1 | *Introduction*

"Being beaten like a drum"—with this comparison, a number of women and men[1] who had escaped the conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DR Congo) and now lived in Uganda's refugee camp Kyaka II would describe the violence to which women especially but also others are exposed in the camp. For my research into gender, violence, humanitarianism, and refugees' encampment, this phrase would become a synonym for the gender-based violence in this camp in Uganda as it signifies so succinctly the intensity of the risks refugees feared and experienced there; risks that made their lives difficult.

How is it possible though that violence like this occurs in such sites of humanitarian protection? After all, camps like Kyaka II constitute purposefully established places for refugee accommodation, protection, and assistance, as well as for government control over refugees until one of the three durable solutions[2] is found. As in most camps, humanitarian and government agencies run them, provide access to aid and services, and retain decision-making functions (see Turner 2010; Agier 2011; McConnachie 2014; Krause 2018b). The paradox arising from accounts of gender-based violence in camps like Kyaka II rests in the contradiction not only of these sites serving as humanitarian shelters but also of forced migration per se. Refugees have fled insecurities in countries of origin in search of finding safety, security, and livelihoods in another region or country but instead continue to face challenges there. Most of the inhabitants of Kyaka II had escaped a broad spectrum of violence due to the conflicts in the Kivu regions of DR Congo—tensions that have lasted more than 30 years now and that are known for the intensity of sexual violence (see Autesserre

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[1] The cited empirical data was collected during research in Uganda's refugee camp Kyaka II; see discussion 2 with female refugees, March 12, 2014, Base Camp; discussion with male refugees, March 13, 2014, Base Camp.

[2] These are voluntary repatriation to the country of origin, resettlement to a safe third country, or local integration in a country of asylum.

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2010; Eriksson Baaz and Stern 2013a). Most refugees I spoke with had been in Uganda—and in fact encamped—for more than a decade when our paths crossed; two men were even in camps since the 1960s. Despite their access to aid in the camp, they remained in difficult positions due to risks, restrictions, uncertainties—and not least due to gender-based violence.

Gender, Violence, Displacement, Protection, and Coping

Dilemmas associated with gender-based violence are limited neither to contemporary times nor regionally to this one refugee camp in Uganda. Yet that gender-based violence is no longer a trivialized but now a widely discussed phenomenon is not least the achievement of earlier work by feminist scholars and activists. In the 1980s and 1990s, scholars slowly yet increasingly adopted feminist perspectives, attended to encounters of displaced women especially, and shed light on the gender-specific threats that triggered their decisions to flee countries of origin, as well as complicated their lives in ones of asylum (see, e.g., Indra 1987; Greatbatch 1989; Ljungdell 1989; Ferris 1990; Friedman 1992). A growing body of research continues to illustrate risks of gender-based violence in refugee situations all over the world, focusing especially on women (for literature reviews, see Buckley-Zistel et al. 2014; Vu et al. 2014; Araujo et al. 2019). Drawing on and seeking to contribute to these debates, this book examines the conditions in Kyaka II, and with it the risks of gender-based violence there—yet not limited to women.

Of course, the research debates over the past decades were accompanied by reflections on what 'gender' actually means. In the past, gender was mainly explained as concerning related social roles and differentiated from biological sex. The separation of gender and sex was soon criticized, among other places, in doing gender approaches (West and Zimmerman 1987), as the distinction of the biological from the social fails to recognize that the broad conception of what is even perceived as 'biological' directly depends on what is socially constructed as such. In line with this, Indra emphasized already two decades ago that gender constitutes "a key relational dimension of human activity and thought" (1999a: 2). Ensuing approaches assume correspondingly that gender includes social, cultural, political, biological, and other components of various groups, ones that can

dynamically change over time and across contexts (see, e.g., Harrison 2006; Villa 2019). In this book, gender is thus not understood as a static condition but as the interaction of various physical and social factors in a broad sense. This includes the fundamental relevance of social notions and constellations and the production of power relations, along with socially ascribed yet individually perceived, performed, and contested positioning. As a socio-structural dimension, gender does not simply occur in a vacuum—be it a refugee camp or other setting—but is socially constructed, relational, changeable and variable, context-dependent, as well as influenced by and influential for experiences of individuals and groups.

