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Where Do We Belong: Rwanda or Uganda? The Conceptualization of "Home" by the Rwandan Refugees in Uganda

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Abstract: This article focuses on the conceptualization of "home" by the post-genocide Rwandan refugees in Uganda. Since 2002, the governments of Uganda, Rwanda and UNHCR have been actively promoting the repatriation of the Rwandan refugees. Despite attempts to return Rwandan refugees to their "homeland", considerable numbers are reluctant to return and yet voluntary repatriation has been flagged as the only primary durable solution available for them in Uganda. Although the question of "home" has been studied by different scholars, little attention has been paid to the conceptualization of "home" when refugees are in a protracted situation and are unwilling to repatriate like the case of Rwandan refugees in Uganda. After two decades of exile, the Rwandan refugees have lost interest in returning home and the concept of "home" has been transformed to mean the country of asylum-Uganda where they have peace. Therefore, this article disagrees with the notion that "repatriation equals home coming model". The argument is that home and the country of origin do not have to be the same.

Key words: Rwanda, Uganda, "home", Rwandan refugees, durable solutions, repatriation, protractedness

1. Introduction

After two decades of protracted displacement of the post-genocide Rwandan refugees in Uganda, the concept of "home" has been transformed. Although the question of 'home' in relation to repatriation has been studied by different scholars (i.e., Warner, 1994, p. 161; Hammond, 1999, 2004; Koser, 1999; Omata, 2012; Adelman & Barkan, 2012; Bradley, 2013), little attention has been paid to the conceptualization of "home" when refugees have had a prolonged stay in exile and are unwilling to return like the case of Rwandan refugees in Uganda.

Since 2002, the government of Uganda (GoU), the government of Rwanda (GoR) and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) have been actively promoting the repatriation of the Rwandan refugees (UNHCR & IOM, 2011). Several attempts have ostensibly been made to repatriate Rwandan refugees in Uganda such as: the signing of tripartite agreements, issuing several joint communiqué, sensitization and promotional campaigns — "go and see", "come and tell" approach, visits by returnees and "forced repatriations" of October 2007 and July 2010; push factors like ban on cultivation and reduction of food rations. And the invocation of a "cessation clause" which was set for June 2013 (but failed to be implemented) requiring the return of all Rwandan refugees. Despite attempts to return Rwandan refugees to their "homeland", considerable numbers

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still occupy the refugee settlements like Nakivale and Oruchinga in Uganda and are reluctant to return. This questions whether repatriation of Rwandan refugees is equivalent to "homecoming" or whether home and the country of origin have to be the same.

And raises more critical questions: What/where is home to the Rwandan refugees in their protracted displacement situation in Uganda? Why is repatriation flagged as the only primary durable solution available for the Rwandan refugees? What is the alternative solution for the Rwandan refugees in the home context? This study will answer these and other related questions. Before answering these questions, it is imperative to highlight a brief history of the Rwandan refugees in Uganda.

2. Post-Genocide Rwandan Refugees in Uganda

In this study, a brief history of Rwandans movement to Uganda helps us to understand the concept of "home" by the post-genocide Rwandan refugees in Uganda. Rwandans have a long history of migration to Uganda which dates back to pre-colonial era. According to Mamdani (2001, p. 162), the Banyarwanda in Uganda comprised three distinct groups: nationals, migrants and refugees. However, Rwandan refugees in Uganda have arrived at different stages of political history of Rwanda since 1959–1963–1964 and 1973 (Mushemeza, 2007). In 1994, Rwanda exploded again following the death of the then President Juvenal Habyarimana in a plane crash on 6 April 1994 leading to a new influx of refugees into Uganda (Van der Meeren, 1996; Mamdani, 2002; Newbury, 2005, p. 283; Mushemeza, 2007). The period of the 1994 Rwandan Genocide and its aftermath saw many, but by no means all, Tutsi refugees in Uganda and throughout East Africa, returning to Rwanda while large segments of the Hutu, fearing retribution, escaped and sought asylum throughout Eastern, Central and Southern African countries and beyond. Once in power after the genocide, unlike the previous regime, the RPF government of Rwanda has been conducting campaigns to encourage their people to return. However, majority are still reluctant to respond to repatriation promotional campaigns. Despite their reluctance to return to Rwanda, the number of the Rwandan refugees in these settlements keeps on reducing as some refugees are said to have self-settled within the Uganda's communities through their networks (Karooma, 2014, follow up visit to Nakivale, 2016).

