Strength-based approach in Social Work: Professionals' experiences in working with refugee youth in Nakivale refugee settlement, Uganda

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Makerere University, June 2017

Declaration

I, Ileana-Maria Turda, hereby declare that this dissertation is my original work and has never been submitted, either in whole or in part, to this or any other university for any academic award.

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Abstract

Title: *Strength-based approach in Social Work: Professionals' experiences in working with refugee youth in Nakivale refugee settlement, Uganda*
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The aim of the research was to explore the area of social work practice with refugee youth in Nakivale refugee settlement, Uganda, in relation to the use of strength-based approach. Hence, the focus was on the professionals and their experiences in working with the youth, covering the area of strengths and resources, both personal and those acknowledged in their clients, the guidelines used and their approach towards youth. Moreover, on a deeper sense, I tried to observe how professionals' strengths, values and attitudes are transferred into practice.

The research is constructed around the sensitive contexts of refugee settlements and refugees, with a focus on the youth and children as predominant groups in the overall population of refugees in Uganda. The same applies for Nakivale refugee settlement. Within this context and drawing from social work literature, the strength-based approach has been used as theoretical framework.

The data was collected through qualitative methods, namely, semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions and participatory observations, using ethnography as a research design. The main sample consisted of 25 professionals from 6 organizations active in the settlement, focused on the work with youth on different areas of practice and service provision (HIJRA – Humanitarian Initiative Just Relief Aid, War Child Canada, ARC – American Refugee Committee, FRC – Finnish Refugee Council, Tutapona and Windle Trust Uganda). Therefore a purposeful sampling was used. Further on, the voices of the youth were captured through FGDs to enriched the findings. The biggest limitation is the dimension of professionals in relation with social work, since the field of practice includes different areas connected to social work, humanitarian and social sciences.

The findings show that the strength-based approach is being used by professionals in their practices. Hence, it is reflected through their attitude towards their clients, through their values, motivations and their passion expressed both for work and humanity. They own the necessary strengths, resources and qualities in order to overcome both personal and work related challenges. Professionals are able to recognize the strengths and resources of their clients and promote them. Emphasizes are made on strong and positive attitudes, genuine relationships, faith and spirituality as a resource and the strength encountered in love, hope and dreams.

Reflections made on refugee youth highlight that they are acknowledged as resourceful and resilient. The youth voices are strengthening and confirming the findings. Hence, I conclude that the strength-based approach as a whole is being used by professionals in their practice with the refugees and refugee youth and at a macro level, the aim of self-reliance policies follows the same direction.

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Abbreviations

ARC - American Refugee Committee

DRC – Democratic Republic of Congo

FGD **–** Focus Group Discussion

FRC – Finnish Refugee Council

HIJRA – Humanitarian Initiative Just Relief Aid

NGO – Non-Governmental Organization

OPM – Office of the Prime Minister Uganda

SGBV – Sexual and Gender Based Violence

SRS – Self-Reliance Strategy

UN – United Nations

UNCRC – United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

UNHCR – United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

Chapter One: Introduction

This study sought to explore the area of social work practice in Nakivale refugee settlement in Uganda, in relation to the use of strength-based approach and its applicability in working with refugee youth in the settlement. This was reflected through the practice of professionals both in relation to their personal attitude towards their work, their values and strengths but also in connection to their guidelines based on theories, legal frameworks and approaches required by the profession.

This report is organize into five chapters: introduction; theoretical framework and literature review; methodology; research findings and analysis; final remarks consisting of discussion, conclusions and recommendations.

Motivation and Interest in the Topic

Humans have extraordinary capacities for maintaining and developing their lives, for progressing and redefining the conditions of living despite adversities or atrocities, in ways which help them find a balance in attaining wellbeing. There are several factors which encourage and promote these capacities and have been studied in different forms, such as resilience and strength approaches and they are later found in new theories and practices of social work (Payne, 2014). Since the living environment in what comprise the macro and mezzo level cannot be controlled at all times from the outside, working at a micro level and stimulating inner resources in individuals is an essential first step which can be taken by professionals when we are referring to support, assistance or aid (humanitarian, psychological or social work related).

Hence, the role of practitioners and professionals is fundamental since they are the direct link between the service provision, care, support, policies and legal agendas and those receiving services (Ingleby, 2005). Despite the limitations of the policies, services and resources, the human contact and their attitude while meeting their clients is valuable and has power in acknowledging and stimulating their inner resources.

Having been challenged myself with a strong adverse experience and being able to reflect during the process and afterwards on what was helpful - favorable for change, for promoting wellbeing and regaining the strengths and motivation - represents a point of departure in my interest in going deeper and discovering, exploring and understanding how resilience and strength factors work and how are they used in social work practice. At the same time, the reality of refugees which I came across since the beginning of autumn 2015, represents the second important area of interest and will be the focus of this research.

Hence, the following research has a ground in previous experiences of work and study which took place in two different refugee camps (the Jungle Refugee Camp Calais, France and Tal

Aabbas Refugee Camp, Lebanon), when I first started to link these two areas of interests - the realities of refugees and resilience. These particular experiences helped me to get an overview and first impressions on the realities of the camps, the wellbeing of individuals in these contexts, their vulnerabilities and resources. Despite the refugees' exposure to trauma, adversity, insecurity and instability, it has been fascinating to observe how many resources were available in themselves and their communities and to be aware of the driving forces which are rebuilding them and restoring their dignity.

Within these conditions, I believe that there is a constant need in defining and bringing up what is *human* in *the inhuman*, given the contexts of refugee camps and refugee realities. Moreover, as Saleebey (2012, p. 7) mentions, resilience has always been there as a source for maintaining life, encouraging us to use hope and belief as central points to liberation and perhaps to encounter "new ways of being and doing."

Starting from here, I developed the core motivation for this research, on how strength-based approach is acknowledged and used while addressing refugees and displaced populations and how these theories are able to influence the future practice of social work.

Background

The realities of war, persecution, conflict, violence, extreme poverty and the lack of a dignified life require a deeper understanding, especially on how they affect and influence individuals and their newly encountered contexts of life – as the refugee camps. As Agier (2008, p. 6) emphasizes, it is important to understand and make sense of what is actually lived by refugees, of "the ambiguity and defilement of identities formed in and through violence, without falling into discourses of accusation and suspicion", which are likely to influence the practice and the way refugees are seen from a macro level.

The anthropologist Agier (2011) brings new angles of looking at refugees from a very critical point of view, defining them as *undesirable populations*, based on deep analysis of geo-political, humanitarian and contextual dimensions. The reality of life in refugee camps is far from what would be appropriate in terms of human rights, decency and dignity in the way resources are accessed, the lack of proper living conditions, security, rights and power (Crisp & Jacobsen, 1998). On a similar note, Malkki (1995) describes refugee camps as places of *highly unequal space* where people live under control over basic resources essential for supporting human life. In spite of the strive for survival, affirmation and acknowledgment which refugees encounter, studies on resilience have confirmed that humans have the power to overcome damaging or harmful circumstances and continue to have dreams, hopes, ambitions while their empowerment, right to self-determination and dignity are restored (Rutter, 2000; Okitikpi & Aymer, 2003; Meyer, 2006; Masten, 2011).

According to UNHCR statistics (2017), the number of displaced populations reaches 65.6 million across the globe from which 22.5 million represent refugee populations. Uganda hosts an overall number of 1.064.043 refugees and asylum-seekers as it was reported on 1st of February 2017 by UNHCR – presented in Annex 8. The increasing numbers of refugees arriving from

South Sudan, constitutes 68% of the overall population of refugees and asylum seekers in Uganda at the moment. According to UNHCR's last reports (2017), the beginning of the year was marked with an average of 2900 new arrivals daily, which brings Uganda under a humanitarian crisis.

Uganda is being recognized as having progressive and forward-thinking policies, giving refugees and asylum-seekers possibilities of free-movement, encouraging integration within local communities and working for empowerment (UNHCR, 2015). All these are facilitated through the new legislation in place, called *The Refugee Act 2006* and the self-reliance strategy, which was created to enable refugees to attain stability and grow their empowerment.

UNHCR works together with the Ugandan Government through the Office of the Prime Minister (OPM) and several international and local organizations for providing services and facilities, covering areas such as: protection, education, health, food security and nutrition, water and sanitation, shelters, access to energy, community empowerment and self-reliance. The refugee populations are mainly coming from neighboring countries and their movement has been shaped in time by the conflicts and instabilities which took place in their countries of origin. In spite of their refugee status and entitlement to protection they are considered populations under concern since they still experience high risks of abuse, lack of security and basic needs (UNHCR, 2015).

Problem Statement

Given the adverse circumstances refugees have been exposed to and their present living contexts (both psychological, material and political), when it comes to delivery of care and services, the framework professionals drawn from is of extreme importance (Ingleby, 2005). In this sense, the nature of legal guidelines, theories and approaches, values and attitudes which are reflected through the practice of humanitarian aid or social work are expected to be in tune with essential values of human rights, dignity and worth of people. Agier (2011), Malkki (1995) as many others, present objective realities of refugee camps and the aid deliverance as not being always in accordance with the direct respect of human rights. In this sense, abuse of power and power relationships, dependency on aid and limited possibilities for self-sustainability or movement, exploitation and discrimination, are added to the current issues refugees face.

Professionals in the field and those providing services have a high responsibility to maintain a balance between following the guidelines, accomplishing what is expected from them, dealing with limitations on what is possible and further on, their personal expectations and motivations. However, their encounters with the refugee populations at an individual level have already a first impact which is meaningful in regards to support, assistance and the acknowledgment of refugees as individuals worthy of respect and dignity.

I consider that exploring the area of practice in refugee settlements and professionals' experiences while engaging with refugee populations represents an important aspect in relation to social work practice and becomes one of the starting points for the construction of this research. Adding to this, is the use of strength-based approach when referring to the practice of social work and populations exposed to high adversities as refugee populations.

Therefore, this research focused on professionals' work, especially with the youth population, between the age group of 15 and 30 years old. Such population, especially in the first group of age (15-18) is already being brought up earlier into adulthood, even though it is still in the process of psychological development (Wyn & Cahill, 2015). I consider that the exterior factors which are influencing their development and wellbeing in this specific age are highly important, together with the impact and influence professionals (as well as other individuals involved in working with them) have on their lives (Rashid, 2015; Munro, 2008). Moreover, the children and youth represent the highest number among the refugee population, and taken into consideration the recent crisis Uganda is facing at the moment, the work with refugees youth will continue to be a high part of the humanitarian intervention.

Aim and Objectives of the Study

The aim of the study was to explore the experiences professionals have in working with refugees and how their strengths and attitude towards their work and their clients influences the practice. In addition, the study sought to explore how they are promoting the strengths, the growth of empowerment, dignity and worth of people through their practice.

Drawn from the above, the following objectives have emerged:

Objectives:

- To explore the day-to-day experience professionals have while working in the settlement and their interactions with the refugee youth.
- The explore the meaning that the professionals bring to their work and to their experiences lived in the settlement.
- To explore the framework professionals use in terms of guidelines, legislation, theories, approaches and values while working with refugee youth.
- To explore the strengths, values and inner resources owned by professionals and their influence on the practice in respect of their work in the settlement.

I believe these objectives are relevant beside the research itself, because they have a direct impact on the professionals as a way of reflection in respect to their practice, attitudes and motivations, while being required to think about it and share their experiences.

Research Questions

Reflecting on the objectives mentioned above, I was interested in exploring the area of practice of social work and humanitarian aid from the perspective of professionals working in the settlement, focusing on how they give meaning to their work and how their practice is influenced by the strength-based approach.

The main research question that guided this study was:

- How do professionals experience their work in the refugee settlement in relation to the use of the strength-based approach?

The sub-questions are linked and form a background for the main question. Therefore, they are related to each other, reachable and connected with the literature following what Bryman (2012) refers to, in the relation to the criteria of evaluation towards research questions.

Overall, they intend to explore the area of personal experience, practice and discourses connecting the work of professionals with the reality of the context.

Table 1. Objectives and Research Questions

Objectives	Research Sub-Questions
1. To explore the day-to-day experience professionals have while working in the settlement and their interactions with the refugee youth.	• How do professionals experience the work in the settlement? both the professional and personal dimension.
	• How do they feel about their work? And how do they feel in the context of the settlement?
	• How are their interactions with the youth and what are the particularities?
2. The explore the meaning that the professionals bring to their work and to their experiences lived in the settlement.	• What are the meanings professionals give to their work in the settlement and their lived experience?
	• How are these meanings shaped over time when it comes to motivation, satisfaction and progress related to the work?
3. To explore the framework professionals use in terms of guidelines, legislation, theories, approaches and values while working with refugee youth.	• What guidelines do they use while addressing refugees and especially refugee youth? Are there differences in the way they address youth and adults?
	• What theories, approaches, skills and values are most relevant for their context and are being used?
	• How do they acquire the knowledge relevant to their work? – education, practice, life experience, background?
4. To explore the strengths, values and inner resources owned by professionals and their influence on the practice in respect of their work in the settlement.	• What are the strengths and inner resources professionals own?
	• What are their values and personal beliefs especially referring to their work and to those assisted by them?
	• How are all these (strengths, inner resources and values) influencing the practice and their work?

Justification of the Study and Policy Relevance

The necessity for *good practices* in social work while addressing refugees implies integrating theories which enable the focus on the wellbeing of each individual, bringing forward ethical principles of social work and human rights, both in the assessment period and in the intervention at any level. Moreover, defining good practices could bring slightly different views together, as it constitutes a complex base in terms of theories, approaches and perspectives used by professionals in the field of practice. According to the literature, working with refugees implies skills, human and intuitive reasoning, emotional wisdom, ethics, resources and a good supervision beside a good theoretical baggage and knowledge (Potocky-Tripodi, 2002; Munro, 2008; Welborne, 2012).

The study aims to contribute to the social work practice in working with refugee youth and forced migrants, emphasizing on the use of strength-based approach, the power of resilience and their applicability. In this sense, understanding professionals' views on strength-based approaches is essential, in order to develop the area of practice, especially in relation to the guidelines and policies in place. Taking into consideration the experiences of professionals, their strengths and the strengths of their clients would bring a deeper knowledge and awareness of the reality of the place and the way services can be improved.

The use of strength-based approach is highly relevant since it links aspects from the definition of social work, principles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, UNHCR, UNCRC in addressing the dignity and worth of people, both while incorporated in practice and values.

Furthermore, I believe that the use of strength-based approaches is essential and would contribute to the wellbeing, empowerment and in growing the sense of worth of people. Hence, knowing what is already in place and how the practice is done, we enlarge the space for introducing new concepts and develop in a creative and useful way the services and the policies.

Chapter Two: Theoretical Framework and Literature Review

Refugee context: Uganda

The ongoing ethnic conflicts and civil wars in the Sub-Saharan Africa, the dictatorship regimes, the lack of natural resources, environmental changes and increased poverty in some of the regions are causing large courses for forced migration.

According to the *1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees*, a refugee is a person who:

> "has a well-founded fear of persecution because of his/her race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group or political opinion and is outside his/her country of origin and is unable or unwilling to avail him/herself of the protection of that country, or to return there for fear of persecution" (Feller, Khan, Jauemet and Leclerc, 2001, p. 9).

Due to its complexity, the definition in different contexts around the globe has been adjusted in order to capture a more objective sense. Hence, the Organization of African Unity (OAU) adds to the definition the following:

> "any person compelled to leave his/her country owing to external aggression, occupation, foreign domination or events seriously disturbing public order in either part of his country of origin or nationality" (Feller et al., 2001, p. 9).

Despite the definitions, when we come to a human dimension, the reality emphasizes cases of high adversity and atrocities people are victims of, or have been exposed to. As Simich & Andermann (2014) point out, the *label itself* reflects different dimensions and experiences, according to the actors involved in discussion, being differently understood by the refugees themselves, by the organization and legal communities or by nationals. According to Potocky-Tripodi (2002), in a social work context, the practitioner must be accustomed with all the dimensions of the definition, referring to the social science, legal sphere and self-definitions. These definitions are meant to help the practitioner in understanding their clients and the whole context related to support and assistance.

Further on, in trying to understand refugees and their lived experiences, a closer look at the recent situation in Uganda is sufficient in order to get a glimpse of what their reality brings. According to latest report of UHNCR (2017) presenting the situations of the new arrivals from South Sudan in Uganda, a clear picture is shown:

> "Refugees arriving in Uganda, majority of whom are women and children, continue to report general insecurity, limited access to food and basic services, violence, rape, abuse of women and girls, arbitrary detention and indiscriminate killing and destruction of property by armed forces as reasons for fleeing their homes in South Sudan."

As Papadopoulos (2003) and Malkki (1995) argue, one should not ignore or disregard the trauma and the consequences of the adverse nature of other phases refugees go through, this given the

example of the process for asylum recognition and being accommodated to the new context of the settlements.

Therefore, the general answers given by individual nations and the international community are moving according to their legal and humanitarian obligations for assisting refugees (Simich & Andermann, 2014). This is reflected through emergency aid which consists in assistance for basic needs, protection and shelter. After passing through the reception centers, they are allocated to different settlements. The settlements or refugee camps are presented by Agier (2011, p. 53) as "hybrid organisms, conceived originally with no other purpose than of simple survival." Malkki (1995) presents the camps as places which can become deeply dehumanizing environments even if they are intended to be shelters, as they lack consistency of history and politics as whole. Camps are limited spaces, having as main characteristics the spatiality in terms of boundaries and movement, and temporality referring to their temporary character which in many cases becomes permanent (Turner, 2016). Over time, they are transformed and for example in Africa, they become rural settlements or refugee villages. This is the case of Nakivale Refugee Settlement in Uganda which is the focus of this study. Therefore, such settlements become partially permanent where a new way of life is constructed as Agier (2011) highlights, where despite limitations, political and legal exceptionality, a social life which is highly resilient and transformative, emerges.

Verwimp & Maystadt, (2015) emphasize the need for incorporating in the legal perspectives the skills and aptitudes refugees have, in order to promote and enhance resilience, therefore improving their situations and living conditions.

This can be found as well in the case of Uganda, where through *The Refugee Act 2006* and the Self-Reliance Strategy. Refugees are supported for becoming self-sustainable, through the reduction of dependency on humanitarian aid, activating their empowerment and decreasing the financial costs for the host country (Svedberg, 2014). Therefore, SRS represents a new approach which aims to empower refugees through a range of livelihood and community development strategies (Meyer, 2006). As part of the strategy, refugees are allocated a small plot of land where they can build a shelter and are facilitated and encouraged to practice subsistence agriculture (UNHCR, 2004). Nevertheless, when deeper analyzing the SRS, an extensive body of literature criticizes its limitations, as there are substantially remaining tensions between refugee self-reliance and refugee empowerment (Kasier, 2005; Meyer, 2006).

Refugee Youth

According to Verwimp & Maystadt (2015), the vulnerability of refugees in Sub-Saharan Africa is increased by the controlling system - in terms of protection and organization - and by the high numbers and dominance of young children and women among the refugee populations.

Childhood and youth are social constructs, being defined according to their socio-cultural background, political, institutional, geographical, governmental or economic context, therefore having different meanings according to a specific space and time (Wyn & Cahill, 2015). Nevertheless, children and youth are globally viewed as subjects of vulnerability and need of care and protection until reaching the age of 18 (UNCRC). Hence, despite the family context, at

a macro level, the states are meant to ensure basic rights, protection and resources for these populations.

According to the United Nations definition of youth, persons aged between 15 and 24 years old are considered to be part of this category, being used with statistical purposes (retrieved from www.un.org). The definition is relative, giving space and flexibility for different states to adjust it according to their settings, in terms of demographics, economy and socio-cultural aspects. Hence, in Uganda the Department of Youth and Children Affairs, under the Ministry of Gender, Labor and Social Development, defines youth as any person between 18 and 30 years old. Further on, The National Youth Policy, gives a more complex definition:

> "All persons, female or males aged 12 to 30 years undergoing a period of great emotional, physical and psychological changes that require societal support for a safe passage from adolescent to full adulthood."(Youth Policy Press and Society for International Development, 2015, p. 14).