Feminist research and activism has furthermore disclosed the 'gendered nature' of violence within as well as beyond times of displacement. Respective debates about violence related to gender, and more specifically against women, have demonstrated varying tendencies and focus areas regarding different types of violence over the past few decades, including sexual abuse, wife battering or beating, and discrimination. These debates have contributed to extensive reflection on and better understandings of gender-specific causes and effects of violence not only in public spaces but also in private ones. Such attacks and threats have in common that they are inherently intertwined with individuals' gender and the respective ascriptions, which is thus not limited to women; nevertheless, research shows that women are often affected (for recent comprehensive volumes, see Brown and Walklate 2012; Lombard 2018; Shepherd 2019). The gendered character of violence is, consequently, at the core of this book. For its exploration in Kyaka II, the focus is on 'gender-based violence' broadly understood as harmful acts of force committed against a person on the grounds of gender and gender-related attributions. This resonates with current international approaches (IASC 2015: 5). As a general framework, Galtung's (2010, 2004, 1990, 1969) concept of violence is used, which distinguishes between direct, structural, and cultural types thereof. The book's theoretical underpinnings are complemented by a gender-sensitive conceptualization following Confortini (2006), as discussed in Chapter 2.

By examining and making public the life conditions that many women experience in displacement, feminist studies and activism have also increased awareness among political and humanitarian actors. This has brought about changes in the way international refugee law

is interpreted and humanitarian protection realized (Edwards 2010; Martin 2017). With a focus on protection and assistance, political and humanitarian agencies—most notably, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)—initially considered gender-related aspects insufficiently but have moved toward delivering specific measures for women. UNHCR's Executive Committee stressed in its first conclusion on *Refugee Women and International Protection* of 1985 the need for the particular protection of women due to their "vulnerable situation which frequently exposes them to physical violence, sexual abuse, and discrimination" (UNHCR ExCom 1985: para. d). This was followed by further conclusions and recommendations (UNHCR ExCom 1988, 1989, 1990, 2006). In 1990, UNHCR published the *Policy on Refugee Women* as well as its guidelines in the following year, which were revised in 2008 (UNHCR 1990, 1991, 2008a). Additional policies and strategies were issued, and they set global standards for improving protection and assistance for women and reducing the risks of gender-based violence (see, e.g., UNHCR 1997a, 2001c, 2001b, 2003b, 2011b). In recent years, UNHCR increasingly also considers the roles of men, seeking their protection and involvement in actions against gender-based violence (see UNHCR and RLP 2012). Notwithstanding these developments, the findings from Kyaka II as well as the above-noted studies exemplify that risks especially for women in camps remain prevalent worldwide, and therefore constitute a great and ongoing challenge for those uprooted.

However, although gender-based violence without doubt constitutes a grave and horrific issue for many women in refugee situations, singular focus on them alone is not sufficient to understand its occurrence; doing so might even have unintended negative consequences (see Davies and True 2015; Ozcurumez et al. 2020). Only addressing women's suffering of such violence risks portraying them as inherently helpless and passive victims, politically innocent, and devoid of agency. Binary categorizations of female 'vulnerability' and masculine 'forcefulness,' of the "victim-women and perpetrator-men" (Krause 2017c: 80, my translation), may be produced, somewhat rendering women's vulnerabilities 'normal' and them 'ordinary victims.' Such bias carries the danger of ignoring how women can also be among those perpetrating violence—an issue thus far insufficiently addressed in Forced Migration and Refugee Studies but increasingly noted in other fields such as Peace and Conflict Studies (see Moser and Clark 2001; Coulter

2008; MacKenzie 2012). Moreover, this bias threatens neglect of the fact that risks and needs also exist for those who do not fit neatly within these categorizations, men especially (Jaji 2009a; Kabachnik et al. 2013; Schulz 2018a; Turner 2019). Yet, men are also exposed to gender-specific forms of violence in refugee situations and beyond (Henry et al. 2013: 9–20; Dolan 2014, 2017; Janmyr 2017; Chynoweth 2017). I investigate these critical nuances by means of gender-sensitive perspectives and drawing on but also going beyond current research debates.