3. The Protractedness of the Rwandan Refugee Situation in Uganda

The post-genocide Rwandan refugees have lived in Uganda since 1994, despite the promotion of repatriation since 2003. The task for finding a proper durable solution for them has increasingly become difficult as the refugees are reluctant to return, hence spending longer in exile. The inability to find a lasting solution for the Rwandan refugees has given rise to the phenomenon of "protracted refugee situations" defined as, "one in which refugees find themselves in a long-standing and intractable state of limbo" (UNHCR, 2004; UNHCR, 2009; Milner, 2014). UNHCR adds that Protracted Refugee Situations (PRS) is where refugees, …continue to be in exile for 5 years or more after their initial displacement, without immediate prospects for (the) implementation of durable solutions by means of Voluntary repatriation, local integration, or resettlement. In this case refugees in protracted situations find themselves trapped in a state of limbo: they cannot go back to their homeland, in most cases because it is not safe for them to do so; they are unable to settle permanently in their country of first asylum, because the host state does not want them to remain indefinitely on its territory; and they do not have the option of moving on, as no third country has agreed to admit them and provide them with permanent residence rights (see also Crisp, 2003; UNHCR, 2004; Omata, 2012; Milner, 2014). During the protracted displacement of the

Rwandan refugees, they have faced challenges of forced repatriations (October 2007, July 2010), denial of access to means of livelihoods like land, reduction on food rations, lack of access to social services, and threats of Cessation clause, but have still stayed put (Interview Rwandan Refugees, 2011, 2012, 2016).

Milner (2014, p. 154), points out that the causes of protractedness are a result of the conditions in the country of origin and the policy responses of the refugee-hosting countries. UNHCR (2004, p. 2) argues that:

> Protracted refugee situations stem from political impasses. They are not inevitable, but are rather a result of political action or inaction, both in the country of origin (the persecution and violence that led to flight) and in the country of asylum. They endure because of the ongoing problems in the country of origin, and stagnate and become protracted as a result of responses to refugee inflows, typically involving restrictions on refugee movement and employment possibilities, and confinements to camps.

In his article, Crisp (2003) questions: Why have so many refugee situations in Africa persisted for such long periods of time, leaving millions of uprooted people without any immediate prospect of a solution to their plight? He outlines different, but inter-related factors which this paper will relate to those of Rwandan refugees. These are: conflict and non-intervention, little attention to the solution of local integration, "residual caseloads" — some refugees choose not to return home, some refugees are political hostages — the search for durable solutions to refugee problems has been complicated and delayed by the political, military and economic interests of key actors.

Despite living in an uncertain condition in the refugee settlements in Uganda, the Rwandan refugees have stayed put despite repatriation campaigns and threats of "cessation clause". This long stay has continuously influenced their re-definition of "home" concept to mean "exile". This research found out that both conditions at "home" and conditions in exile have influenced their protractedness and hence the transformation the "home" concept. This study points to a number of factors based on a well-founded fear of persecution in the country of origin-Rwanda: *Gacaca* courts that were seen as unfair, association of all Hutu with the genocide, previous repatriation experiences that had horrific consequences for themselves and family members, and of land that they could not reclaim, Ibuka — remembering genocide, tyrannical laws like genocide ideology, works for community service-TIG where some escaped from, imprisonment and arbitrary arrests, political repression — as will be explained later in respondents' testimonies.

In addition, conditions in exile like: established kinship ties and presence of social networks in the host country, employment and economic status and security, the duration and nature of assistance program. I also found out that Uganda's refugee policy which favours refugees' interests — access to land and self-reliance strategy, access to Uganda's education system, better standards of living in Uganda, economic opportunities and relative security in Uganda — have influenced the repatriation process of Rwandan refugees in Uganda (Interviews, 2011, 2016).

4. Methodology

This research is largely informed by my PhD research on attitudes and responses of Rwandan refugees to repatriation in Uganda. It was carried out between 2009–2012 in Nakivale and Oruchinga refugee settlements in south-western Uganda and in Rwanda using a case study approach. The follow-up visits have been made in 2016, to up-date the study. During the follow-up visits, the researcher established that not much has changed compared to previous visits; and the respondents still hold the same views for their reluctance to return and for what "home" is. Following the threats of invocation of Cessation Clause in 2013, still there is no solution in sight for the

