temporary dislocated and socially unstructured” (Thomassen 2006, 322). On the other, we need to analyse the way gender defines the experience of such space, remembering that “[experience] is always necessarily embodied, corporeally constituted, located in and as the subject’s incarnation” (Grosz 1994, 94–95). It is noted in various pieces of research that women’s mobility in refugee camps tends to decrease, given the violence they experience in such places (UNHCR 2001, 20–21). On the one hand, this can be related to gendered division of space (and gender roles) inherent to patriarchal cultures of origin of some refugees, that tend to get reproduced once the threat of “social unstructuring” of refugee camps is met. On the other hand, many obstacles to mobility are enrooted in the camp’s planning and infrastructure itself: lack of gender segregation of latrines, inadequate lighting, the distance of service and facilities, insecure housing (in some cases tents), etc. As the testimonies in this paper will show, these can have a vast spectrum of consequences for female population in camps as GBV threats and incidents appear when girls are walking long distance to attend a faraway school, when women go to collect water or firewood they lack for delivering their household duties, when women are living alone in unsafe housing or surroundings, etc.

In considering questions of agency and gendering within the context of forced migration, it is important to note that refugee groups, researchers, activists, advocacy and humanitarian organisations have called and mobi-

lised for the implementation of strategies that prevent and mitigate GBV. While my paper foregrounds analytical inquiries that seek to illuminate the consolidation of patriarchal arrangements within refugee camps, several authors have orientated their work on gender and migration towards other relevant topics. For example, contrary to the effects of forced migration studied in this paper, perspectives on migration as an empowering process for women have been widely discussed in academia as well. Certain authors mapped the instances of displaced women who received roles of protectors and providers of families which boosted their agency and political participation (cf. El-Bushra 2000); some observed integration of refugee women in the host societies as an increase of education and employment opportunity, sense of independence or its influence negotiation on family-related gender norms (cf. Martin 2004b; Hondagneu-Sotelo 1994; Oishi 2005); others focused on the other side of the same coin – the male experience of a decrease in authority in family within migration processes (cf. Mejivar 2000).<sup>2</sup> Another stream of migration studies, closely related to the topic of this paper, is focused on gender and forced migration in the domain of laws and policies. Mainstreaming gender in humanitarian work (cf. Mehra and Gupta 2006), gender and asylum law (cf. Musalo 2014/2015; Arbel et al. 2014), gender and statelessness (cf. Blitz 2009), or discussions around the forced migration, local laws and international refugee policies on managing LGBTI population (cf. Sussman 2013; Zomorodi 2016), are just some of the analysed topics. In addition, different civil society and humanitarian organisations such as UNFPA, UNICEF, and other UN bodies, International Rescue Committee, Women Refugee Commission, Refugee Law Project, to mention the few, have developed programmes that aim to promote refugee women's protection and their participation in humanitarian programming (design and delivery), livelihoods, community-based governing bodies, their access to justice, etc. Their role in doing research, producing guidelines, and advocacy efforts around this issue should not be undermined as well.

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2 In addition, interesting studies were conducted in relation to stay-behind women, and their permanent growth of independence and autonomy if their husbands are the only one who migrate (cf. Chant 1992). An important body of literature is focused on the role of female migrants in development of sending countries, particularly when it comes to remittances (cf. García and Paiewonsky 2006).

Finally, identities – not only gender – are marked on and through a body, and they affect the lived experience of an individual. They cannot be adequately understood without taking into account the role of the body and “body’s visible identity” (Alcoff 2006, 102). And this leads us to the Mahler and Pesser’s final point, *social location*. Researches show that gender, class, ethical and racial dimension are inseparable within migration processes which additionally boosts reproduction of inequality in transnational spaces (Pešić 2013, 33). And, as the lessons from black feminism showed, the blindness to multiple social locations that can be ascribed to a woman is highly problematic as “the violence that many women experience is often shaped by other dimensions of their identities, such as race and class” (Crenshaw 1991, 1242). Intersectionality started to be globally used as a critical acknowledgement that different layers of identity do not function as a mutually exclusive entity, but rather as “reciprocally constructing phenomena that in turn shape complex social inequalities” (Collins 2015, 2). The same way Crenshaw analyses intersectionality of Afro-American women, refugees too “cannot be captured wholly by looking at the women race or gender dimensions [*and the number of others – sexuality, class, religion, etc.*] of those experiences separately” (Crenshaw 1991, 1244). Women in the refugee camps are at a disproportionately higher risk of violence – especially GBV – than the male population, but within this group, there are substantial differences when it comes to protection issues. The interplay of multiple social locations can make a refugee camp a particularly dangerous place to live. Women living alone, or female heads of households could be seen as a particularly “easy prey” for harassment or exploitation; girls from lower casts could face stigma and discrimination without having any support network; lesbians would be outcasts from a local community, and might face the same threats as in the country of their origin – and in the countries like Uganda, would not be protected even by the law. These are just fractions of lives and complex experiences many women are surviving in their everyday life that show that violence against women in refugee camps is far from a monolith phenomenon. The same experiences show us that we need intersectionality as a tool to understand “meaning and nature of [*gender-based*] violence, how it is experienced by oneself and responded to by others, how personal and social consequences are represented, and how and whether escape and safety can be obtained” (Bogard 1999, 276).