The refugee youth goes under the same definition once in Uganda, and despite the refugee law protection, they are also entitled to the Ugandan constitutions concerning youth protection and development. Moreover, as it is clearly specified through the African Youth Charter, the acknowledgment, protection and promotion of the rights of youth specifies the inclusions of young displaced population and refugees (Youth Policy Press and Society for International Development, 2015).

However, a deeper look on the reality of refugee youth shows limitations in terms of rights and resources available and accessible to them, as part of the large refugee population (Agier, 2011). The effects of forced migration, together with all the lived experience of fear and persecution which children and youth have lived or witnessed, have strong repercussions on their emotional stability and well-being (Hughes, 2014). Moreover, the youth faces problems of adaptation, expression, being exposed to risks in the camps in terms of violence, addictions, delinquent behaviors, instability and disappointment. Nevertheless, if a safe and secure emotional environment is available, they are likely to adjust and regain emotional stability. Moreover, studies have shown their ability to remain bright and rapidly develop new skills (Trowell, 2003). An extensive body of literature highlights the refugee youth resilience and strengths as being highly present and evident in spite of adversity and lived experiences (Hughes, 2014; Simich & Andermann, 2014). However, this is not the case of all the children and youth as there is still ongoing distress and posttraumatic disorders growth among refugee youth (Sleijpen, Boeije, Kleber, & Mooren, 2016). Hence, the role of professionals is crucial in identifying protective factors and what leads to positive adjustment. Overall through the awareness of the strengths individuals hold and their resilient capacities, the process of assistance becomes more effective and positive change and transformation are possible (Potocky-Tripodi, 2002; Thomas, Roberts, Luitel, Upadhaya & Tol, 2011; Payne, 2014; Simich & Andermann, 2014; Rashid, 2015).

Turner (2016) talks about the life in the camps, where people are faced with new structures and have to habituate themselves with new identities and roles, which are likely to become favorable to marginalized groups as youth and women, as the camp reinforces new power structures and relationships. Therefore, the youth represents a powerful and important group to be focused on.

As Kohli (2006) and Sleijpen et al. (2016) highlight, it is less probable that refugee youth have had previous relationships with professionals, aid or social workers, hence the relationships based on the need for closeness, attentiveness and care, as what they have previously experienced through family, friends or other mentors, are unique and need to be articulated in order to contribute to their resilience.

Between the factors of support which professionals need to be attentive to, studies on refugee youth resilience have showed the importance of social support which consists in family, friends and peers, the community and the professionals, followed by acculturation strategies, education, religion and the hope as high sources of strength and resilience (Wyn & Cahill, 2015; Sleijpen et al., 2016).

Overall, the importance of recognizing the interplay between the risks and resilience especially in the context of displacement and youth populations, in order to promote well being is highlighted in the literature (Thomas et al., 2011; Sleijpen et al., 2016).

The African Context of Social Work and Refugees

Even though social work as a profession has a critical role in society, aiming for its development and wellbeing of individuals, it faces several challenges when it comes to its development and recognition in the context of Africa (Hare, 2004; Spitzer, Twikirize & Wairire, 2014).

A number of factors contributed to the development of social work in Africa, starting from the impact of the external powers through colonization, missionary activities, the African mutual aid societies and the responses to the current issues (Chitereka, 2009; Kreitzer, 2012). Therefore, the profession is still developing under some of the mentioned factors.

Even though social work in Africa it is built on Western foundations, it managed to move along and encounter its particular ways in dealing and finding answers which are responding better to the cultural context and reality (Asamoah, 1994). This aspect is referred to in the literature as *indigenous knowledge*, with a great potential in ensuring a better and more suited practice in relation to the reality of the place. Therefore it brings back more freedom and independence in the way the profession is being shaped and built (Hare, 2004; Noble, Henrickson, Staniforth, Fouché, & O'Brien, 2011; Rankopo & Osei-Hwedie, 2011). As highlighted by Rankopo & Osei-Hwedie (2011) and Noble et al. (2011), the relevance of social work in a specific context has to be linked with its cultural identity in order for social work practice and education to create its own way towards social work indigenization. Hence, these aspects have been noted and taken into consideration, being encountered on a broad scale in the definition of social work.

Since the welfare systems in most of the African countries are undeveloped and not completely mature, lacking sufficient funds for responding to the social issues, it gives space for the development of the NGO area, which currently plays an important role. Therefore, social workers are likely to be employed by NGOs and they find themselves under different working cultures, criteria of defining the profession and their roles (Chitereka, 2009; Kreitzer, 2012,

Chisala, 2015). For that reason, social workers can have different roles in NGOs and other professionals form different similar social fields can perform social work related tasks.

Despite the challenges of such a diverse continent and adding the challenges connected with the profession, being an effective and efficient social worker is a hard task (Lyons, Hokenstad, Pawar, Huegler, & Hall, 2012). Some of the challenges are connected to the social work identity and the lack of education and training available, as Kreitzer (2012) and Chisala (2015) mention. Moreover, Chisala (2015) focuses on several aspects which are presenting the social workers' environment and wellbeing, as the lack of resources, poor working conditions and payment, high levels of stress, overload cases and lack of recognition. Therefore, both the motivation and the strengths social workers and professionals have, need acknowledgment, recognition and further development.

The work with migrants and refugees has been already recognized in the social work since early times (Healy, 2004) as it brought up emergency situations and crisis that individuals were facing. Until nowadays, around the world the number of displaced populations is rapidly growing and especially in the developing countries, the services for addressing their needs are limited and resemble to the basic human needs (Drumm, 2004). The direct assistance and support are mostly offered through organizations and as Chisala (2015) mentions, professionals encounter challenges in assisting displaced populations when it comes to their adaptation to the settlements and their new social dimension and condition. These are connected to specialized services, social support, rehabilitation, further development and self-reliance strategies.

When it comes to practitioners and professionals engaged in the work with refugees, Potocky-Tripodi (2002) mentions professionals as individuals who have at least a bachelor degree in their areas of practice, including social workers, psychologists, humanitarian workers, counselors, therapists, attorneys, legal advisers, nurses.

According to Healy (2004) and Shier & Graham (2011), the need for training and deeper understanding of migration and diversity requires practitioners equipment with good skills and methods of intervention, given the sensitive issues forced migrants are facing. Another aspect which is highlighted in the literature concerning the work with refugees represents the cultural competence the practitioners need to acquire, both given the context of the refugees and the complexity of the multicultural dimension of the settlements (Parker, 2000; Potocky-Tripodi, 2002; Rubin & Babbie, 2014).

Despite these mentioned above and coming back to the professionals and their experiences, including social work, humanitarian work and related disciplines, the aspect of resilience and strengths found in the professionals themselves, their values and inner resources represent major points in terms of success and effective work.

Good Practices in Social Work with Refugees

The theoretical base of the research is focused on strength-based approach and its utilization in social work practice, while considering what is referred to as good practices in working with

refugees. *Good practices* incorporates the values owned and attitudes promoted by professionals in their practice, illustrating how certain approaches create meaning and shape the discourses with regards to refugees and refugee youth.

The literature in social work and references to good practices in the context of migration and displaced population combines a variety of theories, approaches and perspectives which are incorporated at micro, mezzo and macro level of an individual. In this sense, I have extracted the most relevant aspects encountered in all the three levels - human rights principles, migration theories, eco-system theory, cultural competences and anti-oppressive sensitivity, strength-based approaches, solution and narrative practice, resilience theory, trauma theories and knowledge, existentialism and spirituality perspectives – which are found under the umbrella of *good practices* in working with refugees and migrants (Parker, 2000; Potocky-Tripodi, 2002; Drumm, 2004; Valtonen, 2008; Cox & Pawar, 2013; Payne, 2014; Garcia, 2016; Ortiz Hendricks & Congress, 2016).

Developing good practice requires comprehensive education and training at all levels with emphasis on the needs of refugees and the social work responses (Parker, 2000), moreover having considerations for the particularities of the place where social work is implemented.

Yet the focus of this study is maintained on the individual level, where the strength-based approach is essential in supporting intervention since they constitute the core for resources in limited environments, such as the refugee camps (Agier, 2011; Turner, 2016), and are able to activate other constructive factors which promote positive development and transformation.

According to Newbigging & Thomas (2011), the work with refugee youth requires a positive approach, with emphasizes on relationships based on equality and dialogue. Moreover, their findings show the need for values as trust, acceptance and non-judgmental attitude, as the refugee youth are requiring for dignity not for victimization.

I consider that the strength-based approach is unique in the way it regards and respects individuals, hence it should be taken into consideration by professionals as a general attitude for themselves and their clients. Moreover, as Potocky-Tripodi (2002, p. 489) concludes, due to the hardships displaced populations faced, the practice should be guided by a compassionate and effective intervention, where *best practices are ultimately values-based, strengths-based and empirically-based*.

Successful practice with displaced populations has to enable professionals to reach all the stages of interventions at their highest potential, guided by relevant concepts and theories in order to make effective assessments and significant interventions which would increase and improve a balanced functionality of individuals and expand their resources (Garcia, 2016).

Strength-Based Approach

The transition in social work from a traditional approach based on problem solving and diagnosis, to an approach based on solutions, resources and strengths people have, denotes development and harmonization with human rights and respect for human dignity. Hence, as

Busch-Armendariz, Nsonwu & Heffron (2014) present, the strength-based approach becomes one of the most applicable approaches used in social work. Saleebey, as one of its pioneers, emphasizes the necessity of finding new ways of *doing social work*, with the emphasis on the creativity, intelligence, courage and common sense of clients and practitioners (Busch-Armendariz et al., 2014). In addition, it is referred in the literature both as an approach and a perspective.

Strength-based approach is considered essential in working with vulnerable populations, as it focuses on the resources and assets embodied in individuals, on their capacities, wisdom and knowledge, increasing the sense of empowerment (Rappaport, 1987; Ni Raghallaigh& Gilligan, 2008; Garcia, 2016; Valtonen, 2008).

As Saleebey (2012, p. 7) mentions, there is a deeper meaning in understanding humans, and the inner resources are highly powerful in shaping wellbeing. Rashid (2015, p. 25) mentions that in order to understand the complexity of a human experience, as a refugee, "both symptoms and strengths, together with resources and risks, weaknesses with values and hopes with regrets" must be considered and acknowledged. As for the whole, Saleebey (2012, p. 7) concludes with the idea of "*new ways of being and doing"* which I find stimulating and creative in social work practice.

The strengths' philosophy is constructed around the area of power and liberation within the human spirit, which Saleebey (2012, p. 7) presents it as a way of releasing *human energy and spirit, critical thinking, the questioning of authority and challenging the conventional wisdom.* Nevertheless, there are also voices which are generally criticizing the use of strength-base approaches and resilience, considering the political dimension of support when referring to the actual capabilities of individuals (Evans and Reid, 2014), leaving therefore the individuals in a greater risk and vulnerability. However, such critiques exclude the actual reality of people especially when the systems are lacking an actual external supportive structure.

In the context of strengths, the language, vocabulary and the words have power, both professionals while engaging with their clients, highlighting the positive elements encountered and the clients themselves, through their stories and narratives which are reaffirmations of their strengths and stories of success (Saleebey, 2012). According to Hughes (2014), the narratives are therapeutically beneficial in the work with refugees as it gives a voice to their cultural ways of coping with distress and brings back essential themes of hope, visions and virtues.

Highest value of the strength-based practice is related to the development of trustful and genuine relationships, as they create new bridges and a greater openness for entering the world of our clients. Through this, we get a deeper understanding of what is lived by the client and discover new directions for action (Busch-Armendariz et al., 2014). On the same manner Rashid (2015) highlights the strength-based approach's contribution in the formation of trust relationships between professionals and those assisted. Further on, he adds the element of hope, which increases the motivation towards change. Therefore, hope plays an important role in the way people give meaning to events and lived experiences, projections of future, expectations and a state of positive mindset which is considered powerful, being relevant in the discussion of strengths (Saleebey, 2012).

The approach calls for participation, the client becomes the expert and the role of the professional is focused on guidance, listening and helping the client reflect on his capabilities. The relationship must be guided by values and qualities which are incorporated in a strength-based practice as Saleebey mentions the respect, collaboration, empathy, nonjudgmental attitude, trust and care (Turner, 2011).

The practice of social work through a strength-based approach takes into account six principles elaborated by Saleebey (2012), which are capturing the attitude towards clients, the practice and the facilitators of change. Briefly, the principles are presented as:

1. *Every individual, family, group and community has strengths.*
2. *Trauma and abuse, illness and struggle may be injurious but they may be also sources of challenge and opportunity.*
3. *Assume that you do not know the upper limits of the capacity, therefore they can grow and change and take individual, group or community aspirations seriously.*
4. *We best serve clients by collaborating with them.*
5. *Every environment is full of resources.*
6. *Caring, caretaking in context.*

Other concepts mentioned by Saleebey (2012) which are linked with the strengths are the plasticity and the placebo effect, empowerment, membership, resilience, healing, the dialogue and collaboration and the suspension of disbelief. From these, the focus of the research in relation with the strengths is connected with the resilience as the overall impact on the wellbeing of refugee youth and their future perspectives.

Resilience

The strengths approach and resilience literature are useful for understanding how people are able to survive, transcend and flourish despite the high adversities they have been exposed to (Turner, 2011). As a consequence, extensive research on resilience has been showing its importance and the emerging factors which correlate with positive outcomes when referring to youth at risk (Bonanno & Diminich, 2013). The refugee youth are entering this category, mainly due to their previous experiences and the new environment of the settlements which increases their vulnerability and exposure to continues hardship, risks and limitations.

Resilience represents the capacity of individuals to manifest positive adaptation, transformation and achieve well-being despite being exposed to high traumatic, adverse situations or vulnerabilities (Rutter, 2000). Resilience represents an essential and valuable element, since it is universal and natural for each individual, but the level can be different as some individuals can be more resilient than others. By its acknowledgment, nourishment and promotion it becomes extremely useful in social work practice as studies have shown (Ingleby, 2005; Carlson, Cacciatore & Klimek, 2012).

The resilience-based approach has been revolutionary as it developed new methods of practice stressing positive adaptation, understanding and promoting strengths (Payne, 2014; Mastern, 2011; Carlson, Cacciatore, & Klimek, 2012; NíRaghallaigh& Gilligan, 2008; Rutter, 2000).

Michultka (2016) presents the resilience in relation to culture and encourages use of methods, ideas and institutions which are supporting resilience naturally.

Moreover, when it comes to children and youth, studies have shown that their resilience is highly remarkable, as Masten (2011) highlights that they possess extraordinary strengths and inner resilience. On the same manner, Rayner (2004) focuses on the protective factors around children and youth, encouraging the acknowledgment that every child is born resilient and therefore, resilience can be protected and enhanced.

Concluding this part as highlighted in the literature, the recognition and promotion of strengths represents a direct link to the promotion of resilience which moves to a new and efficient direction when we refer to the context of refugees and youth populations.

Chapter Three: Methodology

Description of the Study Site: Nakivale Refugee Settlement

One of the oldest refugee settlements in Uganda is found in Nakivale. According to UNHCR (2016) and the Uganda Government, Office of the Prime Minister statistics from February 2016, Nakivale refugee settlement accommodates over 125.000 refugees and asylum seekers, representing the third refugee settlement in Uganda, with a population of 12% from the overall population of refugees and asylum seekers (UNHCR Report, 2017). According to the demographics of the settlement, statistics of UNHCR from 2016 show that over 60% of the population was represented by individuals under 18 years old – 53.000 from over 100.000 – in the beginning of the year 2016.

Nakivale refugee settlement is located in Isingiro district in the south-west of the country, on a surface of 185 km^2 organized on three zones, Rubondo, Base camp and Juru and at this moment consists of 83 refugee villages. The refugees are mainly from DRC and Rwanda, followed by Somalia, Burundi, South Sudan, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya and Liberia. Despite the refugee population, around 35.000 nationals are living in the area.

UNHCR and several national and international organization are providing services and implementing programs covering the basic needs and further community development as well as implementing self-reliance policies.

The site has been chosen due to availability, contacts and the specificity of being the oldest refugee camp in Uganda as it is expected to provide a substantial expertise in terms of social work and humanitarian practice.

Research Design

Situated in an active and visible place for observing the world, in qualitative research according to Della Porta and Keating (2008) and Rubin and Babbie (2014), researchers are involved in the natural settings, focusing on understanding, making sense or interpreting a phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to it, in our case around the practice of social work and the experiences lived by professionals in the refugee settlements. In other words, qualitative research through a humanistic approach is relevant in this context, since I intend to explore individual's life experiences (professionals) which demands face-to-face interaction in order to understand deeper perspectives on thoughts, feelings, beliefs, values, attitudes and life stories (Marshall & Rossman, 2011).

The research design goes under the category of ethnography utilizing as main research methods qualitative interviewing, FGDs and participatory observations. According to Creswell (2007, p. 68), through ethnography it is facilitated the description and interpretation "of shared patterns of

values, behaviors and language of a culture-sharing group" as the researcher is involved in the day-to-day lives of the participants and the context.

According to Bryman (2012), the ethnographer is typically a participant observer but also uses other types of qualitative methods for collecting data, as in our case it includes: in-depth and semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions and observations. The researcher can keep a more open mind on what he wants to discover giving space for concepts and theories to emerge from the data collected and this can be done through the methods mentioned above (Bryman, 2012; Creswell, 2007).

Regarding the epistemology of the study, the epistemological approach used is interpretivism, as I intend to capture subjective meanings of social actions (Bryman, 2012), the practice of social work and the meaning professionals give to their practice. Therefore, since epistemology represents a version of empiricism, which assures us to have knowledge of the world, while testing predictions and perceptions (Hollis, 2002), interpretivism is best suited for this context. The social reality is always changing and as Bryman (2012) emphasizes, it is a permanent creation which belongs to individuals.

The ontological approach is positioned towards constructivism, where realities and other forms of interactions and social entities are built up from the perceptions and actions of social actors (Bryman, 2012). I consider that these approaches are relevant, both while exploring the area of social work practice, experiences of practitioners and the reality of refugees.

Study Population and Sample Selection

The research took place over a period of three weeks, mainly in Base Camp 1 – Nakivale due to accessibility to the study group, both the offices and the youth center are located in this area.

In order to facilitate the access to the field and as part of the research process, I was closely following the service provision of HIJRA in the settlement. HIJRA is one of the main organizations under UNHCR, providing at the moment services in the area of community development and child protection, which includes the youth dimension. One of the projects, part of the youth services is represented by the youth center. The youth center is a structure and a platform, meant to create a space where the youth can meet and develop their own ideas, initiatives and activities. It was opened in June 2008, and since then music, arts, theatre groups are using the place for their meetings, aside from sports and other social and educational encounters which are accommodated there.

This was the main aspect which determined the collaboration with HIJRA during the research period, as I considered it an essential point in being able to get both the perspectives of professionals and of the youth. Therefore, I was able to take part in the activities implemented at the youth center such as workshops and trainings, assist professionals in their work with the youth, get to know the youth and initiate my own activities.

Despite HIJRA as main organization involved in the study, the target group for collecting data was primarily constituted by professionals working with refugee youth in the settlement and a

sample of refugee youth. The professionals belong to fields directly connected to social work, as community development, education and psychology. Therefore, I selected professionals from different organizations active in the camp and were categorized under the types of work, services and areas of interventions, especially those directly providing services to youth population in terms of education (Windle Trust Uganda, FRC, War Child Canada), child protection and community development (HIJRA, ARC) and mental health and psychosocial support (Tutapona). I chose these six organizations, in order to get a wider understanding from different perspectives and areas of practice in relation to social work and due to their availability and interest to participate in the study. The organizations will be briefly described in the next section.

Since the process of collecting the data was controlled and references are already found in the research questions, the type of sampling used goes under the *purposive sampling* and within this category the *theoretical sampling* (Bryman, 2012, p. 419).