Moreover, honing in on this violence per se could entail paying little attention to the other difficulties regularly faced within refugee camps, which is not my intention. Limited access to their rights, uncertainties of various kinds, insufficient livelihoods and services, structural restrictions, and top-down decision-making by humanitarian and political actors are just some of the many significant issues that often complicate the lives of those inhabiting such sites—and these affect the women and men in gender-specific ways. Due to camp conditions and disruptions of social structures as a result of flight, studies note that women have to take on additional responsibilities in camps, which can be overwhelming or empowering for them (Martin 2004: 15; Freedman 2015a: 34ff) —or it may only be portrayed as 'empowering,' as Fiddian-Qasmiyeh (2014a) critically discusses in her book on Sahrawi women. Moreover, men might experience a loss of their leading social status due to the limitations encountered in camps (Turner 1999; Lukunka 2011). Contributing to these debates, a key aspect of this book lies in its exploring of how humanitarian structures are realized in the camp, how the women and men perceive these, as well as how gender relations change. It will be shown that neither of the issues and their effects can actually be seen as separate cases because they are inherently connected.

Yet a focus on violence and difficulties in camps can produce a victimizing notion of refugees. Despite—as well as due to—the problems faced, the 'camp population' do not passively submit to the conditions at hand, merely give in and obey imposed regulations and restrictions, or just wait for aid to be handed to them. In stark contrast, they practice agency. Research increasingly reflects how refugees cope with issues through individual and collective strategies, and engage socially, economically, politically, and culturally in camps. They build lives and homes, create livelihoods, resist limitations, make their voices

heard, and stand up to violence and other forms of wrongdoing (see Horst 2006; Jansen 2011; Oka 2014; Doná 2015; Erdener 2017)—something the practices of refugees in Kyaka II[3] also represent. By not only reflecting on the various issues that refugees face while living in the camp but also placing emphasis on addressing the practices that they employ to deal with, overcome, reject, and navigate the difficult camp landscape, the book runs counter to the victimizing notion of refugees, shedding light, instead, on their agency and coping strategies.

I therefore seek to take a broad perspective on refugees' lives in encampment throughout this book, in order to explore the effects of and practices in refugee camps. Based on a large body of original empirical insights gathered through an in-depth, micro-level case study of Kyaka II conducted in Uganda in 2014, the book provides nuanced accounts regarding four main interrelated subject areas, each addressed in its own respective chapter: the forms, scopes, and conditions of gender-based violence; the structures of humanitarian aid, and their influence on the women and men concerned as well as on the prevalence of violence; changing gender roles and relations among the women and men; and the strategies to cope with risks and challenging conditions in the camp. For the analyses hereof, I employ critical and gender-sensitive perspectives as well as draw on and seek to contribute to international debates within Forced Migration and Refugee Studies —particularly its gender literature.

Whereas the book's main interest lies in women's views, experiences, and practices within the camp, I believe that they cannot be gauged and depicted without taking into account those of the other people around them—as these are influential too. Following Indra's (1999a: 2) early emphasis on gender as a relational dimension, this study therefore goes beyond singular focus on women to also continuously consider the intertwined positioning of women and men, girls and boys, and aid workers. An unfortunate lacuna is the perspectives of LGBTIQ+ people. At the time of research, the 'anti-homosexuality bill' had just been enacted in Uganda—criminalizing same-sex relations. Its impact was far-reaching, with wide-ranging political debates and media coverage—as well as public violence—ensuing (Nyanzi and Karamagi 2015; Zomorodi 2016). Although Kyaka II is situated in a remote

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[3] See also the important research by Clark-Kazak (2010a, 2010b, 2011, 2014) carried out with youth in Kyaka II.

region, political debates and subsequent tensions were also visible in the camp. After careful assessment of local conditions, I decided to refrain from proactively trying to work with LGBTIQ+ people—and in fact also potential male victims of violence, as they are often labeled 'homosexual'—to ensure the safety of research participants. Their security was more important than any data that might have been collected.