## METHODOLOGY

In general, many feminist scholars pointed out that quantitative research suppresses female voices – either by ignoring them or by burying them underneath a barrage of stats (Bryman 2012, 410). Moreover, using the given categories in quantitative research results in highlighting what is already known and ‘silencing of women’s own voices’ (Maynard 1994, 18). As highlighted above, these observations are particularly valuable for this research as its primary goal is to depict the experiences of women, from their own perspective, that is to answer the question “In which way gender defines the experience of life in Nakivale refugee settlement in Uganda in the context of gender-based violence?”.

The present research was conducted within two months (August and September 2015) in the Nakivale refugee settlement in Uganda, the authentic place where girls and women in question live, using the feminist grounded theory. Having in mind the feminist reflections on this methodology, that underlines different interpretations of reality (Wuest 1995) and heavy emphasis on collected data before theory – it served well for this study and its goal to serve as a platform for female voices. The research process has employed different methods as participative observation, informal conversations, and research diary. However, the primary method was conducting semi-structured interviews, led by an interview guide that was transforming according to each feedback from interviews with respondents. Altogether, 16 women were included in the research from Somalia, Congo, Rwanda, Ethiopia, and Eritrea. All respondents were given an explanation of the purpose of this study, before obtaining their informed consent. For the respondents younger than 18 years, both assent and parental consent were obtained. Confidentiality of all respondents who participated in the study was protected by disguising their identities (e.g. changing names). Informal conversations with employees from institutions and organisations in the settlement were also included in certain aspects to shed some light on the perspective of service providers. Nevertheless, the main focus remained on the experiences and voices of refugee women, which will be analysed in the following sections.

## WOMEN'S TESTIMONIES

### WOMEN'S BODIES AS SPACES OF CULTURAL REPRODUCTION

Gender roles brought in the Nakivale settlement from the countries of refugees' origin defined the experiences of the women in the camp in many ways. Generally, the question of gender roles in migration is seen in different ways: on the one hand, moving from the countries that are considered repressive when it comes to women's right to those of more liberal environment showed to open the space for the possibility of women's empowerment and emancipation. On the other hand, this change often showed to be a "red flag" – mostly to fathers and husbands – for the potential disruption of existing power relations, which may result in additional effort to reproduce the respective cultures, including preservation of traditional harmful practices.

The case of Astur, forty-years-old Somali women, is an example of repressive efforts to maintain traditional patriarchal values. Astur had spent six years in Nakivale with her daughters and husband. She came to Uganda after her husband, who arrived a couple of months earlier.

*"My husband was very well respected in our town; everyone knew about our family. We knew many families as well, and I was spending my time with them. Me and my daughters we went to shopping, walks. ... Since we came here, we have no freedom. [My husband] does not let us leave the room. He said that everyone here is wicked and primitive. He said that [Somali people] started to act sinful, the women are taking off their scarves, daughters stay alone with men – and that is not according to Allah. He saw our daughter talking with a young man, and he dragged her home in front of everyone and beat her. And she was buying potatoes. He hits me as well because he thinks I spoiled her. And my [daughter] is a good child. ... He doesn't allow [our daughters] to go to school – he doesn't want them to mix with "non-believers". If he would let me, I could work – wash and clean. But he doesn't let us leave the house. He says we are already spoiled, and he has to stop it for the sake of our family's reputation"* (Astur, September 13, 2015).

Isolation of these women is also possible because, unlike Uganda and surrounding countries, the members of the Somali community do not speak

English in most of the cases, not to mention the local dialects. Language barriers disable women and girls who experience domestic violence to report it to the local authorities, and this is often identified as one of the major factor contributing to intimate partner violence among refugee population (Menjivar and Salcido 2002, 901). Moreover, isolation affects many other aspects of life, which, as a consequence, can become controlled by the man in the family exclusively. As Astur explains, men also receive food provided by the local organisation on behalf of the whole family, which means that the rest of the family can be restricted:

*“[My husband] goes to collect food, and then he hides it from us. When he is angry with us, he punishes us by not giving us food. Mostly he does this to me, not to the children. Sometimes he sells food to the rest [of refugees] who can afford it. Last time he sold most of our food and spent money, I don’t even know where”* (Astur, September 13, 2015).