protracted Rwandan refugees. The following methods were utilized: interviews and narrative inquiry, focus group discussions (FGDs), observation and documentary evidence. The study involved Rwandan refugees, recyclers (those who were repatriated and came back to Uganda), new asylum seekers, government of Uganda (GoU) and UNHCR representatives in Uganda. To obtain a balanced perspective, ten Rwandan government representatives and fifteen returnees in Rwanda were also interviewed in August 2012. During the course of the field research, over 100 respondents — men, women and youth — were selected using purposive and snowball sampling. In purposive sampling, the study decisions concerning the individuals to be included in the sample were taken by a researcher to find people who could and were willing to provide the information, based upon a variety of criteria which included specialist knowledge of the research issue, qualities an informant possess, position in society, lived experiences, role in society or capacity and willingness to participate in the research. And snowball sampling is a technique I used to identify potential subjects with characteristics that were hard to locate. In this study, there were several Rwandans whom I interviewed who necessarily had to rely on me to hide the fact that they were part of the study for security purposes. The purpose of the fieldwork was to gather data on repatriation perceptions of Rwandan refugees in Uganda and the concept of "home". Ethically, voluntariness, confidentiality and informed consent of the respondents were observed. The field findings discovered that although repatriation of Rwandan refugees has been a key priority for the GoR, GoU and UNHCR, the notion of what 'home' is to the refugees has not been paid attention to in the last two decades of exile in Uganda.

5. Understanding the Notion of "Home": A Theoretical Perspective

> Refugees are going home. But to where? For many people, the trauma of being driven from one's home will now be matched by the shock of returning to a home that does not exist (Levy, 1999 as cited in Long & Oxfeld, 2004, p. 11).

Of the three durable solutions — voluntary repatriation, local integration, and resettlement in the third country — the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) since 1980s, proclaimed voluntary repatriation as the best durable solution (Harrell-Bond, 1989; Mupedziswa, 1993; Long, 2008; Warner 1994; Lopez, 2011; Adelman & Barkan, 2011; Omata, 2012; Long, 2013; Bradley, 2013) — although the current thinking is that the three durable solutions can work together and more attentions is be paid to innovative approaches to solutions (Crisp & Long, 2016) — repatriation is still emphasized.

However, Harrell-Bond questions: "Under what conditions is it [repatriation] the most desirable solution for refugees?" And she adds, "In whose interest is repatriation?" She emphasizes that UNHCR has made voluntary repatriation a major emphasis of its work even where conditions which led to the creation of refugees have not changed (1989, pp. 41–69). And she adds that every refugee should have the right to return voluntarily to his homeland. However, given the dynamic nature of society as well as of individual personality, the reintegration of returnees into the home society may be almost as complicated as the experiences of adjusting to a new culture while in asylum. It is likely that the longer a refugee remains in exile, the more difficult it will be to go home (Harrell-Bond, 1989, p. 42). Thus, although much attention has been given to aiding people to return home, there has been little investigation of what "home" means (Warner, 1994, p. 161) in situations of protracted displacement like for the Rwandan refugees in Uganda. Therefore, this article interrogates the conceptualization of "home" by the protracted post-genocide Rwandan refugees in Uganda, who are said to be reluctant to return even when the conditions that led to their flight have been said to have abated.

5.1 "Home" Concept

The concept of home has become critical in academic and policy discourses, particularly in issues concerning solutions to the refugee problem. According to Kibreab (2003, pp. 24–73), "Home is a contested issue." Koser and Black (1999, p. 6) like Warner (1994) suggest that there is no agreement in the literature on what "going home" actually means. Sociologists, anthropologists and geographers warn that home must be understood as a multidisciplinary concept that always needs a multidisciplinary research approach taking into account the efficacy and methodologies one employs in arriving at the meaning of home (Saunders & Williams, 1988; Iyodu, 2011, p. 8). However, Long and Oxfeld (2004, p. 11) note that mass repatriations are not homecomings or the natural outcome of a refugee cycle. As Rogge and Akol (like Warner, 1994, p. 170; Koser & Black, 1999, p. 6) state that:

> For many long-term refugees . . . repatriation does not necessarily mean "going home". Instead, they return to places or social environments that are different or appear to have changed, or, alternatively, where the resident population regard the returnees as strangers because of differing customs and beliefs that they have acquired (Rogge & Akol 1989, p. 193).

According to Koser and Black, the notion of return 'home' can be viewed in a number of ways (1999, p. 7). For example Iyodu (2011, p. 5) notes that the general perception of "home" is understood to encompass a broad sphere of emotional experience, sensory perception, memory and feelings of nostalgia. Others simply say "home is where the heart is" (Crawford, 2009), relating to or being where one lives or where one's roots are. And Graham and Khosravi (1997, pp. 115–133) suggest that "Home is where you make it" based on "repatriation and diaspora culture among Iranians in Sweden". It suggests that diaspora consists of "multiple homes" including the original homeland which is merely "the place of nostalgia" as opposed to other homes which meet more practical needs. Thus "returning" home can mean returning to a home other than the original homeland (Hammond, 1999; Kibreab, 1999, 2003; Adelman & Barkan, 2011).