As Hammersley & Atkinson (2007) mention, relative factors as time, people and context, together with the field access and relationships the researcher establishes, are influencing the final selection of participants in the study. Thus, after presenting and introducing the research and the objectives to the organizations, I was directed to the professionals who best fitted in the requirements, as well as those who were considered more experienced and were available to participate in the research.. In order to increase the reliability, I chose two respondents from each organization and six respondents form the main organization, HIJRA, trying to capture all the dimensions of their work. Resulting a main sample of 16 professionals for the interviews and 9 professionals for the FGD with the main organization, HIJRA.

In order to understand the views of the youth and to make a connection between what professionals express and their reality, I organized two FGDs with two groups of youth, respectively 24 participants. The youth has been selected from the participants in the youth training on *'Life skills, Peace education and Leadership'*, organized by War Child Canada on the 9 and 10 of March at the youth center. The training is part of a large program of War Child Canada on education and sensitization, following the topics mentioned on its title. These specific sessions were organized for the youth from New Congo and New Hope communities in Base-Camp 1. Due to this, the majority of the participants were Congolese and few Burundians, aged between 12 to 19 years old, representing a total group of around 50 young people.

The training touched topics and themes as skills, individual's resources and values, which I considered relevant for being further looked on and reflected by the youth. Therefore, it provided me an opportunity to get direct access to the youth and to be able to understand in these two days where they are and how they report themselves to such themes. Moreover, it helped me get an overview on the professionals and the way they address these themes and the contact they have with the youth. It represented a continuation and further exploration of their views, thus, I considered it an opportunity to listen to their voices while creating a space for sharing and for a deeper reflection on their strengths, skills and positive experiences. As mentioned in Bryman (2012), even "*luck* as *being at the right place at the right time"*, together with meeting good informants and the relationship formed, are making each field situation unique, influencing the course of the research.

The further selection for the FGD was made through purposeful sampling, as it adds credibility when the group of selection is too large (Creswell, 2007). Moreover, the sampling was mixed

with elements of opportunistic and convenience types of sampling, as the possibilities allowed and due to the suggestions of the professionals in the moment of selection. Hence, the main criteria was the previous participation in the workshops, availability, interest for taking part in the study and gender balance.

The same group of youth participated afterwards in the workshop *'Il y a encore d'espoir/ There is still hope'* which came out as a result of the FGDs organized with the youth at their initiative and desire to learn more and share with each other. A number of 29 young people participate in this activity.

Organizations selected for the study

All the organizations are entitled to operate in the settlement and have approvals from OPM and UNHCR, which are the main actors regarding coordination and decision making in the settlement. UNHCR is also the main donor for several organization which decides the distributions of funds according to the needs and the best qualified projects presented by the organizations.

Further on, in order to give a clear view of the services provided and the actors involved, a brief description of the organizations who took part in the study is presented.

Humanitarian Initiative Just Relief Aid (HIJRA), operates in Uganda since 2002 and has a focus on providing urgent answers to basing needs of most vulnerable communities and improving the living standards and conditions for people of concern. In Nakivale the programs are based on community services and community education, livelihood and child protection. Together with material items distributed, services around the area of socio-psychological support, education, legal advice and livelihood are carried in the settlement. Under HIJRA functions the youth center, a structure intended to provide a space for youth activities and initiatives, in the area of education, arts, sports and non-formal activities. (Information partially retrieved from http://www.hijra.or.ke/ on 8th of May 2017).

War Child Canada started to work in Nakivale in the beginning of this year with a main focus on improving access to education, through Accelerated Learning Programs (ALP), youth capacity building and creating awareness and sensitization campaigns in the area of education, sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV). (Information partially retrieved from http://warchild.ca/stories/uganda/ on 8th of May 2017).

Tutapona operates in Nakivale since 2013 and provides trauma rehabilitation services and counseling. They engage the communities in activities of awareness in regards to mental health and psychological well-being. (Information partially retrieved from http://www.tutapona.com/east-africa/ on 8th of May 2017).

The Finnish Refugee Council (FRC) operates in Nakivale for 7 years now and has been focused on the area of education and livelihood strategies. FRC aims to improve the living conditions and living standards of refugees, through education and trainings on life skills, supports initiatives for sustainability, provides tools for increasing their capabilities and improvement of their income levels. Additionally, the youth represents an important dimension

of their work, with a focus on building self-confidence and promote youth participation in society. (Information partially retrieved from http://pakolaisapu.fi/en/#uganda on 8th of May 2017).

American Refugee Council (ARC) is focused on empowering the communities and improve their living conditions through water and sanitation provision, community services meant to assist them with their needs and protection in the area of SGBV. Other activities include greenhouse cooperatives, ARC radio station, sport and artistic events where the youth is highly engaged. (Information partially retrieved from http://arcrelief.org/our-work/uganda/ on 8th of May 2017).

Windle Trust Uganda is mainly focused on providing access to education, training and employment opportunities for children and youth. This is made through scholarships programs which are supporting refugee students at secondary, vocational and undergraduate level. At the same time, programs of awareness and sensitization towards education and reduction of school drop-out are held in the communities. (Information partially retrieved from http://www.windletrust.ug/ on 8th of May 2017).

Data Collection

The data was collected through the following methods and techniques used in the qualitative research as semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions and participatory observations, described as it follows:

Semi-structured interviews enabled the researcher to attain both clarification and elaboration on the answers given, having the possibility to go beyond the answers and to enter into dialogue with the interviewee (May, 2001). According to Bryman (2012, p. 471), the interviews in the qualitative research are referred as "in-depth interviews or qualitative interviews" and includes both semi-structured or unstructured interviews. The particularity of qualitative interviewing, with respect to the semi-structured interview is represented by flexibility (Bryman, 2012) and the balance in terms of freedom for both individuals involved in the process of interviewing, together with the utility of the interview guide.

The interview guide contains 34 questions which are presented under four dimensions: work experience in the settlement; the challenges professionals deal with, solutions and resources; education and training; strengths and resources encountered between the refugee youth population. The questions were constructed in a way which could lead to the exploration of the practice and experience professionals have at a deeper level, in accordance with the objectives and the research questions. As Bryman (2012) points out, the researcher is in control and directs the discussion, moreover, due to its flexibility, the semi-structure interview brings richness in terms of collected data. Accordingly, during the process of interviewing I have been able to observe and maintain a balance within the discussion, which could bring both a space for further exploration and clarification ,while keeping the focus on the objectives of the research.

The interviews lasted between 50 minutes to 1 hour and 30 minutes, and took place in the office of the organizations, on the field or other places which were quiet and appropriate in terms of

privacy. After explaining the purpose of the study, both the informants and I, signed a consent and confidentiality agreement in two copies, in order to ensure them confidentiality and transparency of the process. All the interviews were recorded, after participants were informed and agreed on it.

The ***Focus group discussion (FGD)***, was used due to its many advantages and practicality in extracting further information and enriching the data. Therefore, its relevance and efficiency, as Morgan (1996) points out, has primarily to do with the large space it creates in order to obtain views, reactions and experiences from several respondents within a short time.

Another aspect which I considered essential, refers to the increased possibility of developing an understanding about lived experiences through the use of FGD. According to Bryman (2012, p. 502), it helps "to understand why people feel the way they do and identify how people respond to each other's views in a group." Further on, it is a way through which one can observe how participants respond in the group, as they are in a central position and need to probe each other and their opinions (Bryman, 2012) and I consider it useful since I intended to obtain such outcomes. Therefore, I have organized one FGD discussion with a group of professionals belonging to the main organization of the study, HIJRA and two FDG with the youth.

The FGD with the professionals was guided by 5 questions on experiences in the settlement, strengths and resources, both personal and concerning their clients. According to Brayman (2012), through FGD one can observe the process through which meaning of a phenomenon or lived experience is created. Therefore, the method helped in getting a common understanding and ground of their shared experiences in the settlement, reflections on their attitude towards their practice, the values encountered and the culture of the group.

Due to limited free time and availability that the professionals have, the possibility of organizing a FGD was uncertain until that last moment of my placement in the settlement. However, it represented an advantage, since I was familiar with the professionals and their work. The participants were selected from the staff living in the residence of HIJRA, being asked about the possibility of participation according to their availability and interest. The FGD lasted for an hour and took place one evening after the working hours, in the residence of the personal, situated at approximately 35 km outside the settlement. The discussion was recorded with the agreement of the participants.

Table 2. Participants FGD HIJRA

Participant No.	Gender	Position in the organization
Participant 1	F	Child Protection Officer
Participant 2	F	Child Protection Assistant 1
Participant 3	F	Child Protection Assistant 2
Participant 4	M	Community Services Assistant 1
Participant 5	F	Child Protection Assistant 3
Participant 6	F	Child Protection Assistant 4
Participant 7	M	Community Services Assistant 3
Participant 8	M	Psychosocial Officer / Counselor
Participant 9	M	Legal Assistant

The two FDGs with the youth took place at the youth center and each lasted two hours. During this time, the participants were accommodated with the topic, with the structure of the discussion, issues of confidentiality and other practical questions which emerged. Participants have been assured confidentiality by signing and receiving the confidentiality and consent agreement mentioned in Annex 7. As well, with their permission the discussions have been recorded. Before starting the discussions, participants filled a table with demographic details, representing additional information about the sample and the group. Therefore, all participants were Congolese, gender balanced (12 girls and 12 boys), aged between 14 to 19 years old, the majority age been equal between 17 and 19 years old. The majority have been living in the camp between 1 to 3 years.

The participants didn't speak English, therefore during the FGDs I was assisted by a translator for moderating the discussion, which was held in Swahili and partially in French.

Table 3. Participants FGD 1 Youth – 10am-12am

Participant	Gender	Age	Nationality	Time in the camp
Youth 1	F	16	Congolese	4 years
Youth 2	F	17	Congolese	4 years
Youth 3	M	17	Congolese	2 years
Youth 4	M	15	Congolese	1 year
Youth 5	M	19	Congolese	3 year
Youth 6	M	18	Congolese	1 year
Youth 7	F	16	Congolese	3 years
Youth 8	F	17	Congolese	3 years
Youth 9	M	19	Congolese	4 years
Youth 10	F	18	Congolese	3 years
Youth 11	F	15	Congolese	1 year
Youth 12	F	17	Congolese	1 year

Table 4. Participants FGD 2 Youth – 12am-2pm

Participant	Gender	Age	Nationality	Time in the camp
Youth 13	F	18	Congolese	1 year
Youth 14	M	19	Congolese	4 years
Youth 15	M	19	Congolese	1 year
Youth 16	F	17	Congolese	6 year
Youth 17	M	18	Congolese	3 years
Youth 18	M	19	Congolese	3 years
Youth 19	M	14	Congolese	3 year
Youth 20	M	18	Congolese	1 year
Youth 21	M	17	Congolese	1 year
Youth 22	F	15	Congolese	3 years
Youth 23	F	19	Congolese	3 years
Youth 24	F	18	Congolese	2 years

The FGDs were constructed around seven questions, related with the main topics of interest of the research and were meant to bring up reflections on highly positive emotions and experiences participants had, their resources and strengths, their role models and sources of inspiration.

Participatory observations within ethnography, even though considered most demanding type of research as May (2001) points out, it brings a deeper analysis and understanding on people's social lives and relationships, being suitable in our context. According to Bergold & Thomas (2012) and Bryman (2012), the participatory research brings the life-world and meaningful actions under study, gathering the perspective of science and practice with the researcher being directly involved in the lives of those he researches about. For that reason, the work on the field, the proximity and developed relationships with the participants of the study, both professionals and refugees, contributed to a deeper understanding of their experiences, the practice and several other aspects related to the context of the settlement. Moreover, the method gives possibility for the exploration of the shared group culture (Creswell, 2007, p. 87) and captures topics as socialization, domination, learning or inequality.

Due to short time in the settlement, the observations were made following structured events, the practice and partially around the lives of the professionals, therefore, they were guided by the observation scheme which can be found in Annex 4. The observation scheme is following dimensions related to behaviors, interactions and work relationships, environment and other similar aspects.

During the time in the settlement I have taken extensive field notes at specific moments and whenever possible, followed by keeping a journal, where reflections, all lived experiences and encounters have been noted down in the evenings, after leaving the settlement.

The collaboration and field work with HIJRA, facilitated the exposure to the way services are provided, the work environment, the work culture and the professionals. Although I have participated in some of the main activities of the group and lived with them, I encountered limitations. As Bryman (2012) highlights, the researcher will not be a full member of the group he researches, being always limited by his purpose and interests. The supervisor from HIJRA which I was assigned with, helped me to clarify the main questions and misunderstandings which came out from the field, as well broaden my picture of the work and the environment, from a critical perspective. Moreover, supported my further reflections and emotional ventilation.

Some of the activities I participated in and witnessed: filed visits in different villages and communities in the main secondary regions of the settlement (Juru, Rubondo), home visits, group meetings under child protection, school visits, office work of HIJRA, activities and events held at the youth center, youth initiatives and workshops, the contact with the other organizations involved in the study. Overall, it incorporated a rich and extensive experience, essential for both the academic and professional dimension related to the research and further on, the personal experience and learning.

Workshop: ***'Il y a encore de l'espoir/ There is still hope'*** represented a set of activities held with the youth which came out as their initiative after several meetings I had with them, both in the trainings and FGDs. I consider it valuable as it reflected and confirmed the findings, bringing more space for discussion through the promotion of positive and constructive outcomes in

regards to participation and empowerment. Moreover, the workshop facilitated as well a certain level of inner reflection, part of the exercise used has a slightly therapeutic role.

As part of the research, extracts from these activities are found under the area of ethnography especially the observations and narratives. According to Creswell (2007), through ethnography the question of empowering groups can be directly addressed while the group being studied is directly stimulated to discuss such topics.

The workshop consisted of a presentation on important topics concerning the youth which came out also from their interest, respectively reproductive health/sexual life and addictions. The presentation was made by one the refugee youth, following a model of peer-education activity. It continued with a debate on questions related to the topics, giving space to participants to be actively involved, through sharing their experiences and opinions. The workshop ended with an exercise, "*The Tree of Life* (Hughes, 2014), which brings up elements of positive psychology and strength-based approach, in order to stimulate reflection on strengths and resources one has. The method uses a strength-based narrative approach where participants are required to map their life and describe their lives in a rich way, following the model of a tree as a metaphor (Hughes, 2014). It has been successfully used by psychologists and social workers in relation to refugees and the example used with the group of youth can be found in Annex 7.

The workshop was organized and moderated by one of the youth together with me. It lasted for 4 hours and took place at the youth center on the 19th of March 2017. The majority of participants were previously engaged in the other mentioned activities, aged between 14 to 23 years old, majority of Congolese nationality and 3 Burundian participants, from a total of 29 young people.

Data Processing and Analysis

For analyzing the collected data and according to the methodology, thematic analysis have been used as a strategy of analysis. Moreover, as Bryman (2012, p. 567) remarks, thematic analysis is one of the most used frameworks of analysis in qualitative data. The thematic analysis aims to bring out clusters of meaning which could give what Bryman (2012, p. 580) refers to as "basic for a theoretical understanding of the data and a theoretical contribution to the literature".

The interviews and FGDs were recorded, varying in length between 50 minutes to 1 hour and 30 minutes. After the completion of data collection, the interviews together with the FGDs were fully transcribed using a denaturalized technique, therefore, specific sounds or long breaks were omitted (Oliver, Serovich & Mason, 2005).

During the process of transcribing I already started to focus on the overall content, trying to identify specific and significant sentences which might capture the overall experience and meaning professionals give to their work in relation to the research question. As Creswell (2007, p. 162) mentions and according to the objectives of the research, in ethnography despite the focus on the descriptions of events and the daily life which is observed, the researcher is "following an analytical framework, or showing different perspectives through the views of the informants." In this sense, thematic analysis was used for analyzing the interviews, FGD with the

professionals and observations, followed by the data from FGDs with the youth and the workshop.

As Brayman (2012) presents, there are several essential steps, requiring a constant reflection on the initial codes, the connections and continuity between them, in order to identify and create themes. Therefore, in this process of breaking down the data and identify codes, I was attentive to repetitions, analogies, similarities and differences, transitions, linguistic connectors and of course theory related materials which were directly identified through the questions.

The themes emerged were classified in order with the objectives and the new dimensions encountered.

Theme One. Working with refugees: "Life changing experience"
Theme Two. Strengths and Resources: "And we become stronger"
Theme Three. Beyond Professionalism: Good Practices and Humanity
Theme Four. Strengths and Resilience in Practice: "Keeping Hope Alive"

The themes are composed by sub-themes, which represent different aspects touched by respondents, enriching the findings through an illustration of diversity in thoughts and experiences.

In order to strengthen the discussion and the findings, I included parts of the interviews, respectively the voices of the professionals as they are powerful, relevant and they accurately capture specific information. Therefore, the pieces of information and data included are marked with smaller font and the cuts in the speech and breaks are represented by three dots (…)

Even though there are limitations in the way people express themselves and in terms of what they want to show while interviewed, in the actual moment of discussion, I could observe and feel mostly sincerity and authenticity in the way they expressed themselves. Later on, being able to confirm parts of the information with the experience from the field, both in relation to the reality of the refuges and the youth and their way of being engaged with them and their practice.

On the same manner, the data collected from the youth was analyzed through thematic analysis in order to support and confirm the data emerged from the professionals. This was constituted by the FGDs with the youth, the workshop and further observations while interacting with the youth and communities. The same process was utilized for analyzing the FGDs with the youth. However, for the workshop, due to its length and different structure there were main points captured, therefore recorded, transcribed and analyzed. The rest was followed by the journal notes and observations which cover the whole process, the atmosphere, the roles in the group, the findings, reactions and the meaning of the exercise – outcomes out of it.

The observations and field notes are influenced by the subjective dimension and as Hammersley & Atkinson (2007) mention, there is constant interplay between the personal and emotional experience combined with the intellectual one and the researcher is responsible to reflect on it and to transform it in a way that the information presented can become potential public knowledge.

Ethical Considerations

The refugee context is delicate as it involves all dimensions and systems of an individual faced with high adversities and crisis, reaching to national and international political aspects in place. Therefore, specific closed settings are likely to be subjects of ethical considerations, therefore researchers prior to their entering the field need approvals from gatekeepers (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007; Bryman, 2012). Consequently, the access to the settlement and field work was required beforehand and approved by OPM. This provided assurance that the aim and role of the researcher is known and supported. The same procedure took place with the main organization I collaborated with, HIJRA, where an approval and collaboration letter was signed. Moreover, once on the field, the prior informal contacts and networks helped me in order to get introduced and gain access to all organizations which I considered relevant for the study.

According to Bryman (2012), the main areas for ethical considerations are connected with the relationship between researcher and the subjects of research, hence, presented through: *harming the participants, lack of informed consent, invasion of privacy* and *deception*. Moreover, given the complex context of refugee camps and the sensitivity of the issues encountered at all levels in the settlements, a special attention and reflection was given to factors such as: harming, deception, privacy, confidentiality, power balance, reinforcing trauma and adversity. These factors were especially considered while engaging in the work with the refugee youth. Nevertheless, several aspects which might be harmful in relation to the main group of the study, the professionals and service providers are mentioned as follows.

The participatory observations are in general the most likely to bring up questions of ethics. The participation in the research and the consent, especially in observations has a very thin line between the reality which is being observed and the aims and what is told to the subjects and their environment. As Hammersley & Atkinson (2007) mentioned, in most of the cases these aspects are not entirely revealed to the subjects of research. Hence, what Bryman (2012) would call lack of informed consent and lack of privacy. Therefore, I made sure that my role as a research was explained and understood by the participants in the study, especially when the context provided an opportunity, as the interviews, the FGDs and activities I participated in. Nevertheless, since I was new in the environment and *a foreign figure*, both practitioners and refugees are likely to assume such role even though not mentioned. However, even in such light I had difficulties to make sure that my role was always understood, especially the observation part and the aim of the research.