Harmful traditional practices are another very common form of GBV, and the way to reproduce the culture in the camp. One of them is female genital mutilation (FGM) that is deeply rooted among Somali refugees, but also present in Eritrean and Ethiopian community. There are very well respected women in these communities that perform mutilation. They are not known to the camp authorities, and they perform these interventions in isolated places that are hard to locate. The community itself protects these women, never revealing their names (INGO employee September 3, 2015). According to Nagan, a 28-year-old woman from Somalia, if girls and women in the community protest against this practice, they are risking to be judged, but also threatened by the community members. As she says, *“if you don’t want to get cut, and you manage to avoid that, you will never marry because no men would want you nor would his family allow that”* (Nagan, September 12, 2015). In the context of the community in the camp, where respecting traditional (harmful) practices is particularly important given the “exposure” to the other cultures, protesting against FGM is seen as “betrayal” of one’s own culture, according to Nagan (ibid.).

Ashkiro, a 15-year-old girl from Somalia, also survived FGM. She was the oldest of the five sisters that resided with her in the camp:

*“Me and my sister went through [FGM] a long time ago. I remember it was very painful, but every girl has to do it, so we didn’t object. Our younger sister – now 9-year-old – was the last one of us who went through it here in the camp. She was very upset about it, and now because of that, she says she is not Somali”* (Ashkiro, September 1, 2015).

Ashkiro described the act of mutilation as extremely hard and painful, but she did not criticize this practice. She explained how her mother found *“respected women in the camp who does that to [Somali] girls”* (ibid.). Most of the families Ashkiro knows still practice FGM, but there are those isolated examples who abandoned these practices once they met the “free women” from Uganda, Burundi, Rwanda and Congo in the camp, who were not engaged in such harmful practices (ibid.).

#### *SCHOOLS AS SPACES OF INACCESSIBILITY AND UNSAFETY*

Although women from mentioned countries were described as “free” given they do not undergo FGM, unfortunately, their cultures are not immune to other harmful practices, such as early marriages. Aside from cultural norms, poverty also significantly contributes to the decisions of parents to marry daughters early. The lack of livelihood activities and insufficient material support from humanitarian actors often make parents see marrying off a daughter as the only source of income (dowry) on the one, and the way to unburden family budget, on another hand. Furthermore, early marriage is one of the main reasons why girls do not attend school. The pressure is disproportionately higher on adolescent girls who are often forced to get married at an early age (RLP 2015, 28). According to the head of one of Nakivale’s elementary schools, while in the lower grades the difference between boys and girls is not as obvious, the discrepancy is rapidly increasing with higher grades (Head of an elementary school, August 20, 2015). In grades with teenagers, less than third are girls, and one of the main reasons for this is the early marriage (ibid.).

Alice, 14-years-old from Rwanda, was enrolled in the fourth grade of this school. As she noted, she is one of the few girls who stayed in school so long:



*“My father wants me to get educated and then, once we get resettlement and move to Europe, I can work and earn. But here, girls don’t often go to school, and even when they enrol they don’t stay long. Some stay to help at their home, some get married. ... I had the best friend here, and she stopped coming when [her parents] married her. She didn’t want that, and she didn’t know the future broom. I haven’t seen her since, although she lived in my neighbourhood”* (Alice, September 3, 2015).

The girl Alice ran away from Congo and was 13 when she got married. *“It’s normal, it’s how it is in Congo, and how it is here”* (ibid.). Nevertheless, in the context of refuge, the practice that had already been common became even more frequent, given the high level of poverty and lack of resources. *“In this situation, parents see [early marriage] as the solution for their problems”* (Head of elementary school, August 20, 2015).

Another challenge that adds up to the lack of girls in schools is certainly the distance of schools as well, and danger that walking to it might bring to children, particularly girls. Unsafe roads girls have to use to reach schools, unsafe school surroundings itself, and bad infrastructure (such as lack of separation of male and female toilets) contributes to this problem as well (UNHCR 2014). Additional enabling factors are lack of safe spaces where girls could spend time together with their mentors, or spaces for childcare for young mothers. About 80% of girls deal with the described obstacles in accessing education (RLP 2015, 28). Moreover, there are not enough schools in the camp. While the first grades can count up to 100 children per class, only the quarter of that number reach higher grades (Head of the local school, August 20, 2015). This situation, coupled with the lack of financial resources, makes building of new schools a very rare intervention. While some children are lucky enough to have a school in relative proximity to their homes, others must travel up to an hour in order to attend classes. Because of that, some mothers, such as Chance, decide not to send their daughters to school:

*“How can I send my girl to go so far away alone? Boys are just waiting for a girl to appear alone on the road. If I tell you that I am afraid to [walk far to] collect food, how can I send my child that faraway?”* (Chance, September 14, 2015).