At its simplest, it [home] can represent a return to the refugee's country of origin; but more generally, it is seen as more specific than that, involving the place of origin, perhaps the refugee's own house or land that was abandoned at the time of flight. This place called home may have both cultural and spiritual meanings for the returnee, as well as being the returnee's own property, imbuing it with an economic significance (Koser & Black, 1999, p. 7). Similarly, for Warner, while the country of origin is a simple, geopolitical concept, the home that the refugees are supposed to return to is more than a territorial place that is associated with a political entity. Voluntary repatriation is more than just return to country of origin; it is return to a home and community. Home, therefore, is the association of an individual within a homogeneous group and the association of that group with a particular physical place (1994, p. 162).

In addition, Coles (1985, pp. 185–186) argues that belonging to the group cannot be separated from belonging to a place that is considered home. For instance as quoted in Warner (1994, pp. 162–163), Coles describes home in the country of origin thus:

> The human need to belong is more than one for protection or for the means of individual development: it is also a need to be among one's own. Although this latter need varies in strength according to individual circumstances and to such factors as age (it seems to become stronger as a person grows older), it is normally a strong human need, the satisfaction of which is conducive to individual and social well-being and the denial of which is conducive to suffering and to social disorder.

He adds:

> Belonging also relates not only to a community of people but, normally, also to a land (the "motherland" or the "fatherland" or the land of one's ancestors). Man is not an ethereal spirit living outside space or time but a terrestrial creature with roots in a land and its history. A "people" is formed by physical propinquity, a native soil and a shared history that has formed common beliefs and values (i.e., its culture or civilization) and conferred on it an identity. The link between a people and a land is a profound one Warner (1994, pp. 162–163).

There is often an implicit assumption that at the end of conflict, a return to a place called "home" is both possible and desirable. However such an assumption can be questioned in both its aspects: return "home" may be impossible (Koser & Black, 1999, p. 7). Malkki (1995, p. 16) argues that the fixing of people in native places of origin is a reflection of the "sedentarist bias in dominant modes of imagining homes and homelands, identities and nationalities". For Dolan (1999), even when voluntary return is the ultimate intended outcome for refugees themselves, the mere removal of war and conflict may not be a sufficient condition to guarantee returnees full rights as "citizens" on return (Chris Dolan, 1999). In addition, Long and Oxfeld (2004, p. 11) suggest that in most repatriations, people may be allowed to return only to their former-nation states, not to their former home. In such situations, they often replace refugee status with that of internally displaced. Even if allowed to return home, such returns radically change the social fabric, and returnees may return to a different social or class status (Long & Oxfeld, 2004, p. 12). For Omata (2012, p. 1) repatriation is not always a triumphant experience for returnees. Repatriating refugees may face significant difficulties in integrating into the socio-economic environment of the country of origin, for example with regard to housing and livelihoods.

Hammond (1999, p. 228) points out that in contexts where refugee movement is spurred by civil conflict and where the period of exile has been prolonged return to the communities from which refugees originally fled may not be possible or even desirable. People who have lived as refugees for several years typically find upon return that they have lost their property and land rights in the country of origin. Therefore, many returnees do not see the object of repatriation as the "rebuilding" or "reconstruction" of their lives. Likewise, they often do not aspire to re-clothe themselves in the culture of the past or to re-join the community that they left. They may merely return to the same physical place, and in some cases may even settle in "a place to which they do not even have ancestral or kinship ties" (Hammond, 1999, p. 235). For example in her study, she gives an example of Tigrayan returnees who were settled in a new area in the country of origin-Ethiopia rather than the one they fled from. As such, the idea of repatriation may be limited to re-establishing one's national, ethnic or kinship affiliations and networks rather than returning to one's original geographic home.

Several other authors (Pilkington & Flynn, 1999; Eastmond & Ojendal, 1999; McDowell, 1999; Shacknove, 1995, Adelman & Barkan, 2011, Bradley, 2013) also disagree with the view that refugees must return to their original places in their countries of origin. For instance, McSpadden (1999) argues that home is constituted as a viable and sustainable national economic base in the homeland, rather than being tied to a particular place. Eastmond and Ojendal (1999) note that returnees can return to their prioritized areas of a country rather than necessarily to their original place of origin. McDowell (1999) suggests that sometimes refugees return to areas which they did not flee from and where their "ethnic" and "tribal" identity may mark them out of discrimination by the local population or local authorities. Shacknove (1985) points out that people can also be returned to a country where they are deprived of the basic rights which might be expected in the place called "home". Pilkington and Flynn (1999) illustrate that refugees can return to a homeland where they have never lived and where many actually consider themselves to be refugees. For instance, a case of Rwanda, where many of those

"returning" to Rwanda from Uganda and Tanzania in 1994 as the Rwandese Patriotic Front took control had never lived in Rwanda before. In such situations, notions of home, nationality and identity become critically blurred (Koser & Black, 1999).