In this book, emphasis is placed on giving as much room as possible to the 'voices' of the women and men who took part in the research. To this end, I present many quotes by those involved to analyze and discuss their perspectives, experiences, worries, and hopes, and essentially their strength, despite as well as due to their vulnerabilities. This chosen wording of these people having 'strength' and 'vulnerabilities' is not meant to be in any way patronizing; researching and writing about sensitive subjects such as gender-based violence and humanitarian situations without victimizing those affected or trivializing and normalizing acts of brutality is a delicate balancing act, one that I strive to achieve throughout and address in more detail below.

Refugees in Uganda

Since independence from British rule in 1962, the Republic of Uganda has been known to host a relatively large number of refugees—with the figure growing further in recent years. Located in sub-Saharan Africa and specifically the Great Lakes Region, an area that experienced enduring violent conflicts in the course of the second half of the twentieth century, many people have sought refuge in Uganda. However, displacement has also occurred within the country, not least due to the war between the Government of Uganda and the Lord's Resistance Army occurring from the mid-1980s onward and lasting for more than twenty years. It would contribute to more than 1.6 million people being internally displaced in northern Uganda (see Dolan 2009).

Refugees in Uganda have mainly come from neighboring countries such as DR Congo, South Sudan, Burundi, and Rwanda, but also from Ethiopia, Somalia, Eritrea, and other states. According to UNHCR statistics, the refugee population there ranged between 190,000 and 260,000 individuals from the mid-1990s until 2005 and decreased to a figure of 135,000 by 2010. Since 2012, the refugee population has

grown once more. At the time of research in 2014, more than 380,000 refugees were in the country (for demographic statistics until 2018, see UNHCR 2020d). The renewal of violent conflicts in South Sudan and DR Congo would lead to an increase in the number of refugees to nearly 1.4 million by early 2020 (UNHCR 2020c). In addition to newly arriving refugees, many in Uganda find themselves in protracted situations,[4] which is also illustrated by the ongoing existence of refugee camps. Some of these were established in the 1980s; Nakivale in western Uganda, indeed, was already set up in the 1950s (Krause 2013: 146–147; Betts et al. 2017b: 109).

Uganda's approach to refugee protection is often considered to be 'progressive' (e.g., Akello 2009; Krause 2013: 147; Vemuru et al. 2016; Betts et al. 2017b: 10). On the one hand, the new Refugee Act was introduced in 2006 and entered into force in 2009, which replaced the prior so-called Control of Alien Refugees Act, Cap. 64 of 1960 (Uganda 2006, 1960). While the latter was criticized for its complex restrictions, including on refugees' freedom of movement (see Kaiser 2005: 354), the new act incorporates a number of revisions. For example, Article 29 presents refugees' rights to own property, engage in agriculture, industry, handicrafts and commerce, establish commercial and industrial companies (according to domestic law), practice a profession according to qualification, and access employment opportunities. The 2006 Refugee Act also notes the right to freedom of movement in its Article 30—which, however, is simultaneously limited in its Article 44. The latter states that refugees have to live in designated places—meaning 'settlements'—and may only leave them with official permission to do so.

On the other hand, refugee protection and assistance in Uganda are not limited to traditional humanitarian relief but rather linked with development cooperation. To this end, policies including the Self-Reliance Strategy (SRS), Development Assistance for Refugee Hosting Areas (DAR), and the recent Refugee and Host Population Empowerment (ReHOPE) scheme have been put in place, aiming to connect rather short-term humanitarian refugee aid with longer-term development initiatives. This approach strives to integrate services delivered to refugees into national structures in order to avoid

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[4] For the official definition of protracted refugee situations, see UNHCR ExCom (2009); see also Chapter 3 in this book.

overlaps, provide nationals with access to these services, and to maintain the structures in question long-term—even after refugees repatriate. Moreover, these policies target the promotion of refugees' empowerment, self-reliance, and more recently resilience, so that they are able to live relatively independent from aid structures—which is mainly sought to be achieved by means of agriculture (see Kaiser 2000, 2005, 2006; Krause 2013, 2016a). For the realization of these aims, the aforementioned 'settlements'—and, more specifically, 'local rural refugee settlements'—are used.