As mentioned, one of the issues can also be the organisation of space within the school as well, not adapted to girls' needs. The issue of toilets is one of the major obstacles, as explained by the head of the local school:

*“As you see, our school solved this question: boys go to one toilet, and girls to another. Teachers have their own toilet, also divided for male and female staff. But you will see that this is not the case for all of the schools. Not only girls and boys use the same toilets, but their teachers use the same toilets as them. This is really a big problem because it happened that teachers abuse their students, and it was the toilets where the abuse happened”* (Head of the local school, August 20, 2015).

This is just one of many examples of the way camp's infrastructure and territory reflects in gendered experience of space. In reality, it affects many other aspects of girls and women's everyday life, which will be discussed in the subsequent section.

#### *THE CAMP AS A SPACE OF SEXUAL HARASSMENT, VIOLENCE AND EXPLOITATION*

Gender norms especially affect the status and exposure to risks of violence of those women who live outside of expected and prescribed roles. Women living alone, outside the traditional family entities are particularly vulnerable – their safety without a “male figure” in a household is particularly jeopardized. As such, they are often seen as “easy prey”, which leads to their frequent harassment. Ferhan (36) described this experience:

*“When I came to Nakivale in 2004, I came alone. My life was hard, I didn't know anyone, and there was no Ethiopians around. When I came, they put me in some room, where I was supposed to sleep. In the middle of the night, some men came and start to bang on my door. I didn't know who they were, and they wanted to come in. I was very scared, I was jumping out of the bed and holding the door all night. They were shouting on me, saying that sooner or later they will come, and take what they want from me. The next day, I went to the Somali neighbourhood, where they helped me and accommodated me. Already the next day I found the transport and went to Kampala. ... I went to*

*Kampala where I survived by working in households. I didn't really feel safe there neither, I didn't know the language. I was alone in strangers' homes. I met the father of my children there, and we came back to the camp together. ... Nevertheless, my husband is not with me today, he is afraid to be here from safety reasons. I live here with my children, but I don't sleep. I don't feel safe as a woman living here alone"* (Ferhan, September 22, 2015).

Rosine (41) from Congo, who spent 9 years in the camp, has a similar experience:

*"I came here with my children; my husband was killed. I was working here, cleaning and washing clothes. But men used this because I was alone in their homes. Once, a man attacked me, and I managed to escape. But he kept on coming in front of my house. The church helped me, they built me a house next to them. That was better, and this man stopped coming"* (Rosine, September 14, 2015).

These testimonies not only arise the question of the safety of living in the camp but also point out the necessity of single women to work, which might add an additional layer of risk to their lives. Both Ferhan and Rosine stressed out how uncomfortable they felt to go alone to strangers' houses, but they had to do so since there was no other income to rely on. Having additional responsibility of taking care of their children as well, many girls and women are involved in risky jobs in order to survive, reaching for any available opportunity. Many reports witness on the cheap labour and labour exploitation of refugees, and when it comes to girls and women specifically, sexual exploitation and violence are common problems (RLP 2015, 41). Girls and women are being forced in prostitution, or decide to become sex workers, given the lack of other livelihood opportunities. Many are being abused, or their sexual services are used without being paid for them, but receiving threats to be reported to the authorities instead (ibid.).

*"Women are doing all kinds of things for money"*, says Hibo (45) from Somalia.

*"They don't have a man to work for them, they have children, they don't know the language, they don't know any crafts. It's known who are the [women] who*

*live where, and how much they work for. Men go to them at night*" (Hibo, September 12, 2015).

When asked what she thinks about it, Hibó replied: *"I know it's hard for them. Not only do men humiliate them, but women despise them as well. (...) One of them went by the market the other day, and people were throwing tomatoes and onions on her"* (ibid.). Hibó also mentioned how women involved in prostitution often experience sexual violence because the community stigmatized them as promiscuous. Still, Hibó ended the conversation with the following statement: *"This is what they chose, they couldn't expect any better"* (ibid.). Hibó's testimony leads the question of protection of women in these situations, as well as involvement and responsibility of institutions present in the camp.

Another woman, Senait (36) from Eritrea, shared relevant experience with one of the employees from organisations present in the camp, although she did not want to specify which one.

*"I came to the camp in 2009 with my son. There were not many Eritreans back then, and no one was really paying attention to us. I was trying to find the job, but no one wanted me. I have a fine arts diploma, also a diploma of an accountant; back home, I was even working with electronics. (...) The biggest challenge I had here was that I couldn't work, and it's hard to survive and secure for your child's future. The food here is not good for the children and is not enough for the whole month"* (Senait, September 22, 2015).