An ethical consideration which is related to the actual consent while collecting data through interviews, because as Homan (1992) mentions, the consent and participation can be masked under a moral obligation. In this way, it might be harmful in case there is pressure for taking participation both personal or from the organization, especially since it involves practitioners in the field. Even though the collection of data is inoffensive in relation to the topics addressed, the use of the data and the results are potential factors of harm, through their consequences in case subjects can be identified later on (Bryman, 2012; Homan, 1992). For such reasons, I made sure that the participation is voluntarily and for each participant, both interviews and FGDs, a consent and confidentiality agreement was signed and can be found in Annex 7. For confidentiality reasons, the names of participants will not be used and the points mentioned in the confidentiality agreement will respected.

One of the main ethical dilemmas which I encountered was the fact that I was regarded as a *white influential individual*, which brought up imbalance in the relationships, especially with the refugees. For that reason, the expectations and requirements in terms of resources were at all times present, which at some points represented sources of interior conflict, as I was not able both from a ethical point of view and also personal, to respond to it. As Hammersley & Atkinson (2007) highlight, it is inevitable not to remark the influence of determined characteristics as gender, age, race over the relationships and the research process. Even more, the race which appears in terms of power (Neuman, 2011) and this represented a constant point of reflection and discussion with the supervisor.

In terms of material benefits and expectation from the participants in the study, I was prepared to respond to it, especially with the youth group which was understandable from my side. Therefore after discussing with the organization I found proper and simple ways to respond to this requirement and show gratitude for their participation in the study.

The thin line between the personal and professional character of relationships developed with the refugee youth represented another ethical question, since at times I felt the ease for the relationship to be misunderstood. This especially due to closeness, different cultural settings, expectations and different interests. Therefore, I was attentive and aware of these aspects, trying to make clear limits and explain the type of relationships which were not possible. Nevertheless, as Hammersley & Atkinson (2007) and Creswell (2007) mention, the quality of relationships developed on the field are transforming the lived experiences of both the researcher and the participants and therefore the whole process of research becomes an emotionally demanding experience and the impact must be acknowledged. For such reasons, possibilities for further contact or follow-up are present, especially in ethnography (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007).

Another ethical aspect which came up, in connection to what Banks (2012, p. 7) mentions as principles for promoting the respect for individual and his rights. There was always a question of the right to self-determination of refugees in relation to the service providers and the context of the settlement, in terms of power, dependency and different values shared. Such questions made me reflect a lot in trying to make sense of both the realities of professionals and refugees.

Limitations

As Creswell (2007) mentions, the time for collecting data, especially in ethnographic research requires prolonged time in the field and that I consider it the main limitation of this research. Even though I have been for 3 weeks on the field and actively involved in encounters with people and participated in many activities, I believe that a longer time would have provided a more exhaustive understanding of the reality of the settlement.

The biggest limitation is the dimension of professionals, respective social workers. As the study was intended to be focused mainly on social workers provided services to youth populations, but the reality of the place and the context of social work in Africa became a limitation for this study. Therefore, the social workers as the initial target group was finally constituted both by social workers and mainly professionals from similar areas. Nevertheless, as explained in the

theoretical part, there are several limitations when it comes to the context of social work in Africa both in terms of defining the profession, the roles, the education and the actual titles social workers take once employed. Moreover, the collected data is still relevant for the social work practice as a whole, being an example of working with youth in the context of the settlement.

For the primary data collection, it was difficult to extend the time I had with the professionals for the interviews, due to their lack of availability and overloaded schedules. I encountered as well as difficulties in finding a proper time for organizing the FGD with professionals, for the same reasons of availability. Therefore, the FGD took place in the evening after work and I felt the limitation of the time and pressure in being efficient and quick for not interfering too much with their resting time.

While considering the activities with the youth, the FGDs and the workshop, I encountered language barriers and even though I have been assisted by a translator, I was aware of the lack of authenticity and accuracy in the translation. Moreover, through translation and interpretations, as Bryman (2016) highlights, there are limitations in capturing completely the sensitivity of the cultural context. However, I consider that the information received is still useful, being used to consolidate the rest of the findings.

In terms of observations, I encountered difficulties in understanding different aspects of the life in the settlement, the service provision and the working culture which, can be determined by not enough information and prior knowledge, subjectivity, misinterpretations and the cultural diversity and differences and especially due to limited time in the settlement. In order to deal with these challenges a was constant consultation and clarification with the professionals, supervisor and others was essential.

Chapter Four: Research Findings and Analysis

Introduction

This chapter presents the findings and discussion in accordance with the objectives and the research questions. The discussion and interpretations are done through the theoretical framework and adds of my own impressions.

A brief demographic of the participants in the study is presented in Table 5. Most of the workers have at least a few years of experience in the humanitarian field, working either with refugees or other populations of concern. Moreover, all of them have been working with refugees either in Nakivale or other settlements, between 3 months up to 9 years and the majority have been working between 2 to 4 years in this field. They are between 23 to 55 years old and majority between 27 to 35 years old.

During this time, they have been changing organizations, only FRC and Tutapona kept the same staff during the whole period of employment, from 3 to 9 years and it is connected with the manners of funding, employment on unlimited periods and long-term projects. Within the participants there is a certain gender balanced which was not intended and therefore not necessarily relevant for the research.

As already mentioned before as a limitation, the education of majority of the professionals is not specifically social work, as well as their positions and working titles. Nevertheless, the services provided, the trainings, skills and ways of working are encompassing the practice of social work as a rich and diverse field of expertise. Hence, references are made previously in the conceptual framework.

Professionals have qualifications in the area of social sciences, social work, community development, psychology, education and law. In the child protection department of HIJRA there is a higher number of employees with social work education and training and 7 of them participated in the FGD.

Concluding to this part, I consider that all the participants brought valuable elements for the research, especially since their experience with the youth and the refugees is already important and relevant source of knowledge. Moreover, I consider that the limitation of social work education which was lacking between the professionals, became a resource, because it brought up diverse areas of practice, different perspectives and experiences under the same picture of strength-based approach. Finally, it consolidated the findings and brings up a wider perspective of working with refugees and refugee youth through a strength-based approach.

Table 5. Participants interviewed - Nakivale Refugee Settlement

Interviewee	Organization	Sex	Education	Position in the organization	Work
Interviewee 1	HIJRA	M	Bachelor Law; Counseling Certificate – Makerere Uni.	Chairman Youth Community leader * *refugee DRC*	7 years
Interviewee 2	HIJRA	M	Bachelor Social & Philosophical Studies; Bachelor of Theology Master Degree in Counseling - Psychology	Manager Community Services Catholic Priest	3 years
Interviewee 3	HIJRA	M	Bachelor in Social Work & Social Administration	Community Services Assistant – Youth Dep.	2 years
Interviewee 4	HIJRA	M	Bachelor in Sociology & Public Administration Master Conflict Resolution and Mitigation	Community Worker * *refugee Somalia*	2 years
Interviewee 5	HIJRA	M	Bachelor in Community Psychology Master in Clinical Psychology	Psychosocial Officer / Counselor	1.5 years
Interviewee 6	HIJRA	F	Bachelor in Social Work & Social Administration Course in Child Protection – Makerere Uni.	Child Protection Officer	4 years
Interviewee 7	War Child Canada	F	Bachelor in Social & Gender Studies Major in International Relationships	Youth Field Supervisor	3 month
Interviewee 8	War Child Canada	F	Bachelor in Development Studies	Youth Field Supervisor	2 years
Interviewee 9	Tutapona	F	Bachelor in Counseling - Psychology	Field Coordinator – Trauma Rehabilitation	4 years
Interviewee 10	Tutapona	F	Bachelor in Counseling - Psychology	Field Facilitator – Counselor	3 years
Interviewee 11	FRC	F	Bachelor in Adult Education and Community Dev. Diploma in Planning and Management	Community Development Officer	9 years
Interviewee 12	FRC	F	Bachelor in Community Psychology Master Project Management and Planning	Youth Coordinator	5 years
Interviewee 13	ARC	M	Bachelor in Social Work and Counseling	Protection Officer	3 years
Interviewee 14	ARC	F	Bachelor in Public Administration & Management Master in Public Health - undergoing	Protection Manager - Youth	4 years
Interviewee 15	Windle Trust	F	Bachelor in Social Development	Educational Officer	4 years
Interviewee 16	Windle Trust	M	Bachelor in Education Bachelor in Special Needs Education - undergoing	Education Project Assistant	2 years

Theme One: Working with Refugees:

"Life Changing Experience"

The first theme answers to the first objective of the research, related to the experiences of professionals and incorporates parts from the second objective, in terms of meaning given to their work and experiences. Moreover, some of the professionals concluded that the work represents *a life changing experience* as it touches both the personal and professional aspects of life with a high potential of transformation.

Experiencing the Life and Work in The Settlement

The life in the camp, from professionals' experiences brings both positive and negative aspects in light, especially when they relate it to the refugees themselves, in terms of conditions, resources and living environment. Since most of the professionals have accommodations outside the settlement area, the environment itself and lack of facilities does not create much inconvenience for them. Therefore, when it comes to the life and experiences in the camp, most of them refer especially to the work, interactions with their clients and reflections on the overall condition of refugees.

However, life in the camp is not *simple* or *easy* and brings forth a complex and diverse context, in other words a mixture of cultures and situations where one must be *flexible, always ready to adapt* and at times, can be presented as an experience of *suffering*.

> "It's a life of suffering and sacrifice both for the refugees and for workers. … limited services, facilities, accessibility and yes, it's a heavy environment which needs availability and sacrifice." (ARC)

> "It's a hectic place and work, overwhelming… you encounter many difficulties and you need to adapt and be flexible. Sometimes you can be somewhere on the field and maybe you don't have access to food." (Windle Trust)

Moreover when it comes to the life of refugees, the reality shows the lack of resources, development and the limited conditions of what would consist in a decent life. Elements which differ from the context of professionals.

> "… heavy work and you get absorbed … a lot of stress everybody experiences and the life in the camp is not something easy, more for the refugees. It keeps them survive but not satisfy them. The camp it just sustains life."(HIJRA)

> "Life in the camp is hectic. Not enough to live with for the refugees, but for us, it's fine as we are just working there." (HIJRA)

Such image is better reflected by the refugees themselves, especially when it comes to the daily life, needs, struggles and the way they perceive the camp, the services, together with the meaning they bring to their condition and experience.

> "And I am meaningless here. And why are the people here?! Just because of peace. But peace doesn't mean satisfaction and peace doesn't mean life. Peace is just the aura that surrounds life. We are given peace but in the middle of sunshine. So we are peaceful but we are waiting to be cherished, helped to grow. However, the interventions are limited, not even enough food. We get 6 to 12 kg of maze. Normal human being from New York to the depth of the Brazilian ghettos, in any other situation, rich or poor, has to take 250 grams for breakfast plus lunch plus dinner, which equals to 750 grams. Now 750x30 days, is it 12 kg? This is when you want to have a healthy body, when you want your immunity to grow. And we don't need a very balanced diet. Africa is Africa. We believe you take a little bit of something and the nature will take care of the rest. But this will help for not getting malaria, nor malnutrition, not develop diseases and to give this energy the drive for what is next. Then the sense of innovation and creativity is growing.
>
> But my friend, if you are undernourished, if even the hospital treatment is below the requirements, if the water is not clean and below the hygiene level, if yourself are self-insufficient human as a refugee - is a tag that makes you feel that you are not like the rest. When all these things precipitate into an equation (silence break) Who are you?! You are just, you know like a straw getting blow into the air. You are nothing.
>
> So this calculation tells me sometimes, now why am I here?! And it goes very deep, because even if I get 50% of all these I will demand for more, at least 70% because I'm a human being in this world." (Refugee Somalia)

Nevertheless, this representation shows the reality from a particular point of view, as some of the refugees have left behind what can be referred as *good lives*, especially when they were in control, independent and owned resources. Such representation shows the reality from a subjective perspective, but along the discussion, the strive for *making life easy* or *dignified* is present, showing the strength and the creativity of the human spirit, themes which will be presented later on. In the same manner, Turner (2016) refers to the barred and limited structures of the camp, which make life being reduced to biological and temporary survival but in the same time, shows that refugees are able to create new identities and meanings for their lives.

Therefore, the differences between the professionals who are refugees and the professionals who are nationals is very complex. Briefly, just the condition and limitations as being a refugee – lack of independence, power, resources, the life in the camp and the overall experience of being a refugees - brings forth a deeper and stronger sense of reality, which is not reflected in the same way by the nationals on the field.

The encounter with the environment of the camp and the realities experienced by refugees, brings more awareness for professionals, contributing to their transformation as individuals which is desired and highly valued.

> "I come from a completely different environment and being here helped me to reflect a lot about the reality, on what to do and how to live … It gives your this impulse that you want to share with others, sharing resources and being more compassionate." (FRC)
>
> "For me it's like a dream to work here and I wanted this since I was a child (… inspired by a movies she saw about humanitarian aiders and UN)… because you get down to earth and you see life from a different angle. It's an experience that you will never explain but in your heart you will know it's the best experience ever… It's a wide opening experience… how life crosses people and how to handle situations." (Windle Trust)
>
> "I always wanted to have this experience … you learn so much about life and simplicity. It awakes you to see such realities and it brings a lot of goodness in you." (ARC)

As it was presented by several respondents, not everybody is able or willing to have this experience or to work in the settlements, being because of their interests or the lack of capacity to deal with such environments.

> "I have seen people who resigned their job in a week's time. They come, look at the environment, the office, the surroundings, listens to the stories of people and says *no, I can't cope up here*."(HIJRA)

> "We had people who worked here for such a short time and they were just like *I cannot take it."* (FRC)

Overall, the findings show that it takes a strong motivation, passion, interest and certain qualities and skills to be engaged for a long time in this area of work.

Previous experiences or similar backgrounds such as the camps or similarities with the refugees, are likely to increase the adaptability, the sense of ease or comfort with the environment and transcend the negative impact of the place. Moreover, such factors have a positive outcome for the work itself.

> "Growing up in the village helped a lot while being here." (Windle Trust)

> "The environment is not a problem, I'm familiar with it. I have been living close to here and I know the refugees, they have been my colleagues in school, my friends. I know about their culture and their problems. Like this it's useful for the work I'm doing." (HIJRA)

> "It has been easy for me because my own family came to Uganda when I was a child (from Rwanda) and I understand how it is for the refugees and what they experience."(Tutapona)

> "Maybe I had a different background, but I see similarities in the culture, the very strong African values and traditional way of living. I understand it and it helps in the work." (ARC)

> "I experienced war myself and I've been a victim in Northern Uganda… slept in the bush with bullets passing over my head … sometimes I tell them my experience and I tell them that I am as well a human being just like you. This helps in the relationships.… I also have the sense that I know what they've been through and it's easy to feel with them and guide them… Many times, I see how my life experience is useful because I can integrate it in practice and I can be more creative." (HIJRA)

Another dimension of this reality, reflects the positive aspects of the experience professionals have, being in tune with what the aim of the services provided, especially referring to the self-reliance strategies in Uganda.

> "It's not a static experience, always changes and learning … I appreciate the services and the refugees, because participating in the contribution of their own development it's a real experience. I appreciate everyone and every small contribution, everything has an impact and it's a nice experience to tell." (Windle Trust)

> "The beauty about working in a refugee setting in Uganda is that you are expected to settle in, not like being put in a camp and wait. I see and I experience a simple way of living, where with so little money you can do so much and somehow find most simple ways to live a sustainable life. It comes also from the policies we have here and the system Uganda is creating."(ARC)

Challenges and Dilemmas

The challenges professionals experience are mainly work related, being either difficult cases or situations, questions of ethics, the overall context in terms of resources, capacity and their personal lives.

The works itself is overwhelming as they have to deal with a high load of cases and a lot of pressure, as they expressed, which can lead to burnouts. In the same time, the cultural diversity even though it brings a lot of learning and is being appreciated, can also be '*confusing, especially when some cultural practices are in contradiction with the culture and the laws of Uganda'* (HIJRA). Other professionals find it difficult at times to approach some of the communities due to high cultural differences: *'diversity is good, but not always easy'* (FRC). The language barriers are mentioned as challenging factor.

One of the biggest issues which has been raised by all professionals and is being mentioned in the literature and other reports, is represented by the lack and insufficiency of resources and funds for the programs and services. The relation of funds and resources, both in the context of humanitarian (Agier, 2011) and the context of service providers in developing countries (Kreitzer, 2012) is not sufficient, creating difficulties for those who are directly implementing the programs.

> "Not enough resources. You know you can correct a situation but you don't have the means and will end up with lives being lots. It's very painful but you don't tell to your mind that you can't do it." (Refugee Somalia)

> "It's very difficult knowing that you can do so much but you don't have resources." (FRC)

> "…immediate material support which can't be accessed or granted by refugees."(HIJRA)

However, the resources and material support also generates dependency having negative influences on the process of self-reliance and empowerment. It is a vicious circle which has been much discussed over the years, irrespective of the situation of adversity or vulnerability people are dealing with. The dichotomy of the dependency issue is present. Simich & Andermann (2004) highlights that settlements and service provision should not create dependency among refugees, but on the other hand, Agier (2011) critiques the systems and the structures of settlements, as in many situations they leave no other possibility than dependency. Therefore, the refugee context, through its limitations, restrictions in terms of movement, access to work and services are increasing the dependency and it is evident that aid is expected and essential.

The refugee policies in Uganda are designed specifically for increasing self-sustainability and self-reliance and Nakivale refugee settlement, is an example where the implementation takes place. Nevertheless, there has been criticism over such strategies when it comes to their impact and results, drawn from the opinions and satisfaction of refugees (Svedberg, 2014) and comes out also in the findings.

> "We don't believe in just sitting down here. We are a very creative and innovative society and we don't get exactly the mechanisms to use these. We have the space, the government gave us the space and ensured some security so we can walk without fear. But the mechanisms to make us work as a society are not there." (Refugee Somalia)

Still, when it comes to practice, professionals bring up the question of dependency. According to them, there are different levels of dependency and *it is always there* - among majority of refugees - affecting the service provision, as the expectations for material aid are narrowing their reality.

> "The dependency affects the work because sometimes they are not able to understand, to compromise and their motivation goes down." (HIJRA)

> "They will ask you if you could help with it and that's beyond my power. Or some might say, *you know, I don't have food at home, soap* ... material things which I can't provide. It's still a challenge because they have much expectations." (FRC)

> "It's difficult to keep balance between the requirements and the possibilities. It's sad when you don't do much for them, when you can't and they expect things from you … material expectation." (Tutapona)

> "Some just stay crossed arms asking for help and expecting handouts." (ARC)

The inability to respond to these requirements, is a dilemma for professionals as they see the need, the limited resources and inadequate possibilities one has and are not able to respond to it. Moreover, it affects the relationships with the refugees as *they might not be willing to understand the lack of materials* (HIJRA). Hence, in such situations the refugees will mistrust and blame the professionals for the lack of resources, pointing to different interests and corruption.

When it comes to the communities, the biggest challenge present is the *resisting communities* or *communities which are not responding*. This is either due to lack of capacity, lack of education and illiteracy, deep cultural and traditional practices and values or dependency.

> "… dealing with factors which are not in our power. We can't read people's minds and sometimes the message is delivered but it doesn't have any relevance. People just don't get it." (FRC)

> "It's difficult with the behavior change, because it comes back again and again. With some communities you work for so long and then you just find out that they're doing the same practices again." (ARC).

When it comes to youth, professionals speak about the knowledge one must have in dealing with them, understand them and work with them as there is a permanent fluctuation between their interests and needs and they need to keep up. Sometimes they can be *stubborn* and *inconsistent.* However the biggest challenge comes again when professionals feel the *inability to reach all their needs.*

> "Youth is the biggest population here and yet we have so limited budget. We can't reach the expectations and demands." (FRC)

Other general challenges, represented as ethical dilemmas are connected with confidentiality, questions of integrity and transparency, the exhaustive bureaucracy, 'make no harm principle', and trust from their clients.

> "The bureaucracy versus the emergency need conflicts, and there a human life gets lost." (Refugee Somalia)

In terms of relationships with their clients, keeping boundaries and limits within the relationships as they can be easily misinterpreted. This has been mentioned especially while working with

opposite sex and the *conflict of interests* which might occur. Therefore, this becomes a dilemma since professionals speak about the need for close, genuine relationships, based on trust and confidence and the awareness of the risk of being misinterpreted.