These 'settlements' are located in the northwestern, western, and southwestern regions of Uganda bordering South Sudan, DR Congo, Rwanda, and Tanzania. They operate under the overall supervision of the Office of the Prime Minister (OPM), Government of Uganda, and of UNHCR, while measures of protection and support are implemented by different aid agencies—mainly NGOs. Due to the development orientation of refugee aid, Ugandans who live in the areas of and near such 'settlements' are granted access to some of the related services. Moreover, with its strategic focus on self-reliance, refugees are assigned land for accommodation as well as for agriculture by OPM.

Despite these features, the labeling of such sites as 'refugee settlements' is critical, and thus requires close scrutiny. Approaching the subject semantically, the term 'settlement' signifies a place "where people establish a community" per the Oxford English Dictionary (Stevenson 2010: 476). 'Refugee settlements' would, accordingly, denote a location where refugees are free and able to live among their communities. This is, however, not the case, as refugees of diverse nationalities and backgrounds are not free to dwell there but are rather bound by Ugandan law and governed by humanitarian agencies. Although 'settlements' in Uganda consist of 'village-like setups,' these structures are still planned, artificially established, and earmarked by humanitarian and government agencies specifically as refugee camps. They subsequently present features of setup, structure, and services typical of the refugee camp phenomenon worldwide (see, e.g., Inhetveen 2010; Agier 2011; Turner 2010, 2016a; McConnachie 2014; Krause 2018b).

The problematic and ambivalent nature of these sites' labeling in Uganda is further evident when looking at UNHCR's global trends reports, in which designations for them vary fairly wildly. Whereas the sites were categorized as 'camps/centres' in the reports of 2003, 2004,

2005,2006, and 2009,[5] this changed to 'settlements' in those of 2010 and 2011—then returning to the camp categorization in the one of 2012, by denoting these sites as 'planned/managed camps.' A contradictory modification occurred in the report of 2013 in which most of the sites were suddenly categorized as 'individual accommodations.' This was maintained in subsequent reports up until 2017. The one of 2018 then designated most of the sites 'self-settled camps.'[6] Simultaneously with these changes in nomenclature, other UNHCR documents continued to categorize the sites as 'settlements'[7]—or even identified them as 'camps.'[8]

Renaming these locations 'individual accommodations,' 'self-settled camps,' and ultimately 'settlements' idealizes them, while also masking the fact that they are humanitarian sites of new or protracted encampment. Also obscured by such terminology is—again—the reality that refugees in Uganda are legally obliged to stay there, rather than that happening out of individual choice. In lieu of reproducing 'humanitarian speak' by using 'settlements,' I hence employ the term 'camp' throughout this book.

Kyaka II

In keeping with the above-outlined characteristics of a camp, Kyaka II constitutes a confined space purposely set up for refugee accommodation, protection, and assistance. This site is successor to the previous camp Kyaka, which was established at the end of 1967. Along with 7 other such sites (4 of these 8 camps are still in use as of 2020),[9] Kyaka served to provide assistance to about 68,500 refugees from Rwanda. Then as well as now, these camps maintain an agricultural

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[5] Details are not accessible for the 2007 and 2008 global trends reports (UNHCR 2009b, 2008b).

[6] See the following global trends reports and their respective annexes (UNHCR 2004b: table 11; 2005b: table 11; 2006: table 12; 2007b: table 11; 2010: annex 15; 2011a: annex 15; 2012: annex 15; 2013a: annex 15; 2014c: annex 15; 2015b: annex 16; 2016a: annex 16; 2017b: annex 15; 2018c: annex 16; 2019a: annex 15 and 16).

[7] See as examples (UNHCR 2013b: 1–3; 2014d, 2015a, 2016b, 2017d, 2018b).

[8] See, among other sources, the map created by UNHCR (2015d).

[9] These include "Oruchinga, Nakivale, Kahunge, Kinyara, Rwamwanja, Kyangwali, Kyaka and Ibuga" (UNHCR 1969: para. 150). Of these, Oruchinga, Nakivale, Rwamwanja, and Kyangwali are still operational in 2020.