Then, she recounts, an employee from a humanitarian organisation visited her.

*"He came and introduced himself, he said he heard about my situation, and he wanted to help. He said that he and his colleagues always need a woman in the household. He said that the help includes the washing of clothes and cleaning, and some other stuff. I agreed because the money would have helped me a lot. He also said that sometimes I would receive the food and clothes from their supplies"* (ibid.).

Senait went to the worker she was assigned to and mainly washed clothes while he was away. Once, the worker asked her to come home in the evening for another job. Senait got scared and turned to a man who offered her the job initially.

*“I asked why should I go there at night when I can do everything during the day. He laughed at me and said ‘you can’t make money only by washing clothes’. When I asked how else should I earn, he replied ‘as a woman – he is alone, you are alone, go listen to him, you don’t have a husband anyway’. I was so scared; I never went to that man again. And this other man, he visited me and yelled that I walked away, telling me I won’t receive a shilling for my work. He said I am only doing what’s easy for me, instead of thinking how will I feed my child. He said he wanted to help, but there is nothing he could do for me anymore” (ibid).*

Women living alone are seen both as non-binding to the expected gender norms, and an “easy target” for assault. In cases where they also take care of their children and are the only breadwinners in the family, protection threats can further increase as they are forced to provide livelihoods in any possible ways. It is clear that aside from being a refugee and a woman, being alone (or female head of household) only multiplies the hardships these women deal with. However, there are many other aspects of one’s situation and social location that can exacerbate life and safety in the refugee camp, and that is why it is important to shed some light on multiple discrimination and intersectional experiences of violence of this group, as well.

#### *INTERSECTIONAL VIOLENCE AND EXCLUSION: GENDER, CLASS, NATIONALITY, SEXUALITY, ABILITY*

The question of intersectionality is another crucial aspect of understanding the position of women in the context of migration. To begin with, this population is dealing with two aspects of marginalisation and their interaction: being female, and being a refugee. Nevertheless, further multiplications of social locations that lead to increased discrimination and high levels of vulnerability and violence exposure are quite common in the camp as well. Re-

ligious, national, ethnical, sexual and other social locations – all of these take part in the dynamic interplay and contribute to a hard situation of girls and women in the camp, their stigmatization, and the consequent violence threat.

### *Spaces of Social Exclusion*

Rashiido (24) from Somalia, shared her experience of living in the camp for eight years, illustrating a case of multiple discrimination. Rashiido explained that she came to the camp alone, as a young girl – her parents were killed in Somalia. One family brought her with them to Nakivale, and she lived with them for some time. As she belonged to the lowest social strata in Somalia, this family accepted her as a maid. She explained how, back in Somalia, she would only spend time with people from her own social status, she did not mix with people from different classes. This harsh division was translated into her new home in Nakivale.

*“[The family that took me with them to Nakivale] had children of my age, but they didn’t think of me as the part of the family. Sometimes they didn’t even give me the food, but they would sell the food I was receiving and earn money instead”* (Rashiido, September 13, 2015).

After a couple of years, the family left Nakivale leaving Rashiido behind. As she was worried about her safety and survival, she agreed to serve another family, although she knew that the man she would be working for was violent.

*“He wasn’t beating me, but he was often yelling at me, telling me how dirty I am because of my class. (...) He had a son, and he and I fell in love. We loved each other very much and decided to get married. One day, his father saw us together and beat me. He kicked me out in front of everyone, and shouted I was a prostitute, a scum, and that my class is not for his family, they kicked me out of their house, and I was left alone again”* (ibid.).

Rashiido said that by the time she got used to insults from people on account of her class, which resulted in her not having any friends in the camp, but being always alone instead.

*“I isolated myself because I am the lowest cast of society. And they isolated me as well. I was isolated, insulted, detested, just because I belong to the lower class. I don’t even know what is love, and I think that if I love someone, I cannot have him. Or, if someone loves me, I think I’m not worth it. (...) Because of tribalism, sectarianism, I am rejected, and not welcome to anyone. At night I can’t sleep and I am always half-awake, worrying that someone might rape me – because if they do, no one would care. This happens to the people from the lower class here – they are attacked, but there is no justice for them” (ibid.).*

When asked if she ever experienced any kind of harassment, or if she asked for the support from the camp authorities, Rashiido said:

*“Once I asked for help. I was going from one house to another, and the group of young men attacked me. I went to the local authorities’ office, and nothing happened. I went to [one organisation], and nothing happened. I went to [second organisation] and nothing happened. I didn’t try after that” (ibid.).*

Given this experience with local institutions, Rashiido believed that the reason for their hesitation to help her is also her class. As she felt endangered both from the members of her community, and the camp authorities as well, she spent all of her time indoors, in the house of the new family she was serving. As she explained, she goes outside only when it is necessary to visit institutions regarding her asylum and resettlement claim. In practice, it happens every several months.