> "These people need so much someone who can walk with them; someone who can enter their world and not just for the sake of earning a salary at the end of the day, but someone who can be part of their life and walk their life as they experience whatever they are experiencing." (HIJRA)

As Chisala (2015) mentions, professionals are also individuals and citizens of communities, with their own backgrounds, interests, values and personal stories, therefore these elements affect their interaction with the work. Challenges faced by professionals when it comes to their personal lives have been expressed both during the interviews and FGD, with a deeper acknowledgment in the FGD as the participants were showing empathy with each other and recognized the costs of the work they are doing.

Drawn from there, the biggest challenge represents the distance from home and their families, which affects their relations with their close ones – *'the contact is difficult and it gets broken.'* (Windle Trust)

> "Not enough time for family. Difficult to reach them and very costly in time, energy and resources." (HIJRA)

> "The fact that I am this far makes me emotionally down sometimes. It's all new and of course the relationships are not the same as with your family. Here it's basically work and some little jokes. But there are people who know you and when you are broken they know how to help you. So that emotional link is my biggest challenge." (HIJRA)

> "Sometimes is not easy emotionally because of the family is not here and brings a big gap. All the time calling and you are worried. It affects sometimes the work but you need to keep going. So I'm taking every weekend long journeys to catch up with these gaps." (HIJRA)

Another dimension is the emotional implication and mental exhaustion as they deal with heavy cases and the overloaded work, which directly influences and affects their emotional wellbeing.

> "You hear these terrible stories every day and it gets you. It's very sad so you have to learn to cope with it." (Tutapona)

> "It's challenging because of the emergencies and you need a lot of attention and concentrations and sometimes is really heavy and your personal priorities would be a bit out, your focus will be the work at all time." (ARC)

The workload and time on the field can be exhausting, as sometimes it exceeds 12 hours until they reach home and they can be required to work as well on the weekend. I could witness and experience this myself during the time on the field. Life after work consists in few hours of free time, where each tries to take advantage of either resting, having some personal time while dealing with practical tasks, getting in touch with their families or even continuing the work which was not done in the settlement due to lack of time. Adding to these, the long trips which they take to get to the settlement twice a day are very tiring due to the lack of infrastructure, and it affects their level of energy. The literature mentions the difficult conditions in terms facilities which are affecting the work, the motivation and wellbeing of professionals (Chisala, 2015).

The Experience: Lessons and Transformation

The encounters with the harsh realities of the refugees and the context of the settlements brings more knowledge, deep reflections about life, personal growth, development and transformation. Such changes are acknowledged by professionals, despite one ‘s personality and attitude towards life.

The professional development is highly influenced simply by the exposure to the environment and field work. Moreover, those lead by a strong curiosity, interest or ambition in learning more, becoming more efficient and are able to improve the quality of their work and services. In the same time they tend to be highly appreciative for their time in such a context. Being in direct contact with what is lived by refugees gives a better and deeper understanding of their context (Rashid, 2015) therefore a better intervention is possible. Moreover, the diversity and complexity of cultures and communities, the authenticity of each case they deal with, the variety of services and organizations present in the camp are all sources of information and knowledge, as many of the respondents highlight.

When it comes to practicality, professionals both while interviewed or in the FGD, recognize new acquired and improved skills in communication, management, conflict mediation, learning new languages and other job related skills.

The influence over the personal life in terms of attitudes and values which become stronger, is firstly reflected through *gratitude, respect, responsibility* and *simplicity* as values and life practices. Respect is being referred to the self, individuals, environment and life itself.

> “I came to appreciate every moment of life… To recognize and be grateful for some of the things I have always taken for granted, like simple things, food or the comfort of a shelter…I have learned not to worry about small petty things. … how to live responsibly and get what life has to offer now.” (FRC)

> “It changed my life; I’ve learn to be appreciative, for all the things we take for granted, all little things (bathroom, bed). So I look at the communities because in general we don’t appreciate such things that we have access to.” (HIJRA)

> “I came to appreciate diversity and appreciate the people they way they are … give value to all that you see around you.” (HIJRA)

> “Working with refugees makes me feel responsible. It’s a commitment to serve someone, especially if I think about survivors of torture… makes me feel that I have a sense of control in how I am assisting this person and basically is giving yourself so I see it a big responsibility.” (Windle Trust)

Humbleness and patience are strongly emphasized both as a practice and as a learning and are relevant with the context of strength approach, as it helps in creating closer connection with the clients. The humbleness is mentioned by Freire (1973) in Saleebey (2012), when referring to the work with those oppressed in order to create fair relationships and acknowledge their wisdom.

> “I’ve learned that I have to be simple, humble and respect everyone. To treat everyone with respect and dignity, especially in the hierarchy. The higher you go on the leader, the most humble you should be.” (HIJRA)

> “It humbled me. I became more humble. You would find children who are unaccompanied and you realize that while they flew other people took care of them so it’s a heart that you see there, it’s also

> rare but it's there. They still have the heart of helping, they show so much generosity and care. So when I see this, I realize that you don't need wealth, you just need a kind heart." (HIJRA)
>
> "It's a lesson of patience. Because this work calls for great patience and understanding." (ARC)

Awareness and gratitude for peace in the country is another aspect which comes often in the interviews and was discussed in the FGD as well. The thin line which keeps balance in the country and the potential risk of becoming refugees themselves brings such reflections.

> "I realize the vulnerabilities and appreciate the peace we have in the country as I know we are all potential refugees. Despite the challenges we are facing as Ugandans, I came to support somehow the system, being aware and grateful for the peace we have." (HIJRA)
>
> "The peace in our government gives me comfort because I was not much aware of its importance before working in this area. Now when you look of how these people leave their countries and what they go through, it makes you appreciate what you have and makes you advocate for peace." (HIJRA)

Further on, the experience and meanings are not restricted only to this theme as other connected elements are found and elaborated with the following themes.

Theme Two: Strengths and Resources:

"And We Become Stronger"

The fourth objective of the research, focused on the strengths, resources and values is highly captured through this theme, together with adding the meaning of the work is presented in the following sub-themes.

Strengths, Resources and Coping Mechanisms: Professionals

Even though encountered with many challenges and difficulties, professionals are equipped with a multitude of resources, strengths and coping strategies and above all, strong motivations which keep them devoted and passionate about their work. Both from the field observations and during the interviews, respondents exhibited a positive attitude, enthusiasm and passion for the work they do. Moreover, professionals were confident in their words and showed powerful and convincing expressions in the speech. Their positive attitude and strengths can be shown also through the way they perceive challenges.

> "People think that challenges are all bad, but on the other hand they are good because whenever you have one you always think how to overcome it. So you became a great thinker and you develop so many new ideas and skills." (HIJRA)

> "For me, I call them opportunities better than challenges - the movement and the changes of the environment, the place, languages, cultures, the issues. Because sometimes you don't move to find out new things, so I've learned that there are so many new and good things outside your surroundings. So I will take these new things." (HIJRA)

Professionals are aware of their strengths and their development since working in the area of humanitarian work. Hence, despite difficulties and challenges which professionals encounter, as they become familiar with the place, they gain *confidence, become stronger* and are continuously reflecting and working on their self-development. Moreover, the inner drives are stimulated by their motivations, values and beliefs, together with the power of example and acknowledging the power in others, both refugees and colleagues. Here, the concept of heroism and *the everyday magic of ordinary* used by Salebey (2012) and its impact can be seen through their speech.

> "They are so strong … and I've learned not to complain because you see a person who has been through hell and back and they are still strong and fine. It's beautiful, it makes you also strong." (ARC)

> "When you see their situations and difficulties you start to look at life more positively, you become stronger." (Tutapona)

> "This work makes you stronger, because you learn so much from everywhere." (ARC)

> "Every day I write and I reflect. It's so much to think about, to understand and to learn." (FRC)

The human resource is being extremely essential for professionals, the wide networks and close relationships are part of what makes them strong, able to find solutions in their work and to cope with their personal struggles. Here, the team, the organizations, the families and the close friends play an essential role. Having good interactions with others, prioritizing humor and fun leads to stress release and wellbeing in their opinion. This was also observed during the field work and interactions with the professionals, especially the HIJRA team. As a positive and joyful atmosphere, combined with support and care for each other was present.

A variety of activities and hobbies or just leisure time activities, are essential for keeping up with the stress and the balance with the resting periods: *music, singing, dancing, sports, writing, watching movies, being with friends, doing laundry, praying, doing meditation*. Such activities are also used while working with the youth in order to bring up the same experience of rest and wellbeing. The literature highlights such key attitudinal and behavioral factors as mentioned by professionals, for releasing stress and maintain wellbeing (Drumm, 2014).

> "I love sports and I know how much it helps me so I try to engage also the youth in sport activities. They become happy and relieved because it increases your energy and level of happiness. And happiness helps you deal with stress." (HIJRA)

Other methods which are helpful are connected with the supervision, self-care methods, knowledge on how to deal with your own stress and the team as a support group. As Potocky-Tripodi (2002) mentions, the supervision increases the support and helps overcoming burnouts and further on, Montgomery (2010) refers to the power of relationships as being in itself a source of resilience and strengths. This was observed both among the refugee youth and professionals. Drumm (2004) as well, emphasizes the need for an attentive self-care and debriefing for avoiding the burnouts and secondary trauma for professionals.

Being aware of your inner strength, self-knowledge and *keeping a positive vibe, acceptance of your limitations* and *patience* are other resources and strengths mentioned by those interviewed. The FGD brought more examples of strengths and some of the voices are presented here:

> "… flexibility and capacity to cope with each and every situation. Determined and ambitious, try hard and do it. Those are my strengths." (HIJRA)

> "I have endurance and resilience. Always to try, never lose hope and keep going." (HIJRA)

> " Being a very social person, makes me be easygoing and can adapt and enjoy many environments; I am also quick at learning so I can adjust very well in working in a different setting. I can control my emotions and can react positively." (HIJRA)

> "… the love for people grows my passion and commitment and that's my strength." (HIJRA)

The spiritual dimension has as well a very important part to play, as it has been present in each discussion and reflects the faith and spiritual practices which have a high impact and influence on their lives. This dimension will be further on explored and developed under a different theme.

Passion and Motivation as Drives

When considering what brought them in this area of work and the meaning they give to their work, mainly refugees and humanitarian fields, all the subjects interviewed expressed their high desires to *serve* and to contribute to the wellbeing of others. Moreover, in the way of speech there were identified two types of motivations which are complementing each other, represented by internal and external factors.

The internal factors are driven mostly by the inner satisfaction one gets through the work , hence motivations and values which are easily translated to practice. Terms as *passion, love for humanity,* the need to share – *give something back to the community* (War Child Canada) – and touching a deeper level of being, while connected to ones' spirituality, beliefs and sense of self-realization. Moving beyond the economical aspect, the literature discourse are around the area of virtues (Saleebey, 2012), good morals (Kreitzer, 2012) and self-actualization for describing high motivational forces (Simich & Andermann, 2014).

> "I love what I do so I do it with a lot of passion." (War Child Canada)
>
> "I love to serve people and see people happy." (Tutapona)
>
> "There are no doubts if you love what you do… after a long day of work, sometimes you even find yourself at home working more and I have to do it, otherwise I get angry with myself." (Windle Trust)

The personal experience some of the professionals have, being themselves refugees or having lived similar adversities, brings forth a deeper motivation and sense of responsibility for their communities. Surprisingly, such contributions are not remunerated as the case of one of the subjects and as well drawn from the observations. Certain services have been extended both in child protection and community services and function with the help of the community, through volunteers. Therefore, it shows the sense of solidarity among the refugees and their shared values, along with other aspects which could be observed and acknowledged both by refugees and professionals.

> "I see many youth here are just wandering only, don't have anyone who can mobilize them. So I work to help my youth, to help my refugees. … I care for my fellow refugees and I want to be useful for the community and share my skills." (refugee DRC)
>
> "I get my motivation and drive because of the daily needs I see in the people and in my community and I am able to link the people with the alternatives." (refugee Somalia)

Looking back at a deeper sense of values and lived experiences, I illustrate the experience of one of the refugees who is working in the settlement, being previously a humanitarian worker in his own country. This represents a clear example of what Saleebey (2012, p. 18) emphasis as "holding high our expectation of clients and make allegiance with their hopes, visions and values."

> "Even in my country, I couldn't run away in the beginning, even most colleagues were killed or flew … after all I went through … Got really silent inside of me. I was broken. Total shock. First three months in Nakivale, I tried to reconcile with myself. I was unhappy and I devoted a lot of time to spiritual practice, reflection and thanksgiving. Difficult to think how my life was and how the time will not be reverted. So I was thinking, now the energy, the mind, the peace, the serenity, the hard work, the drive, all taken. I'm left with my little values, my norms, my codes and my ethics. There is

> nothing more left, than writing a book, helping the community and the poor. I still have my brains, my professional skills, my humanity, the sense of empathy and my values. I need to share them." (refugee Somalia)

The external factors exist but are slightly mentioned by those interviewed. Few of them mentioned such factors and are linked with the material gains, salary, the ambitions of getting in higher positions in order to have a bigger impact, improving and developing the services, achievements in the work, appreciation from colleagues and having *a room to develop* professionally through such work and a constant sense of growing.

> "… not just work for the salary, there are many other investments that one looks at." (Windle Trust)

Therefore, when it comes to the direct focus on the practicality of their work, professionals talk about growing the empowerment and capacity of the refugees and reducing dependency on services, in accordance with the self-reliance strategies. This attitude, reflects the link with the principles of strengths-based approach.

> "I designed this program in this place and I have changed a couple of lives." (FRC)

Constant Source of Energy and Inspiration: Positive Change and Success

The experiences of high impact and relevance lived by professionals, defined as valuable moments, are triggered especially by the changes they can see through their work, the impact created through the services provided and at times by witnessing the strengths of their clients. Hence, the valuable moments came across in the discussions being referred as constant sources of energy, inspiration and motivation in their work. During the speech I could see how their enthusiasm and excitement is growing, emanating positive energies through their expression and body language. Further on, even the smallest positive change in the wellbeing of refugees is considered important, being reflected and measured by the majority of professionals even through smiles.

> "Smiles on people's faces means change…so I conclude that it was a good work." (FRC)

> "Smiling means progress… represents change of mood and psychological state of an individual." (HIJRA)

> "When clients leave the office with a smile on their face it means that you achieved something, means success. You see them happy." (HIJRA)

> "I value working with the refugees because it makes me happy, to see and bring smiles on their faces even if something small is changed." (HIJRA)

> "You see them smiling and you feel the sense of gratitude as they are leaving." (Tutapona)

> "…the smile of a sick mother who doesn't have guidance and I can do something for her." (refugee Somalia)

> "Just seeing them and I get inspired, because they are so strong and can afford to smile and laugh." (HIJRA)

At the deeper sense, they link it with the level of hope which is being restored in people and considered as valuable for long term transformations and it is directly linked with strength-based approach.

> "Your motivation grows so much … to see those broken hearted have smiles and hopes… reinforce and rebuild hope." (Tutapona)

> "Seeing reconciliation, hope being raised among the people… stories and testimonies." (Tutapona)

> "lives change positively from misery and hopelessness… motivates me to see hope coming back and they are changing and I have an influence in their lives." (FRC)

Generally, the cases of success, are bringing motivation both for professionals and for refugees, being later on translated in examples, models and roles. In the context, the success is being classified from very small and simple achievements as youth being mobilized, to high achievements of some refugees or cases which are being difficult – dilemmas – and after intervention positive changes are seen.

> "Each case of success is relevant and creates impact in the community, so even if I succeed to put one child back in school, I know 10 others will follow after." (Windle Trust)

> "I had one case of a youth who was one of my greatest achievements while being involved in our leadership program … he excelled so much and reach to be a youth UN Secretary for refugees … his example and his gratitude are still having a great meaning to me… and I see, yes… it's there." (FRC)

Reciprocity of Giving and Receiving

The work itself brings a lot of satisfaction, despite its overwhelming character as it has been presented by most of the professionals. Repetitions of terms as *receiving* and *giving* were encountered at all levels of speech, linked with to acknowledgment of the effects and benefits the work itself and the relationships with the refugees brings to them.

> "I feel valued by the clients and I see their gratefulness… this gives me a lot." (Tutapona)

> "Your motivation grows and you know you are doing something right, especially when you see appreciation and you do feel important." (Windle Trust)

> "You need to give and receive … I've learned from the youth, it changed me and made me work harder and grow … wanting to do more, learn more, give more." (FRC)

> "It is a lot of effort and I feel that I make impact… it gives a lot of satisfaction because you see something tangible." (ARC)

On the same manner of expression, the reciprocity of *giving-receiving* is being presented by one of the respondents through moments when he meets the refugees in their villages, the interactions – *the human presence and energy transmitted* - and through activities he participates in, especially in schools with the children and youth. Very enthusiastic to share and to make me understand the value of such moments, he showed me – during the interview - a video he took in the school while some children were dancing in a recreational activity, and he added:

> "See! Something is getting out of her, presence, so this fills you also and you feel yourself relieved and stronger, you have much more to give now." (Windle Trust)

As Saleebey (2012) highlights, such experiences are lived and present in our daily lives and the awareness of it are connecting us with a deeper level in ourselves and each other, revealing the powers and strengths of the human spirit. The terminology used - *it fills you* - has been expressed with different words by other professionals, related with their deepest joys and valuable moments in their work and encounters with refugees.

The satisfaction and sense of worth which professionals get is being expressed directly through the gratitude of their clients, or comes out by seeing impact and change, through reflecting on their work and being aligned with their motivations and values.

Other similar factors which are increasing the sense of relevance of their work and satisfaction is being both personally and professionally present, taking the form of healthy relationships created with their clients and being needed in such context due to their skills, knowledge, availability and willingness to be involved beyond the professional requirements. The relationships with the clients and the quality becomes a powerful tool in the work process while focused on strengths and as Saleebey (2012) mentions, the relationships have a strong potential for change.

> "My motivation and satisfaction grows all the time, especially when I see change and I feel connected with those I work with…I feel useful because I know I have something to give to these people, both professionally and personally." (Tutapona)

> "My motivation is increasing, when I see that they change, that they have resilience and when I know that there is someone there who needs to be supported and I have the capacity and will to do that." (Refugee Somalia)

> "Sometimes my role as a father is very important in this context, because I feel that people need me here, they need someone to rely on and to be guided at a spiritual level." (HIJRA)

> "… this boy gained stability because he felt that someone is there to love him. I am very happy that I could be there." (HIJRA)

Theme Three. Beyond Professionalism: Good practices and Humanity

The findings related to the third objective of the research in terms of guidelines and the sub-questions related to this topic are answered and analyzed under the following sub-themes.

Guidelines for Practice

This part represents mostly a descriptive of the findings, showing what professionals acknowledge and refer to as guidelines. Hence, the guidelines present in the work with refugees, asylum seekers and persons of concern in the settlement are especially linked with the psychosocial part of the support and are represented under a large umbrella of laws, policies, strategies, theories for practice and approaches. They are found in humanitarian work, community development, social work and psychology. Generally, these are influenced and drawn from Western models and fall under international practice and structures. Nevertheless, there are aspects, which translated in a different environment and culture are being transformed and adapted, therefore we can identify indigenous knowledge, practices and ideas which are unique and drawn from an African context. These were observed especially through the interaction professionals have with the youth, the believes they have, the way certain issues are addressed and the spiritual dimension. Gray (2005) cited in Kreitzer (2012) highlights the importance of indigenous cultures and their potential in enriching and adding new discourses to practice. Therefore, such findings are valuable, as it brings up new models of work both related to the social work and humanitarian areas.

When it comes to the base and framework of structures which guide the refugee protection and assistance, according to professionals, references are made to UNHCR guidance, the refugee laws, human rights, the constitution of Uganda and the self-reliance strategies, children's rights and the African charter of rights of the children.