### *Spaces of Heteronormative Violence*

Sexual identity is another category that can significantly contribute to marginalisation – not only on the level of local, refugee community. This can be an issue on the state level, that is, the state’s institutions present in the camp, as belonging to the LGBT community can be legally punishable in Uganda. In such complex and repressive system – legal and social – refugees that fled their countries because of the persecution based on their sexual orientation, are in a particularly vulnerable position. They can experience many obstacles in exercising their rights to asylum or resettlement, fearing

to reveal their sexual identity to local authorities and organisations. Moreover, stigma and violence in the camp they experience as LGBT members are alarming. A Congolese woman, Divine (28), described this situation. Divine spent five years in Nakivale, where she fled from Congo because of violence she was suffering as a lesbian.

*“As a lesbian, I don’t feel safe here. I don’t know whom to ask for my case, and I am afraid of possible reactions. They don’t want us here, and I feel ashamed to go and ask for my case. (...) Last year, the Ugandan president said that he will arrest all the gays and lesbians in Uganda, and when he said that, a lot of them went to jail. When I went to the police, when I needed protection, they told me ‘you are not even allowed to be in this country, and if you come again we will arrest you’. Since then, I am afraid even to go and ask for my case, because I’m afraid I will be kicked out of here. So, when someone attacks me, I cannot go to the police. Because when you see a policeman here, you see the state in fact”* (Divine, September 17, 2015).

On the other hand, Divine described the issues with the community and neighbours as well.

*“I came here, and a woman let me live with her and her children. I was there for some time, but then gossiping started. Somebody told her I am a lesbian. She threw me out of her house immediately. No one else wanted to house me. (...) Also, when they were choosing the community leader deputy, I put myself as a candidate, but everyone was protesting, and saying ‘how can a lesbian lead the community’. They threw rocks on my home afterwards”* (ibid.).

Conversation with Divine touched upon sexual violence she had survived and was maybe still surviving. She explained that she survived “corrective rape” by the militia members in Congo and that she came to Uganda pregnant. However, she was living with three children in Nakivale, of which two were born well after she arrived in the camp. Although she was not explicit about surviving the rape in the camp, Divine did stress out that she had a similar experience in Nakivale as in Congo.



*“[‘Corrective rape’] they practice in Congo, is not much different than what they do here. To them, the fact you are a lesbian means they can and should [rape you]. And who to ask for help if the police think that as well?” (ibid.).*

### *Exclusions from Spaces of Belonging*

Different nationalities and ethnicities of refugee women can also play a role when it comes to the risk of violence they are exposed to. In the camp, the quarters or villages are usually inhabited by the people of the same origin which can prevent clashes occurring. However, sometimes, when people from different backgrounds get married, one of them – usually a woman – needs to move in the neighbourhood of their partner. Sometimes, the sole fact that her identity is different from her neighbours’ can cause a problem. Other times, this identity bears specific political and historical significance which radically heightens exposure to risks of violence.

Raissa (28) from Rwanda, experienced such a problem. She got married to a man from Congo, and she lived in the Congolese quarter where she was not accepted by the community. *“The problem is with what happened to Rwanda, and then Congo”*, she explained, referring to the Rwandan genocide and its consequences (Raissa, September, 15, 2015).

*“I am a Hutu. After the genocide, all the Hutu people were persecuted from Rwanda. Most of them went to Congo, and among them were those who killed in Rwanda. They started to make problems in Congo as well, amongst other things to rape many women” (ibid.).*

According to Raissa, because of the way Hutu extremist militia treated women in Congo (which caused many to flee to Uganda), the local community believed that men from Congo in the camp should not treat Hutu women any better. As she says, many times she heard people calling the community to lynch her and show her *“what Congolese women survived”* (ibid.). That is why she moved to Somali quarter with her husband, where they became isolated but safe.

*“I still fear to go to the quarters where [Congolese] live. Do you know what is ‘panga’? Machete? They were chasing me with it once and cut my hand [she showed scars]. I thought they would abduct me. ... They will always chase me. They told me they would never leave me alone. They told me ‘one day [your husband] won’t be home, and then we will come’” (ibid.).*

In all of these testimonies, it is clear to which extent women’s intersectional experiences of exclusion intensify the vulnerability of the women in the camp, exposing them, as a rule, to physical and sexual violence. Multiplying social locations only heightens the marginalisation of those already particularly unsafe in the camp – refugee women. Moreover, there is yet another factor that significantly contributes to the lack of safety in the camp that both Rashiido and Raissa touched upon with their testimonies: the gendered experience of space of the refugee camp.

### *Spaces of Immobility*

Space, precisely the gendered experience of it, is in many ways connected with the gender-based violence in the context of a refugee camp. For example, girls and women are often ambushed when going to collect woods and water in faraway places. Because of the fear of being attacked, many women do not feel comfortable using toilets and showers, especially at night. As mentioned, children – especially girls – can be in danger when walking to school, or when they are left alone while their mothers are collecting water and other supplies (Estevas and Cumming 2016, 37).

The infrastructure of camps does not make this situation easier for women: only 25 from 49 (51%) of refugee camps complied with standards and provided an average of 20 litres per day per person (UNHCR 2014, 60). On the other hand, only 18 of 49 (37%) camps apply minimal standards and provide toilets and access to water not further than 200 meters to at least 80% of households (ibid., 61). In the case of Uganda, these standards are provided for only 43% households – which, although presents more than the global average, is far from satisfying (Bruijn 2009, 28). Many pieces of research confirmed the direct link between the lack of adequate access to water and sexual violence (Winter and Barchi 2015; Sommer & Caruso 2015; Sahoo et al. 2015;

Arnold et al. 2010, etc.). Besides, other aspects of a camp's infrastructure can contribute to GBV as well – poor lighting, placement and lack of separation of male and female toilets, lack of security or police, etc.

One of the women who spoke on the way that collecting supplies affects her life was Habsamaan (43) from Somalia.

*“I am here with my children. They are young, and I need to cook and clean for them. Do you know how little water we are getting? Thirteen litres per day. When I came it was fifteen, even that was not enough. How can I wash, cook, feed? ... Behind our village, there is a lake, and men take water there when they make bricks for building their houses. But you have to walk there for about an hour. And that's the road where there are no houses – only you. You hope it's only you. When something happens there, there's no help for you, you don't have where to hide, you don't have whom to call”* (Habsamaan, September 15, 2015).

When asked if she ever had some bad experiences there, she replied:

*“I went there a couple of times, and it was very hard. It was hard to walk so far away and then carry all that water, and I have no money to pay someone to drive me. I was always going during the day and trying to go in a group, not alone. But once I went there alone, and the group of men ambushed at the lake. They were calling me, provoking me, pulled my dress, told me to take it off. Luckily, one of them knew my late husband, so he took them away. God knows what would have happened if he hadn't”* (ibid.).

Chance (53) from Congo shared a similar story:

*“They give us some food to eat, for example, beans and mays. But we don't have wood for preparing that food. We need to eat at least once a day! Some people even sell woods here, but I can't afford that. I can only find them in the bush, and everyone knows what happens to women there. (...) Even men are afraid to go there alone, so they don't get kidnapped, or their woods get stolen from them. And God knows how many women are raped there”* (Chance, September 14, 2015).

This is recognised as a big problem by the camp management as well. A local employee explained that there are some programs that provided the charcoal and gas for the cooking stoves, but this is not enough for all of the refugees (A local employee, September 16, 2015.). As he explained “*we have a big problem with the case of violence against women and children who collect firewood. We are aware that many women exchange sex for different supplies, including firewood*” (ibid.).

On the other hand, Suleekho (45), a woman who escaped from Somalia to Uganda 20 years ago, explained that the issue of the relation between security and space is not only related to going to faraway places. Being a person with a disability – impaired hearing and limited mobility – moving through the camp’s space was particularly precarious for her.

*“When I was in Somalia, a bomb exploded on my roof and left me almost completely deaf. I can’t hear nor speak well. I walk slower because I have a piece of metal in my leg. The only healthy thing I have are my eyes. And here, in Somali quarter, the roads are small and narrow – between houses, around houses, no one can see you. As soon as night starts to fall, nothing is visible. The other women will at least hear if someone is behind them. Although no woman goes out at night, we know it’s not safe”* (Suleekho, September 13, 2015).

Presented examples are clearly the consequence of inadequate design and infrastructure of the camp. Although it is clear that interventions such as providing water or basic supplies would directly influence on decreasing of GBV, these are not happening – mainly because of finance issues. Coupled with other challenges described by women living in Nakivale, such experiences of space only add to heightening the risk of exposure to violence and limiting the ability to move freely and safely.

## CONCLUSION

Gender shapes the experience of migration and life in the refugee camp in many ways. As the testimonies in this paper showed, gendered experience of such precarious life for women can often relate to gender-based violence.