According to the education and the area of expertise, professionals either social workers or sharing similar backgrounds as sociologist, community development, psychology, education and administration, are familiar within the practice with similar theories and approaches, due to the interconnection and interdependence of social studies and humanitarian work.

Therefore, they mention the same theories and models of work such as: *Gestalt theory: focus on here and now; Cognitive Behavior Therapy; AGD mainstreaming: age, gender and diversity mainstreaming; counseling and psychotherapy; psychoanalysis.*

The approaches which are mentioned by most of professionals are the humanitarian approach, community approach and participatory approach, followed by: person centered approach based on strengths; right based approach; child and youth participation; BIA guidelines (best interest assessment); pyramid of social support.

Other things which come out in the discussion are the code of ethics and conduct, *the principle of do no harm, no judgmental attitude* and *cultural sensitivity*.

Overall, the link with the strength-based approach is present within the participation and community development approach. Moreover the self-reliance strategies are aiming towards empowerment and self-sufficiency which finds its roots in the strengths and capabilities of individuals. Within the context of self-reliance policies and strategies the work offers a direction and a further impact on the views of professionals since the awareness of creating independency and focus on the capacities of refugees is required. This aspect helps and facilitates the work from a strengths approach but does not mean that the practice and implementation of programs always follows this direction and there is a body of literature which critiques the actual implementation. Aspects related to the actual value of the self-reliance strategy did not come out from the findings since they did not represent part of the objectives and focus of the study.

Good Practices in Working with Refugees

The literature shows a variety of factors meant to increase what would be defined as good practices in working with refugees. The opinions of professionals in regards to what reflects good practices is relevant, both as source of information and presenting the direction and focus they have. Some of the good practices have been referred to as part of the guidelines, and other things which have been emphasized are presented here.

Therefore, a good practice starts with a *good assessment* which will lead the guidance from the beginning and build the work relationship with their clients. A strong emphasis is put on the relationships, including the participatory approach and cooperation – "*learning from them and working together"* (HIJRA).

According to professionals, factors such as *respect, transparency, empathy, acceptance, non-judgmental* and *non-discriminative attitude, unconditional positive regard,* are extremely important in the relationships, especially while dealing with youth as they are subjects of development, learning and *looking for roles and models.* As well, relationships which show genuine care, honesty, are *opened* and *free*. In this case, openness and freedom, refers to the role of the professional, since he is regarded as expert, from a hierarchical position and most of them acknowledge that this image needs to be transformed. Hence, the power balance needs to be equal and to arrive at a point where, as Saleebey (2012, p. 15) refers we are agents for them and *"our voices have to be quieted so that we can give voice to our clients"*.

Further on, "the beginning of good relationship, builds the way for change" (HIJRA), following a participatory approach.

> "I like to address children in a child friendly way, soft. I like to call them boss - *how are you boss?* and they are automatically smiling wondering *how can I be a boss?!* it changes them and how the relationships continues.'(HIJRA)

> "I ask youth , *how can I help you* because they would just say *you know how to help me, I just need help* so I always want them to participate and find solutions. I put a challenge to them, ask them to look at sustainability and make sure I get their opinion. I also challenge them to think beyond, think sustainable and understand their position." (FRC)

Professionals also talk about the importance of their clients' capacities and the necessity to continuously build on them, making sure that they are seen as *strong and independent* despite their condition as refugees, which follows the principles of strength-based approach.

> "We don't need to add to the trauma. I treat them as normal people, with no victimization and pity – if they keep say, *I'm a refugee*, it brings that type of disconnection and is the contrary of what are trying to do. Empowerment, self-reliance." (ARC)

> "They have high potential, especially the youth, when they are supported, empowered, believed in. They need to become more confident and to see that someone believes in them, cares for them and supports them." (HIJRA)

In terms of attitude, showing *commitment, full presence, love* and *hope* has its role to play in making progress and growing their motivation for change. In order for individuals to develop a status in society and grow self-confidence, self-esteem and self-respect, it requires the presence of love, solidarity and rights which are facilitating these transformations (Thomas et at., 2011).

Other ideas which came up, are related with the services and increasing their efficiency. Here the focus being put on join case management and extending the follow-up procedures.

Most Relevant Sources of Knowledge

The sources of knowledge for the practice represent a mixture between background, life experiences, the work experience, the field and of course, the education and training. Professionals express the necessity of the practice in order understand and be able to assist persons of concern.

> "I came to realize that some of the theories we learn and study in school, when it comes to real practice, some of these might not be of great help." (HIJRA)

> "Best knowledge comes from the field, and it's important to be there, see and taste." (ARC)

> "Best learning from the practice and the field, because things keep change. You can't go by the book all the time." (FRC)

Therefore, majority of professionals believe that being on the ground gives you a clear image of their situations and the experience is the most important source of knowledge.

> "People need to be understood and accompanied in their environment… being on the ground, finding solutions with them, it wideness your knowledge and skills." (HIJRA)

> "… best from the experience, the field when you experience something you understand better." (HIJRA)

> "During my time here, it's been a long time, I could see many change and progress and I appreciate it. I believe it's possible. If you don't have such experience, you as a service provider can lose motivation." (FRC)

The life experience, being a refugee, or living in a similar environment, having contact with people of concern or being yourself in adverse situations, is useful and could bring a deeper understanding and easier approach towards their clients, but it's not a necessary condition. As

Potocky-Tripodi (2002) suggests, it is ideal if the service deliver for refugees can be done by professionals who are familiar with the language, culture and history of their clients or even more if they have similar lived experiences, have been living in proximity and had interactions with the refugees for a longer period.

> "Some counselors when they receive someone who says *for a week I have not eaten, someone say, how can that be possible?!* But he has not the experience. But a counselor that has been experiencing being hungry can understand that, can be of great help and guidance and receive them in the best way." (HIJRA)

> "I know change is possible and I understand these people. Because I was a victim and my life could change… I bring up my story many times as an example." (HIJRA)

At last, the education and constant learning plays an important role as well, together with self-reflections about the work, supervision, keeping close relationships and sharing with the colleagues, mentors and being exposed to other examples of work and situations. It is essential that practitioners have a good knowledge, education and training in order to work with persons of concern (Potocky-Tripodi, 2002), adding the other factors mentioned for increasing the good practices.

Values, Beliefs and Spirituality

Professionals as individuals, have already their own system of values which guides their lives and work (Chisala, 2015), being later on introduced to the values of the profession, humanitarian work or social work.

Professionals talk about the importance of respect and responsibility at all dimensions and being further on transmitted to others, *give them responsibility.* This is linked with other values and beliefs which professionals mention, as commitment, hard work, ambition, devotion and care.

> "With hard work and the sense of responsibility everything is possible. I remember the words of my father, *I have hope in you.* This helped me change my family and get to where I am now. I believe that is possible to transmit this to others. Giving them responsibility and showing them that you trust in them. So, I believe people can change if they accept and chose, I have myself as reference." (HIJRA)

Other values which are reflected: compassion, presence, solidarity, integrity, confidentiality, honesty, patience, tolerance, showing empathy, protect dignity, forgiveness, trust, acceptance and many mention the *sense of humanity.*

Having a non-judgmental attitude in order to *start from where people are* and *not push them away,* increases the acknowledgment in ones' capacities and believing in oneself - '*to have in mind that you cannot fail*' (Tutapona) - and in others – '*everyone can do something'* (ARC).

> "I believe in myself. I have this *I can* in the back of my mind; *you can make it no matter what* . So I try to transmit this to the youth." (FRC)

As an ethical principle, the importance of beginning from where the client is, represents an essential point in the right of self-determination and clients' capacity and as Saleebey presents it, and enters under the strength-based approach (Turner, 2011). Moreover, transmitting the

message of faith in people and oneself has a powerful impact and is an essential step towards transformation and growth (Saleebey, 2012).

Education and the importance of knowledge came as well along all the discussions, being mention mostly as resource, necessity and goal, but as well as a value, both directly and indirectly spoken: *the only key is education.*

Faith, spirituality and religion represent an extremely important dimension in the lives of people, especially in the south hemisphere. In the African tradition and culture the dimension of spirituality is important, being referred as *the spiritual nature of human beings* (Kreitzer, 2012). It has deep roots in the traditions and believes people develop along the history, combining the need for connection with themselves and others, making sense of reality and events. Moreover, from the findings, it is reflected that this dimension is crucial in people's lives, bringing up guidance, strength and meaning. It was present in all the all the discussions, where terms as *God, faith, bible, prayer, church* were mentioned over and over. Only the terms *God* was found over 25 times in all of the interviews. Therefore, professionals refer to values drawn from Christianity and recognize the effect and impact of faith both in themselves and their clients. According to Thomas et al. (2012), religion can be used as an element of love and coping strategy as it is essential in developing confidence related to emotional support among refugees populations.

> "The most important value is love. You can't have respect for humanity if you don't love, you can't have kindness if you don't love, if you don't trust in God or if you don't pray. Respect comes from appreciating people as they are and begins with the love of people." (HIJRA)

> "I am comfortable and love what I do, doing God's work. … We need God's wisdom to guide us, we can't do nothing without God." (Tutapona)

The dominant religion in the settlement is Christianity, followed by Islam which is concentrated in the Somali and South Sudanese communities. There are many churches and mosques in the camp and people devote a lot of time for spiritual practices and worships, becoming part of their daily lives and representing a relevant and powerful resource. Spirituality and religion are interconnected with the culture, where faith and tradition play an important role in defining the cultural identity and therefore they make sense of their experiences through the process of spirituality (Shier & Graham, 2012).

> "For me, God and the spiritual teachings are one of the most important sources of strength. It's a good way to pass it to someone when there is nothing else to pass. To put some light and hope. You just tell them that *God is here*." (Windle Trust)

The humanitarian work and international social work require sensitivity to the practices and values of professionals, clients and their communities (Shier & Graham, 2012; Payne, 2014; Sleijpen et al. 2016). Hence, we need to recognize the value of the spiritual dimension in practice.

Theme Four: Strengths and Resilience in Practice: ’Keeping Hope Alive’

This theme draws aspects connected to all the objective of the research, especially the fourth objective as it incorporates the way professionals acknowledge the strengths in their clients, their attitudes and how the services are provided together with their expectations for the future of their clients. Further on, briefly introducing the voices of the youth consolidate the findings in terms of strengths, resources, through their own representations.

Conceptualization of Refugees and Refugee Youth

Being a refugee as a whole brings up a new identity, linked with a lot of psychological and social pressure, together with the lived experiences, the new status, the restricted present and the uncertain future.

When professionals talk about the meaning of refugee both from their perspective and from the way refugees regard themselves, a heavy image is showed reflecting the hardships they have been through, especially when they first arrive at the settlement. *Pain, hopelessness, worst thing that can happen to anyone* are some of the words used by professionals to describe the concept of refugee. In order to overcome and work with such situations, when it comes to experiences of youth and their needs, the professionals mention structure, routine, stability, aim and close support networks as crucial. And when it comes to the way refugees and the youth feels and the stage in which they find themselves, such reflections are made:

> “… very diverse groups, the youth especially experiences the feeling of homelessness and not belonging; Most of them have dreams and goals for life but once they reach here, they feel now that life is shuttered. Their dreams and goals are shuttered. We need to make them restart, reconsider, rethink everything.” (HIJRA)

> “(reflection on life in the camp) … Who are you?! You are just, you know like a straw getting blow into the air. You are nothing.” (Refugee Somalia)

Professionals are aware about how refugees see themselves and what they experiences. Both from observations and the interviews, it has been showed that they are trying in the process of their work to switch images of victimization and focus on their strengths, capacities and the positive dimension of life. In time, the relationships built, the way they are treated and the attitude professionals have, contribute for increasing their confidence and empowerment and build new identities and meanings.

> “They need someone to be close to them, able to regenerate their hope so they don’t lose direction and get into destructive behaviors because now everything seems dark.” (HIJRA)

> “.. it’s not the end to be a refugee … In time this feeling of hopelessness is transformed.” (FRC)

However, not all refugees have a negative self-image, some who show very strong resilience and are able from the beginning to respond well to their situations, to accept it and deal well with it – "*In time they become and think like the nationals, it's not easy to differentiate them"* (ARC). Without entering into details, professionals mentioned that depending on nationalities and situations, they create different stories and meanings, some being more easy going or resilient than others.

In Nakivale, the youth and the population under 18 years old represents over 60% of the overall population. This being highly acknowledged by professionals as they are trying to develop and focus their services on this category.

> "The key factor, the key group within the community that we target is the youth. Because without the youth we can't have better communities." (HIJRA)

The most important and urgent need for the youth which has been mentioned by most of professionals is the need for activities, *for keeping them busy*. Due to limited facilities both in employment and education, the opportunities for development are low. In this sense, it has been mentioned the need for *stimulation, bring up initiatives and engaging the youth in activities.* This has a double role, both in decreasing the risks for addictions, delinquency, mental health deterioration and on the other hand, *bringing meaning to their lives*, sense of worth and empowerment.

> "I see many youth here are just wandering only, don't have anyone who can mobilize them. Sometimes they think that because you are a refugee you have no power, but I want to show to people that you are a refugee but you are also a man." (Refugee DRC)

> "They have the running blood through their veins and you can't let them like that. We need to explore and work with that. They can easily become restless. We can understand them and don't limit them to such a place. We need to make them feel useful and their energy being used in good ways. To keep on building their dreams, because they are a source of change." (Refugee Somalia)

Other aspects which are captured in relation to their needs and acknowledged by the professionals are the constant necessity for *support*, *guidance*, *stimulation*, *given the space and freedom for expression, to be recognized, loved, encouraged.*

The Youth: Strengths, Resources and Resilience

The youth is *creative, attentive, full of life, energy, open-minded, curious, flexible,* they are able to be also responsible and take initiatives as long as they are interested in what they are doing. Drumm (2004) mentions the desire of refugees for meaningful activities, especially since the limitations of the camps.

> "The youth are very strong people, they have so much in themselves… They have ideas to promote their talents but need support for it and sometimes not even much support. For example, they started their own basketball team both girls and boys, they organized by themselves and worked and trained on their own. One day they just asked us for transport to go to Mbarara and play. And they came back winning 1st place both for boys and girls." (ARC)

> "They have talents to do things and able to do something for themselves and able to stand up and be active and strong. They are doing so many things – like youth involved in so many activities. I love

> their designs and artistic taste, especially Congolese. The way they do their hair, clothes. Because is not to have self pity but even I they eat one meal, they will be careful about image and self-respect." (HIJRA)

> "They are all strong but sometimes they don't know. It's our responsibility to be there and help them see that and help them grow and support their projects. So I have this hope but I encourage others as well to hope." (Refugee DRC)

The findings show that professionals are aware of the strengths of their clients and are working with them in that sense. As Saleebey (2012) points out, it is the responsibility of professionals to look for strengths, to appreciate and mobilize the powers and capacities they see in their clients, in order to achieve their goals and ultimately improve their lives.

The resources refugees have are drawn both from their inner and personal capacities but also highly from external factors as social network and community (Drumm, 2004). According to professionals, the internal resources of youth are related to their personalities, their skills, qualities and their believes. Hence, they mention: *good working skills, creativity, artistic talents, interest and willingness to learn, knowledge, strong faith, self-motivated, hardworking, courageous, strong.*

> "I am inspired myself and motivated when I see some of them how hard they work." (FRC)

> "By having a good inner attitude towards life and yourself and commitment to what you have inside will always bring you to success." (Windle Trust)

The aspect of hardworking was observed in practice in several occasions, where I could see the motivation, interest, enthusiasm and willingness of the youth for being engaged in activities, for learning and for being active, especially when we organized the workshop and activities, visiting their projects and initiatives.

The external resources are mostly found in family, the strong communities and social networks as they are *close to each other, support each other* and *cooperate.* In the same time, due to strong cultural patterns, some of the communities are very supportive, they show generosity to each other, share resources and there a sense of *sacrifice for the community.*

> "They are cooperating and they are very supportive, especially the Somali community – they stand for one another." (FRC)

Other aspects are related to the good and peaceful environment that Uganda provides, together with the policies, the possibilities for some to enter the job market, the aid from the organizations, the scholarships and studies, the volunteering opportunities.

Moving further into the aspect of resilience, professionals are trying to keep a balance between the negative aspects of life and the awareness of the strengths and their resilience. Moreover, they acknowledge that with proper support, assistance and guidance they are able to rebuild their lives within the limited conditions of the settlement.

> "In the camp nobody is quite sufficient. However, we don't believe in just sitting down here and doing nothing, we are a society which is creative and innovative, we are given space and peace but the mechanism is not there to make a society function properly." (Refugee Somalia)

> "We are talking about success and resilience, but we need to keep in mind that these people were so hurt, left with nothing and even given a new identity, in a new place where they have to start from scratch. And they are here, they rebuild themselves and start new lives. Of course, the environment, the laws and the services are there to support them, to give an impulse. But there is something more. Something that comes from within, the spirit. And we have seen progress, many got studies, jobs and they struggle but they make it, sometimes better than the nationals." (ARC)

> "Refugees are very strong people, very resilient despite all their problems they can afford to laugh and smile, sharing without expressing much emotion at times. They are also very hard working, if you give them the opportunity you can find them doing so much." (HIJRA)

> "They get motivation and inspiration from staff, the community. They are aware that is not about survival anymore, so you can start to do more, get to the next level." (ARC)

Professionals recognize that resilience is present and a big percentage of refugees are working hard in order to make their life easier and are able to do a lot on their own with little support. Moreover, examples and stories of success are increasing the motivation of people and their resilience. Professionals who have been themselves able to change, believe stronger in themselves and their clients and are using their experiences as examples:

> "I was a victim once, so for me I value this work. Because I know we need to push harder and I know where to push." (HIJRA)

The strong believes people have and their remarkable capacities for keeping positive meanings beyond the miserable and limited realities they are facing, shows the strength of the human spirit: *"The resilience in them and their deep faith brings back hope and the power to change."* (HIJRA)

Moreover, all the aspects encountered in literature in connection with strengths can be captured through the voice of a refugee which said:

> "… if you look around, there is so much misery and suffering. *And then, here comes someone who wants to know the strengths and resilience.* Unfortunately you want to know these … but we are strong because we know we are created, we are not from a laboratory and as long as you know you are created the creator knows your place. When every aspect of you fails down, you still know the purpose of life and why are you here." (Refugee Somalia)

Further on, knowing of such realities brought me the desire to conduct the research, trying to see what keeps the flame alive in humans and how can we work with it and increase it. And he continues:

> "*Even in hell there is love*, I say. This gives me a bit of resilience and I inject that in the community as well." (Refugee Somalia)

Working with youth: Dreams and Hopes as A Way Forward

When working with the youth one must consider their different interests, life styles, expectation and ways of coping they have since they are different from adults. Youth also can *easily get bored, impatient* and can be *inconsistent*, as well they need to be *given responsibilities* and *kept busy* in order to avoid destructive behaviors. For these reasons, professionals talk about patience,

acceptance, understanding, a good listening and getting to know them in order to respond creatively to their needs.

> "… they are all looking for joy and pleasure so music and art is one of the sources. So for me, I try to integrate it in the work with them. They are very creative, so craft work, storytelling." (HIJRA)

The youth I have been in contact with shows a proactive and energetic attitude, they are creative and developed many projects and initiatives on their own, in the area of arts, sports, culture, music, leadership, education and small businesses.

As Thomas et al. (2011) mentions, people need to feel valued and their efforts and strengths acknowledged in order to develop further their skills and identity. According to Vasilevska in Simich & Andermann (2014, p. 171), "nothing matters as much as having another person actively engage with them, someone whom they can trust and it continues with a welcoming interaction with a person who is genuinely interested in helping." Especially when referring to youth, this dimension is really important and from the finding it shows that professionals are attentive to this and as Sleijpen et al. (2016) and Garakasha (2014) emphasizes, the refugee youth needs to be listen to and given the opportunity to show their potential.