Experiences presented in this paper showed how societal dimensions of gender transform over geographies – how the gender roles change, how much more suppressive cultures might become in order to protect existing power dynamics in the family, while some harmful practices, such as female genital mutilation, continue to live outside of its geographical origins in order to preserve (patriarchal) cultures. The testimonies also showed how social location affects already disadvantaged women, their right to work, socialize, participate in public life, and finally, their bodily integrity and safety. A single woman may become an easy target even for humanitarian workers; lower social strata might be invisible to their own community members and attacked with impunity; lesbians not only fear from social stigma but from discriminatory state; women of ethnic minority might be punished because of the political history they are not responsible for, etc. Finally, the female embodied experience of the camp's space clearly unmasks "apparent naturalness of space and gender" by illustrating series of scenarios in which, because of the experience of space, the female body can get violated. The space of the camp becomes everything but "the static stage" for those who cannot move freely in it, or who put their bodies at risk every time when they go to collect woods, water, or other supplies necessary for survival.

What this paper aimed to do was not only to map these issues but to introduce refugee women as narrators of their own stories, with an effort to avoid the trap of speaking on behalf of them – a tendency some authors correlated with colonialist mentality. For this research, the primary motivation for that was to unravel and better understand the issues they are dealing with, with the hope that can inform better response in the field. However, the "colonial mentality" in migration studies and humanitarian work remains a more extensive field to explore, not necessary in relation to the primary topic of this paper – GBV. Aside from the question *Where are the voices of refugee women* in academia, there is also a question of *Who speaks in their name?* Where do these authors come from? Is it possible that countries with extensive experience in migration management, e.g. Sub Saharan counters, produce so few experts, or is it that their contribution is not heard? Finally, who occupies the highest positions in the humanitarian hierarchy, and who is globally thought of as a *universal humanitarian subject* (and who is an *object?*). While a humanitarian expert is imagined as the citizen of the

Global North, humanitarian interventions continue to reproduce the image of the Global South as the population always in need of help (Christie 2015, 42). In the aforementioned paper, Hyndman even spoke of humanitarian work as “colonialism of compassion” (Hyndman 2000, xvi). While the efforts and achievements of humanitarian efforts, and fast-growing GBV field within it, should by no means be understated, the power relations in them should definitely attract more attention in the future practice.

Going back to the main subject of this paper, GBV, one should keep in mind that these testimonies are just a fraction of the Nakivale’s reality – stories of 16 women that live with almost 100,000 people in this refugee settlement. Furthermore, these experiences are not only limited to Nakivale, nor Uganda, nor Africa. The problem is omnipresent throughout the world’s refugee camps, informal refugee settlements, and to an extent, asylum and reception centres as well. And although it is being increasingly recognized in the humanitarian system, the problem of GBV is still far from being adequately and effectively addressed. Testimonies presented in this study highlighted many forms of violence and gender inequality caused by omissions of humanitarian actors – no monitoring of equal reception and distribution of food rations at the household level, lack of access to water and firewood, inadequate latrines and lighting, unevenly dispersed schools, sexual exploitation and abuse incidents and lack of accessible complaint mechanisms, to mention few examples. It is because of this insensitivity in planning and implementation of services that humanitarian system has the piece of responsibility to take as well – as this blindness to gender differences and needs reproduces the patriarchal and heteronormative culture in the refugee camps, that in turn significantly contributes to creating a fruitful arena for emerging of GBV.

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## Rod i izbeglištvo: životi, prostori i svakodnevna iskustva žena u izbegličkom kampu Nakivale u Ugandi

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Nezavisna istraživačica

**Sažetak:** Iako je cela izbeglička zajednica pogođena problemom nestabilnosti i nedostatka bezbednosti, žene su posebno vulnerabilne u situacijama izbeglištva. Tokom celog migracijskog puta, od ratom ili nepogodom pogođenih zemalja njihovog porekla, preko putovanja, do zemalja destinacije, one su u disproportionalno većem riziku od opasnosti, pogotovo od rodno zasnovanog nasilja. Ovo uključuje i izbegličke kampove, gde su uznemiravanje, silovanje, zlostavljanje i eksploatacija svakodnevne pojave u životima izbeglica u smeštenih njemu. Ovaj tekst će se fokusirati na jedan od tih kampova – izbeglički kamp Nakivale u Ugandi.

Članak koristi teorijske okvire feminističke geografije kako bi sagledao rodno određeno iskustvo života u izbegličkom kampu i promatrao načine na koje rod oblikuje žensko iskustvo prostora, mobilnosti, promene okoline i kultura, odnosa u porodici itd. u njemu. Povrh toga, kroz same glasove žena izbeglica, tekst ima za cilj da prikaže kako rod upleten sa brojnim drugim identitetima može dodatno marginalizovati žene izbeglice i ugroziti njihovu bezbednost u kampu.

**Ključne reči:** žene izbeglice, rodno zasnovano nasilje, izbeglički kamp, Uganda, intersekcionalnost, feministička geografija