> "We just need to listen carefully because a problem identified is a problem solved; and they have the capacity for it with a little guidance from us." (HIJRA)

> "… identify a strength, validate it and make sure that the client understand their strength and encourage them keep practice it… it brings up self-reliance; we know that they have capacity, power that they don't see we try to work with that." (HIJRA)

> "First you listen to him, see where he is and then counsel and show opportunities…You show them life, guide them because an adult can say, 'what can you teach me?!' so youth is more receptive, interested and energetic." (Refugee DRC)

> "It's a partnership. You give them a platform to develop. You are with them and spend time with them and they will get the values that you want to preach to the community. It's a possibility but it haven't been explored enough yet –I believe that they will speak the same language like you." (ARC)

Three aspects which are very important when referring to the work with the youth came up, as the power of relationships, the attitude professionals have and the capacity of increasing their hope for following their dreams.

The importance of the relationship is highlighted along the literature, both from the professionals' perspective and those assisted. Sleijpen et al. (2016) show through their studies the importance of relationships and its effects, as it is expressed by the refugee youth especially when they are treated with openness, kindness and generally a friendly attitude. In the same manner, according to Kohli (2006) and Rashid (2015) an effective practice is directed by complex, powerful and warm relationships, where there is an emotional commitment between the professionals and their clients.

When it comes to the language, attitude and the way they are addressed, professionals mention the use of the same language as the youth, together with a lot of encouragement words, respect and care. Moreover, showing simplicity, humbleness and "*trying to be like their peer"* (HIJRA) has a big impact and considered successful.

> "It's easier to approach them if you speak their own language… they will be more interested. You have to be like them and know them." (FRC)

> "It's a different way that you address adults and youth. Adults feel they are always right, so you need to go with a message, you can't tell they are wrong. So you go like, *actually what you do is right, but can we make it better?!* They think they know everything. Then with the youth, you take the approach of *let me give more information, guidance* because they say they know but they are still in the stage of exploring, having some clues so they need guidance.' (ARC)

The strength-approach points out the importance of dreams and hopes and it has been also highlighted in the findings. The limitations, due to the environment in terms of resources and possibilities has been both observed and mentioned by the majority of participant in the research. However, professionals consider that they have to maintain a strong and positive mindset and *keep pushing* and they recognize and sustain the dreams of the youth within the possibilities of the context.

> "We need this spirit I CAN DO THIS, leave self-pity and victimization and make use of what we have and what we are. I always tell the youth: you can do something. Going there, take the chance the risk and you learn – if something bad happens you've learned your lesson and how to do it better if something good, awesome, go ahead and make it bigger." (FRC)

> "Each of us has power within us, brilliant ideas, knowledge, skills, something that can't be taken away from us, so we have the ability to change and transform, we have strong spirits. So this is hope." (ARC)

> "Their dreams are still on, they are still persuading them. And education is the most important as it keeps the dream on..The elderly lost hope but youth moves on!" (HIJRA)

> "The dreams are achievable for some. It's possible, especially if they get scholarships, or depends on luck, faith and those who work very hard." (Tutapona)

Hope represents a very powerful source and tool for positive energy present among refugees, as they have clear goals, projections about future and they are hopeful (Sleijpen et al. 2016), in particular the youth. The dimension of hope was mentioned previously and it comes back here in a more concrete picture.

> "I am touched because sometimes their situations are just too much and I am always wondering why don't we make much effort to stop the conflicts and avoid such situations. I see so much humanity and hope in them, just taking the example of those who are fostering children and how they care about each other." (HIJRA)

> "They have the energy that is pushing and have the zeal to safe life, to make life comfortable. I have seen brilliant people out there, using the minimum of resources and make the best out of it. Each of us has power within us, brilliant ideas, knowledge, skills, something that can't be taken away from us, so we have the ability to change and transform, we have strong spirits. So this is hope." (ARC)

Hope among youth is being presented through education. Therefore, education comes up again and again as a crucial need, resource and powerful element of hope. Education provides access to knowledge, development, further opportunities, brings meaning, self-actualization and increases empowerment and confidence among youth. Nevertheless, due to many factors, a great number of youth and children are deprived of education and therefore it becomes a great goal and dream, instigating the hope for a better life and transcending their condition.

The Voices of Youth: Self-Reflection and Realities of Strengths

A brief consideration was made for acknowledging the voices of the youth and their representation of strengths. Both the workshops and the FGDs were moments of sharing which were highly appreciated. The goal of the exercise was to bring up the strengths of the youth through their narratives and stories, based on a visual frame which as Hugues (2014) presents, and helps in reconnecting people with their past and future hopes. The youth spoke about themselves with courage, pride and joy and presented their ideas with confidence.

When considering their strengths and resources, the first thing that that comes up is the social networks. The networks and close relationships represents the highest source of joy and energy for the youth, fulfilling the necessity for being connected, the sense of belonging, the expression of love, care and safety ("*I am happy because my parents loved me*." 16 years old girl). For that reason, the family, siblings, the good relationships with their peers and community are highlighted by all participants and brought up both as sources of happiness, resource and inspiration.

> "I am happy when we are with my family, talking, laughing, enjoying and when we talk about the future, than I'm happy. Also when you realize you have good relationships with your neighbors, you can talk and share with them." (Female, 17 years old)

Enthusiasm and positive energy are shown and reflected through the possibility of getting education and experiencing success and achievements in school by the majority of participants. Therefore, it shows the necessity of education and its effects: *I am happy when my parents pay for me school fees*; *when I'm in school; learning and knowing more; when I can achieve my goals and be the best in my class.* For that reason, it strengthens what professionals refer to around the education topic. In the same time, it has been emphasized in different studies that the youth highly values education, as it represents a primary goal for being independent and gain a higher status (Munro, 2008; Sleijpen et al., 2016), hence improve their lives and transcend their conditions.

In the same manner, engagement in activities related to their passions and talents represent strong resource for them, as it brings satisfaction, a sense of self-expression and identification with. Similar references made by Pattman in Wyn & Cahill (2015) on their studies with youth and the dimension of identity.

> "I am very happy when I sing and play my chords. Because I am a musician." (Male, 19 years old.)

> "One of my biggest happiness was when I came to the camp and later when I went to Kampala and sang in a contest in the church, and I was so joyful because we sang and we won, that made me feel so happy." (Female, 19 years old)

Despite talking about their well-being in terms of resources, sufficient food, the work and the improvement of their living conditions, they also relate their experiences to the safety and peace of the environment.

> "…because we left Congo and came here, and we are not disturbed anymore. So living with my parents peacefully here makes me very happy." (Youth 5, DRC)

When it comes to great courage and situations where they felt strong, fearless and overcome certain obstacles, or what Saleebey (2012) would refer to heroism, the discussion was moving around the area of overcoming their insecurities and dealing with crisis situations.

Standing for someone, especially for those they love, being able to overcome their fears of expressing and exposing themselves in front of a large public either through speaking or singing represent some of the moments when they become fearless. Moreover, at a basic level, especially those who are younger, talk about the fulfillment of their needs, in terms of food, education, health, care and love received from their parents as matters of comfort, confidence and feeling fearless. Overall, they mention that as they grow older and acquire more experiences, they become more confident in themselves and their capacities. In the same time, as the professionals mention, some of the young people have a very high confidence, positive attitudes towards life and believe in themselves.

> "Sometimes we are not afraid because we know in what we believe and also because I know what I am and who I am; even if I'm a women, I am capable of do whatever I want because even if I'm young, I know what I am and I dare to do things." (Female, 19 years old)

The daily struggles in the settlement are not left behind and the youth show distress and disappointment, as they are not able to pursue their dreams, having difficulties with every small aspect of life . However, they are active and ready to look for solutions and fight for improving their lives, as some of them mention.

> "We fled from many problems, for our lives but we reached here and we have other problems, different but we have it. We don' have job, we are in foreign country and we are limited. Many people are suffering. Even we get food, we are hungry. So how to reduce all these problems, we are working, we do bricks and all we can." (Male, 19 years old)

Even though the social networks represents an essential element in their lives, yet show that the preference to deal with their difficulties until a certain point on their own, before requesting their families, peers, elders. This represents either a growth sense of responsibility, power and independence but in the same manner can be connected with what Sleijpen et al. (2016) mentions as trust issues, which some of the refugee youth might express due to their experiences.

> "I make efforts and I just do bricks because I don't want someone to laugh at me, I don't' want to beg." (Male, 17 years old)

> "Many times here I do face problems; I find heavy problems and I face them. So when some are coming also to ask me because of my age, my young brothers for help, it becomes too heavy for me so I go to elders to ask and see how to do." (Male, 19 years old)

> "You don't have to tell everyone your issues, because you will bring yours but find out that he or she also has problems. Then it means that you shouldn't go to all and tell them, because some can also laugh at you. You can't tell I'm hungry because they can tell to all and laugh at you. But you can ask for advices." (Male, 18 years old)

The spiritual dimension and faith represent one of the highest resources and strength for them, as they all mention it and emphasis on it. Therefore, faith, prayer, reading the bible or talking to their pastors or priest represents an important aspect of their live and relevant resource, confirming professionals' words.

> "First I pray, then I talk to my dears and they help me." (Female, 16 years old)

> "I also read the bible, I lay my life in God's hands because there you can find everything. We have seen miracles, people being healed and I believe." (Male, 18 years old)

> "I can't do something bad because God gave me a good heart. So I know that bad things can be transform in good, so it will end well. I have faith in what is good." (Female, 19 years old)

> "Also to leave it in God's hands because it's not just about us so I beg for God's advice and it comes." (Male, 16 years old)

Sleijpen et al. (2016) the role of religion is relevant for refugee youth, especially for creating meanings and explain events, together with the acceptance and the source of support and continuity.

When it comes to the question of strengths and resources, they all talk about their knowledge, education and skills in many different areas, they have many ideas and they talk about their talents, creativity (art, music, dancing). Moreover, they imply values as perseverance, courage, responsibility, seriousness, ambition, caring and love for people, kindness, humility and the importance of being charismatic.

> "I got skills from some trainings and it's been useful. Knowledge is so important so it helped me because I was not keeping it just for myself, I was sharing all this information with my society and friends. I was recognized and known for it, so I have great relationships with the community." (Male, 19 years old)

Role models and Inspiration: Stories of Success

Professionals mention the importance of role models and stories of success as they have a high potential in motivating and inspiring the youth, especially if the examples are concrete and come from the community.

It is inevitable that youth gets influenced by the behaviors, attitudes, believes and messages which they receive in their environment, for that reason professionals have an impact in the way they interact with the youth, through what they represent and what they bring according to what is mentioned above (Potocky-Tripodi, 2002)

Therefore, the youth expresses appreciation towards people who *have good manners, commitment, kindness, willingness to listen, be attentive and care.* In this category they include the professionals as *'those who want to help us'*, referring to their qualities, knowledge and good intentions and they try to copy some of their behaviors.

Here, the talk about professionals and how they are treated was mentioned by the youth, showing that the majority of the cases, professionals are regarding them as whole individuals, with respect and dignity, being able to listen and offer guidance. However, this area was not much covered as I felt that the group was reserved go deep into a debate about the professionals especially in a group and I found it unnecessarily to create disturbance and change the focus of the discussion.

The youth is very attentive and are able to observe the qualities and behaviors of those who they want to get close to, especially when it comes to their peers and friends, in terms of affinity and likeness in others. Hence, they consider *good behaviors* and *people who transmit positive energy.*

When it comes to inspiration and models, they mention their families and especially their mothers, using descriptions which show examples of strength, integrity, kindness and unconditional love. As well as, other elders in the community, leaders and people from the community who are working hard and who succeeded in different aspects of life.

> "There is no one like my mother. In every need she is so special and knows all; because she knows when I'm hungry and all I need. I do respect all the people because I learned from her about it." (Female, 16 years old)

> "My mother, for her teaching, how to be in the world. She is good and strong, never left us behind. (Male, 18 years old)

Examples and models which came out are either related to the spiritual and religious life, such as the example of Jesus or other characters from the bible, due to their values and ways of being. Other important or famous figures both current or from the history are mentioned. Here they talked about football players, musicians, business men, leaders, philosophers or teachers and they expressed they admiration and desires to reach levels where they could become like them.

The youth showed gratitude for the taking part in the activities and considered them important for their development. This emphasized as well their desire and interest to be engaged in activities with potential of socializing, learning, sharing and entertainment.

> "I appreciate this group because I might have some stress but here I forget for a moment all my problems because everyone talks about joyful things and it gives me some inspiration and courage." (Female, 16 years old)

Chapter Five: Conclusions and Recommendations

Summary of Findings and Conclusions

The main purpose of the study was to explore the experiences professionals have while working with refugee youth in relation to the use of strength-based approach. As part of the motivation for this research was my desire to go deeper and explore the sense of strength professionals have and how they share this with those who have been through tremendous and devastating experiences. Hence, I wanted to draw from the way they see the reality, reflected through their experiences, motivations and expectations in relation to their clients.

The field experience, the encounters with the reality of the camp and with both the professionals and the refugees, was an affirmation of the power of the human spirit, the strengths and resilience, as part of our human legacy and contributed in reaching the objectives of the research.

The relation between the strength-based approach and its utilization, even though not being consciously recognized, it has been reflected through the attitude of the professionals towards their clients, through their values, motivations and passion for their work and for humanity. Many examples of good practices while engaging with youth have been presented and observed. Nevertheless, there are limitations in terms of resources and availability of professionals to reach the high numbers of youth and respond to all their needs.

Even though encountered with harsh realities, difficulties and challenges in the settlement, professionals are willing to be there and are able to recognize the positive aspects of their experience while transforming the challenges in opportunities for development and learning. High workloads, stress, emotional exhaustion, obstacles in their work, awareness of the lack of resources and their personal struggles are mentioned and acknowledged. Yet surprisingly, the positive aspects tend to have a greater impact on them. Moving beyond the practicality of employment and material gains, they recognize the transformations and strengths acquired, together with a deep and meaningful experience in terms of reflections on life, growth of the sense of gratitude, fulfillment, satisfaction and inspiration. Overall, the findings show that it takes a strong motivation, passion, interest and certain qualities and skills for being engaged for a long time in this area of work. Therefore, through all these I have been able to recognize and gather the strengths professionals have and how they are reflected through their practice.

The strong aspect of faith and spirituality, together with values based on love and hope are highly presented, both as driving forces and high resources and can be found among professionals and refugees.

"*Even in hell there is love, I say*." (refugee Somalia)

Professionals acknowledge the importance of relationships based on such values, in terms of effects, impact and influence on youth and they are making use of them. Moreover, they are able to recognize the strengths and resources of their clients and promote them, emphasizing on the need for keeping a strong and positive attitude and activate the dimension of hope and dreams,

especially with reference to the youth. The strengths dimension is present in the guidelines, since they are constructed around the participatory approach, within the self-reliance policies.

The youth constitutes a very powerful group, reflections on their strengths and resources have been visible through the observations and being both presented by themselves and the professionals. Even though they are challenged with many difficulties, their needs are not being fulfilled and the context restricts their possibilities for development, still their resilience is highly present. Surprisingly, the findings show that professionals are aware of this aspect and try to promote it.

I have been impressed with all the positive aspects which came up through the research, as it denotes a great sense of responsibility, care and maturity from the professionals' side, despite the challenges they are facing and the criticism found in the literature. I believe that these aspects have a powerful potential for bringing more effective ways of practice, in relation to social work, humanitarian and similar areas of work. As I mentioned from the beginning, I believe in the importance of the impact and influence of direct relationships and encounters with the clients, which in a very simple way trigger the sense of worth and dignity humans need.

In terms of reflexivity, the research comes from a subjective perspective, being influenced by the previous experiences in working with refugees and the high focus on strengths and resilience. Hence, even though it was not the purpose of the research, I am aware of its limitations and I acknowledge the insufficient critique and focus in terms of the needs, vulnerabilities and risks which youth is exposed to in the refugee camps.

Recommendations

According to the findings, the following recommendations represent brief reflections in order to improve the quality of service provision in relation to the necessity for good practices in social work with refugees and the use of strength-based approach.

Social work practice

- despite the development of the profession in the African context, the use of strength-based approach enriches the practice and promotes the strengths and capacities of both professionals and their clients. Therefore, the focus on acknowledgement and use of strength-based practice should be further considered by professionals alongside self-reliance policies while working with refugee populations. In practice, this can be done by assessments which highly integrate a strengths and resource focus, further building on the outcomes, employing participatory approaches.
- to further acknowledge the use of indigenous knowledge in relation with spirituality as it represents a source of strength for both professionals and refugees; Moreover, the theme of hope and a focus on positive values are highly relevant for the work with youth, especially when it comes to motivation, inspiration and increasing the state of wellbeing. For this reason, professionals can use these aspects within their practice.

- to further acknowledge and promote the use of strength-based approach and resilience within the education context of social work.

Organizations and policy development

- to improve the working conditions: increase the numbers of professionals employed and/or reduce the caseloads; offer further guidance, trainings and quality supervision in order to reduce burnouts and to increase the effectiveness of their work. This would improve the wellbeing of professionals, their motivation for the work and satisfaction. Moreover, with better working conditions professionals would be able to develop and improve the programs and focus more on developing quality relationships with their clients.
- to support professionals in order to get easier access to their support networks in terms of access to their families or develop facilities and structures in order to bring their families close to their work place. This would reduce the personal stress and grow the quality of their work as it was mentioned by professionals.
- to improve and increase the services for the youth, since they represent the highest numbers in the settlement and both the facilities and services are not responding to all of their needs. To create more youth centers and attached facilities for sports, arts and technology as the existing facilities are not sufficient for the high number of youth and children in the settlement. Moreover, the need for education remains a high request and the structures in terms of schools, learning centers, libraries are not sufficient
- to increase the resources and funds from which the youth can benefit in order to find more livelihood opportunities; on the same manner to increase and develop more programs for youth both in the area of education , skills' development and microfinance for their stimulation, development and the improvement of life quality.
- further investment in trainings and workshops on topics and area of concern: reproductive health, addictions, non-violent communication and conflict management, leadership and psychological self-care.

Further Research

- further evaluation on the service provision in relation to the use of strength-based approach, reflecting the opinions and experiences of refuges.
- a deeper exploration of specific dimensions drawn from the strength-based approach and their impact on refugees and professionals.
- further research on the link between strength-based approach and self-reliance strategies, their implementation and impact on refugee populations with specific on youth.

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Annex 1. Interview Guide: Professionals

Exploring the experience of working in the settlement and the use of strength-based approaches in practice.

Professional background and work experience in the settlement

1. Could you tell me please about your previous work experience before working in the settlement?
2. Since when do you work here/refugees and what is your position?
3. Tell me about your educational/professional background.
4. What were your motivations in getting this work and how are they shaped today?
5. What does it mean to you to work in this area (profession/refugee context)?
6. How does your personal life experience impacts your work? Is your life experience relevant for your work? Are there similarities with the context of the refugees situations?
7. How do you experience the life and work in the settlement these days? (work, relationships, personal)
8. Can you describe a normal day of work in the settlement? and maybe example of unexpected situations?
9. So far, what were the main changes over time in terms of motivation/satisfaction/progress related to the work? What were they influenced by?

Challenges, Solutions and resources

10. Tell me about the moments which made you question the work you were doing? In terms of meaning/aim/progress...
11. What kind of challenges and difficulties do you experience with the work?
12. How do you overcome them? What helps you?
13. How do you deal with stressful situation? What helps you? Where do you find answers, solutions, resources etc?

Education and Training

14. What comes first in your mind when you think about the guidelines you are using for your work in terms of legislation/ theories/ approaches/ methodology/ skills/ values.
15. In your opinion, which of these are having a higher impact on your work and which do you think are more relevant?
16. What is the most relevant and useful source of knowledge for your practice and how do you get it? (education, practice, life experience etc)
17. What would be relevant for you to develop and or learn for the future? – improving the quality of your work.
18. What about skills, qualities or other competences which would be helpful?
19. So far, how do you think you can answer to the needs of your clients in this context?
20. When you think about *'good practices'* in working with refugees, what comes first in your mind?

21. Tell me about the ways in which you address/treat the refugee youth. How do you see them in comparison to adults?
22. How do you experience the relationships with the refugees and your clients? (in terms of collaboration, mutuality or partnership.)What would be ideal in your view?

Strengths and Resources

23. What are the most valuable moments for you connected to your work?
24. Can you tell me about values which are important to you as an individual? And what about personal beliefs about life, which guide you or are important to you?
25. What makes the people function at their high potential - overcoming high stress and difficulties, from your experience?
26. When do you see situations of change and stability among the clients? What are those triggered by?
27. How are your clients encouraged? Empowered? Strengthen?
28. How do you stimulate their capacities and competences?
29. What are the strengths that you find in the people you work with? What surprises you?
30. In what are refugee youth finding hope, energy and strength, from your experience?
31. How do you make meaning of the situation of refugees in general? what does it mean to you? how do you feel about it?
32. And what about them, how do they perceive their situation as refugees?

Based on the six principles of the strength-based practice, the following questions will be addressed and discussed:

33. If we think about the *interests, desires, hopes, dreams, aspirations, knowledge and capabilities of each person*, in the context of the camp, especially between the youth – how do you see these aspects in practice? Are some of these aspects realistic, possible to be materialized?
34. How do you experience the following sentence in your work: *All human beings have the inherent capacity to learn, grow and transform. The human spirit is incredibly resilient.* What comes to your mind when you hear this? Are there some examples from your experience and practice which could be reflected through this?

Annex 2. Guide Focus Group Discussion (Professionals): *Experience and Strengths*

Based on a discussions of the principles of strength-based perspectives (Saleebey), the following topics will be addressed:

1. How do you feel about working in the context of refugees?
2. What are the biggest lessons that you've got so far while working with refugees or in this area?
3. What about the changes which emerged since working in this area – in terms of practicality, at a personal level and lifestyle?
4. Think about your strengths and inner resources. What would be those strengths and inner resources? And where does your power comes from?
5. If you think about your clients (the refugees) what about their strengths? What surprises you and how do you use those strengths while working with them?

Annex 3. Focus Group Discussion Guide: Youth

Based on a discussions of the principles of strength-based perspectives (Saleebey), the following topics will be addressed:

1. Think about a moment in your life when you felt extremely happy, joyful, content. So what brought those feelings? What made you happy? Describe and discuss.
2. Think about a moment in your life when you felt fearless, you had so much energy and nothing was scaring you. Which was that moment or which are those moments? What are they triggered by? Can you give examples.
3. If you can think about your daily life and see the things which are a bit difficult or stressful - How do you deal with them? What are the challenges and what helps you to deal with them?
4. What helps you even you have problems? Where do you find support?
5. What do you think are your Strengths and Resources? As well things which help you be strong and make you unique? (qualities/talents/skills).
6. Can you think about qualities which you admire in others? What inspires you in others?
7. Who are the roles and models you follow in your life? Who are the people who inspire you?

Annex 4. Observation scheme: *'Life and work in the settlement'*

The observations took place between 06 – 24 March 2017 in Nakivale Refugee Settlement, mainly in Base-Camp, including the environment where professionals operate. While the period on the field, I have been supported and collaborated with HIJRA.

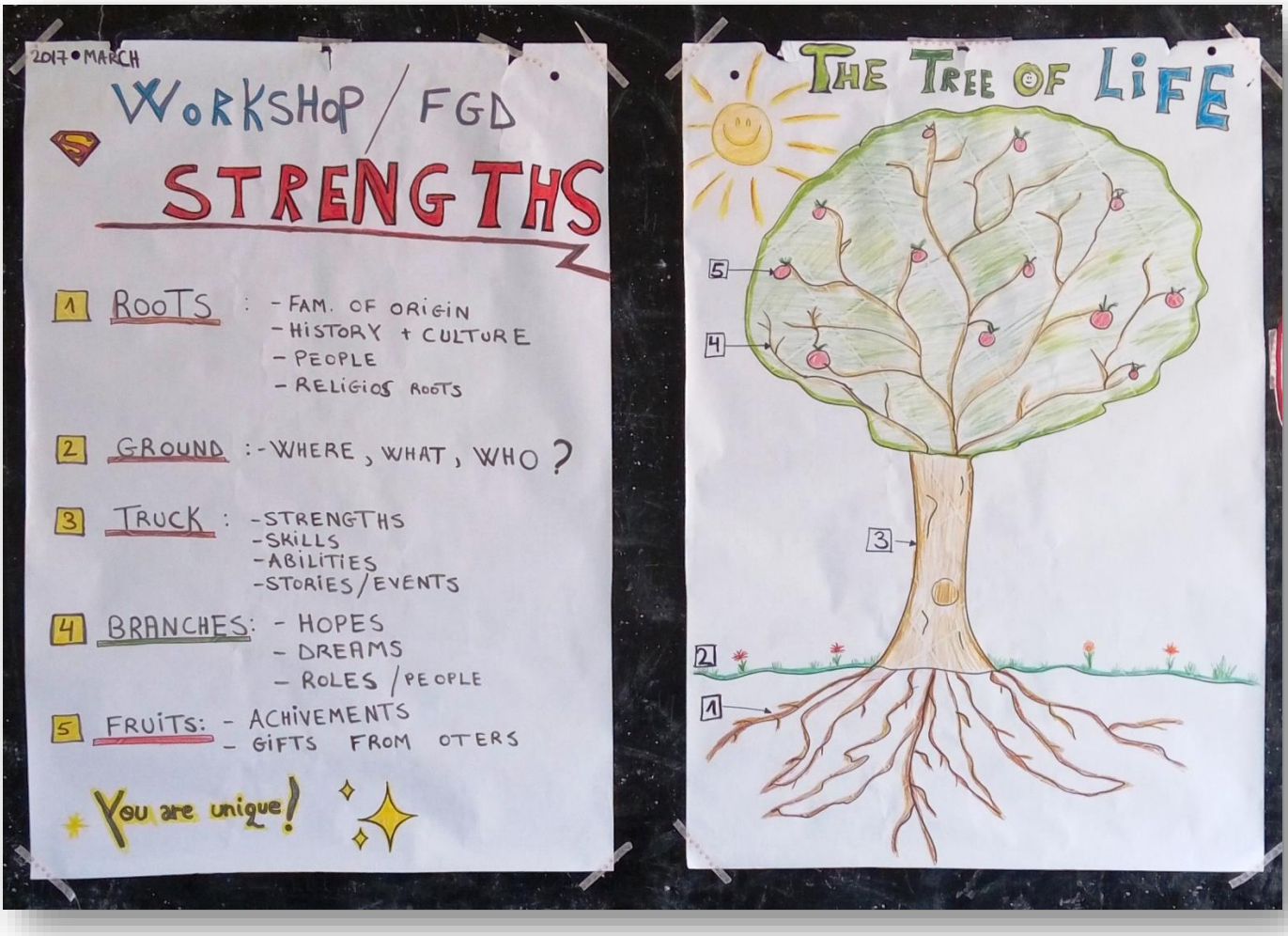
Observations include the following aspects:

- interactions between professionals and refugees, in terms of verbal and nonverbal communication; body language; physical proximity;
- practice of social work: methods of work; theories used; values;.
- reactions in different situations;
- both the attitudes of the professionals towards refugees and vice-versa;
- the decision-making process;
- the daily routine, activities;
- the environment and aspects of the live in the settlement.

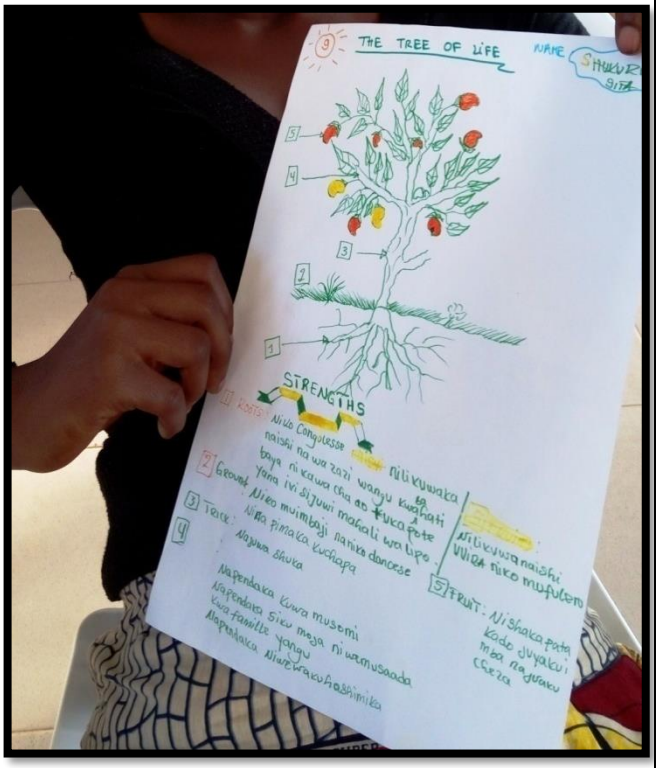
The observation while participating in activities, will be supported by questions of reflection and clarification and will be focused on capturing aspects from strength-based approaches.

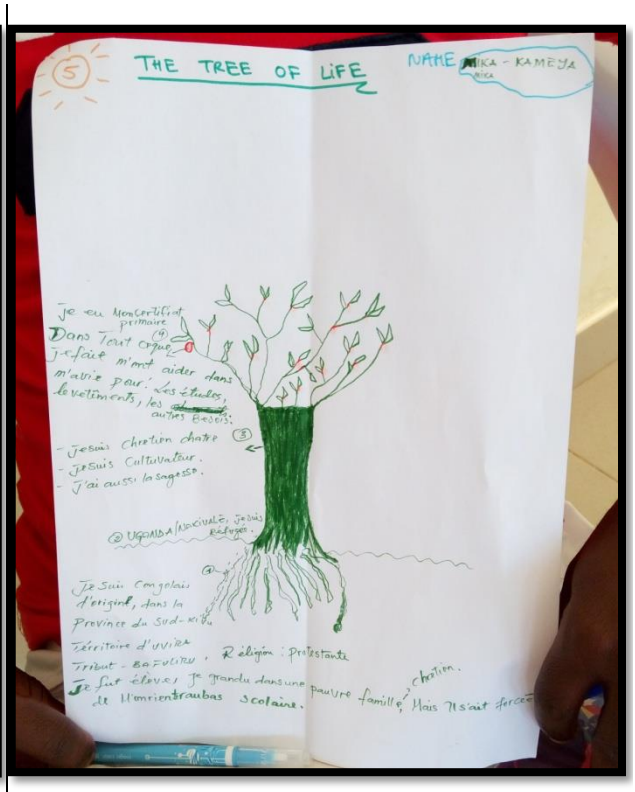
Annex 5. ***Finding a voice through "The Tree of Life"***

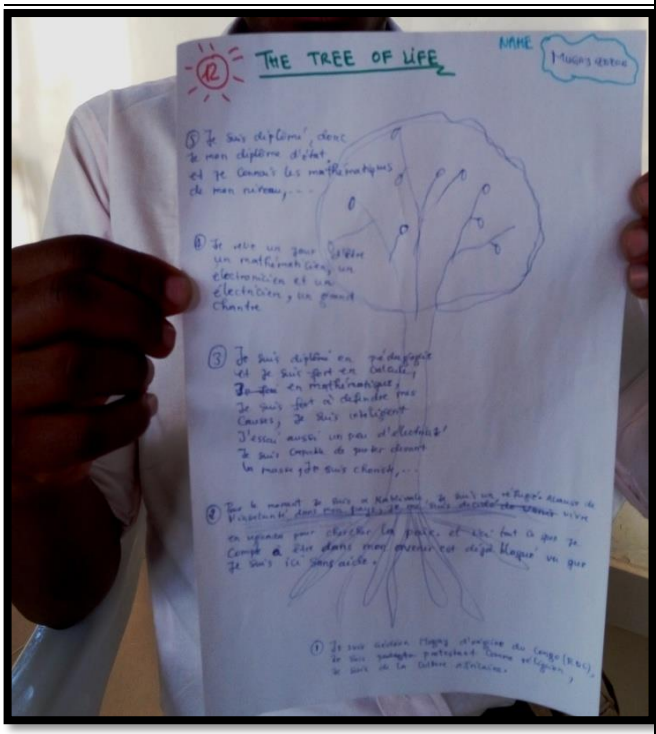
A strength-based approach to mental health for refugees .
Materials used in the workshop *'Il y a encore de l'espoir/ There is still hope'*, Nakivale Refugee Settlement, Base Camp 1, Youth Centre

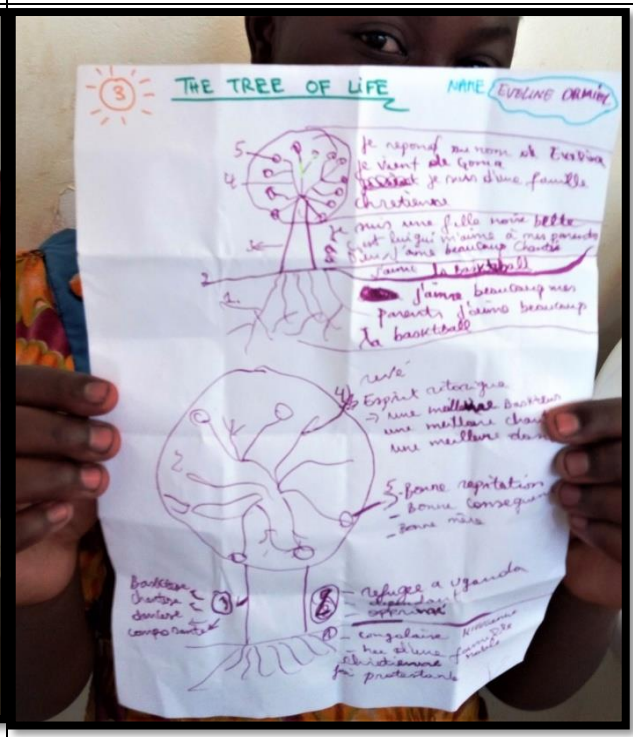


Annex 6. Examples "*The Tree of Life*" - Workshop, Youth Nakivale Refugee Settlement









Annex 7. Consent and Confidentiality Agreement

Consent and Confidentiality Agreement

Research Project: *Strength-based Approaches in Social Work: Professionals' experiences in working with Refugee Youth in Nakivale refugee settlement, Uganda*
Location: *Nakivale Refugee Settlement*
Approval for access to the field: *Office of the Prime Minister, at 9th February, No: OPM/R/41/1*

I, Ileana-Maria TURDA, master student, *European Master in Social Work with Families and Children* enrolled at Makerere University, Kampala, will conduct my research under the supervision of Dr. Denis Muhangi between 1st of March – 1st April 2017. The study will be conducted with academic purposes and your participation is highly valuable and appreciated.

I understand that I may have access to confidential information about study sites and participants. Therefore, by signing this statement, I am indicating my understanding of my responsibilities to maintain confidentiality and agree to the following:

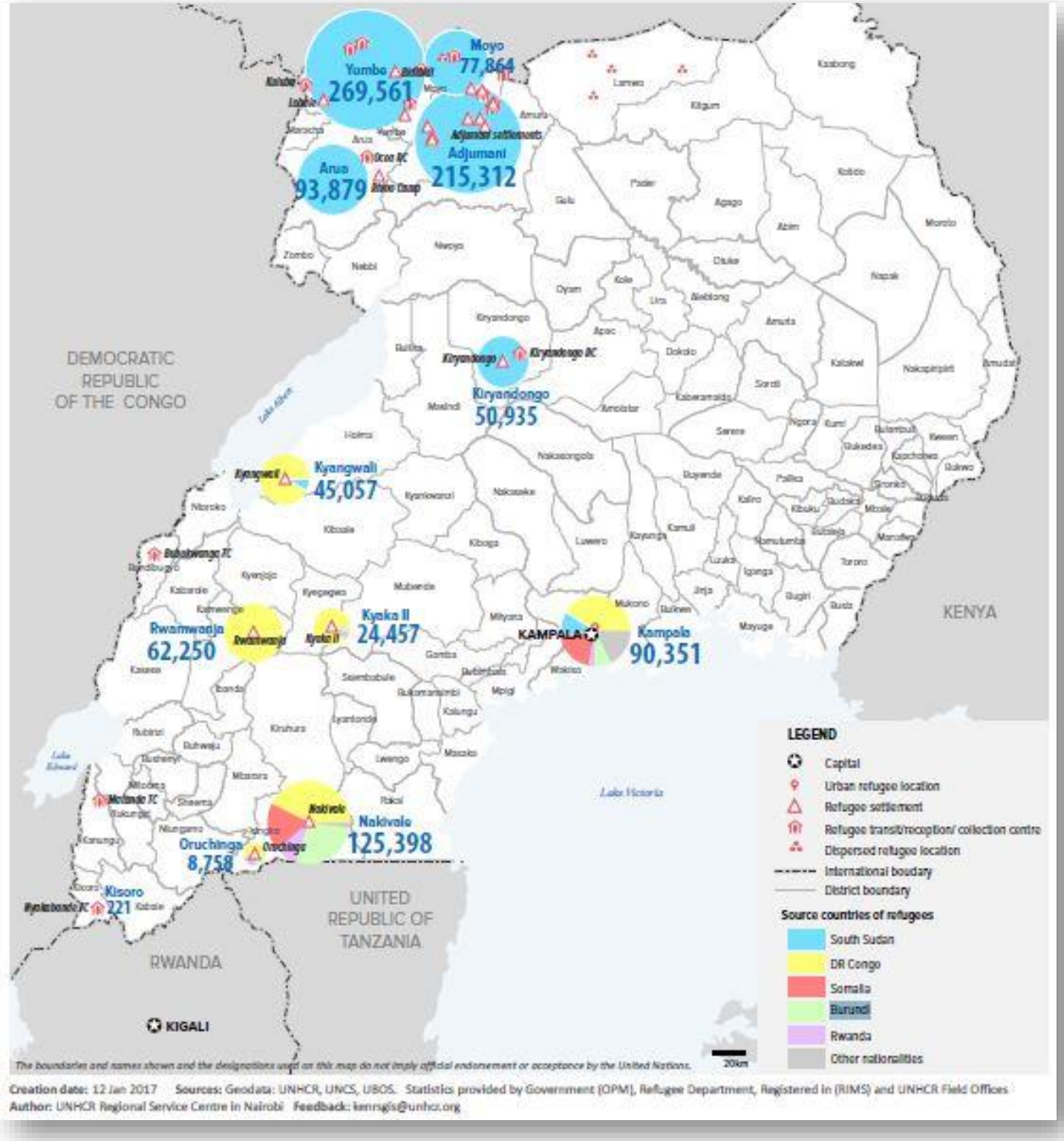
- To keep all the research information shared with me confidential by not discussing or sharing the research information in any form or format (e.g., disks, tapes, transcripts) with anyone other than the academic committee and researchers for educational purposes.
- To keep all research information in any form or format (e.g., disks, tapes, transcripts) secure while it is in my possession.
- I understand that names and any other identifying information about study sites and participants are completely confidential.
- I agree not to divulge, publish, or otherwise make known to unauthorized persons or to the public any information obtained in the course of this research project that could identify the persons who participated in the study.
- I understand that all information about study sites or participants obtained or accessed by me in the course of my work is confidential. I agree not to divulge or otherwise make known to unauthorized persons any of this information, unless specifically authorized to do so by approved protocol or by the local principal investigator acting in response to applicable law or court order, or public health or clinical need.
- I understand that I am not to read information about study sites or participants, or any other confidential documents, nor ask questions of study participants for my own personal information but only to the extent and for the purpose of performing my assigned duties on this research project.
- The participation in the study is voluntary, therefore you have the right to refuse or withdraw from participation at any time during the process. As well, you have the right to ask questions for clarification during the process and access to the report after its completion.

Student/Researcher:

(Name)	(Signature)	(Date)

Participant:

(Name)	(Signature)	(Date)

For further information, do not hesitate to contact me: mariaturda@gmail.com, (+256) 0787142106
Thank you for your time and participation!

Annex 8. Refugee Population and Settlements in Uganda: ***UNHCR, January 2017***