On the other hand, Kibreab argues that in the era of globalization, mobility has become the mode of human existence and consequently national borders have lost their significance (1999, p. 385) and as a result, issues of home and identity have become more or less deterritorialized. He suggests that this period is characterized by a "generalized condition of homelessness" where "we are all refugees" or even "tourists". The corollary of these assertions is not only that the relationship between place and identity is denied, but people, regardless of their territorial origin, have become or are in the process of becoming citizens of a deterritorialized global world where concepts such as homeland, locality, territorially anchored national or collective identities have either become a thing of the past or lost much their significance. Kibreab therefore suggests that "since we are all mobile and, therefore, homeless, there is no home in the physical, material or national sense that refugees can return to" (Kibreab, 1999, p. 386). As highlighted by different scholars, the notion of home remains a multi-dimensional issue; some say home exists in the ancestral place or any other place in the country of origin, while some argue that home no longer exists. This article amplifies the voices of the post-genocide Rwandan refugees and their conceptualization "home".

5.2 "Going Home" or "Staying Home"? Redefining the Concept of Home by Post-genocide Rwandan Refugees

The following quotations highlight the voices of Rwandan refugees on what and where home is:

> Home is where we have peace
> A group discussion with Rwandan refugees, Nakivale, February 2011.

> Uganda is my home and I can never return to Rwanda whatsoever.
> A refugee woman, Oruchinga, April 2011.

> I would rather drown in Lake Nakivale than return to Rwanda.
> A refugee woman, 38 years, 2011.

> I am secure here and I can get some sleep, this is my home.
> An asylum seeker, male, Nakivale 2011.

> Home is impoverishment and lack of means of livelihoods, it was better there.
> A returnee in Rwanda, August 2012.

> We want local integration; we do not want resettlement in the third country because we want to stay near home. A refugee woman in Nakivale September 2016.

Over two decades of protracted displacement from the 1994 genocide, the Rwandan refugees in Uganda still lament on the question of returning home. My research among the Rwandan refugees found out that the meaning of home has been transformed. To them, home has been re-defined to mean the country of asylum — where they have relative peace.

While scholars assume that repatriation is a return to a way of life and association between identity and place that is familiar, and therefore better, than remaining in exile or being resettled to a third country (e.g., Malkki, 1992; Warner, 1994). And Mesic and Bagic (2011, p. 44) add: "It is only by means of return that the 'natural' and 'national' order that is assumed to have existed before the displacement can be re-established."

On the contrary, this study of Rwandan refugees in Uganda gives an alternative to the repatriation equals "home coming" model (Warner, 1994; Koser & Black, 1999; Hammond, 1999, 2004; Long & Oxfeld, 2004; Omata, 2012). Thus in the case of Rwandan refugees, home and the country of origin do not have to be necessarily the same (Interviews: Rwandan refugees, 2011). In the context of repatriation of Rwandan refugees and their interpretation accrued to home, the concept of return further blurs the meaning of home.

While the Rwandan government says that there is no reason for their people to continue to live a life as refugees in exile, because of established peace and widespread security in Rwanda (MIDIMAR, 2012), the Rwandan refugees have continuously chosen not to return. The refugees cite that the circumstances that led to their flight have not fundamentally changed (Interview: Refugees, Nakivale, September 2016).

It is also apposite to note that while circumstances which caused initial flight — the 1994 genocide, 1997/98 civil war — may no longer be directly pertinent, some new circumstances have arisen emanating from Rwanda's past. These include: persecutions and human rights violation, ethnic discrimination, absence of reconciliation, political repression, Ibuka-remembering genocide; property restitution challenges, undemocratic elections, absence of freedom of expression and of association, tyrannical and oppressive laws, non-independent and manipulated judiciary, persecutions against returnees, arbitrary arrests and imprisonment; institutionalized slavery through community service; which are said to be posing insuperable obstacles to return. Given such circumstances the Rwandan refugees are not interested in returning home except for some interviewees who redefined home as the post-Kagame regime. Furthermore, conditions in exile like time, social networks, prospects for naturalization, economic conditions and security were also found to be paramount in redefining home (Focus Group Discussion, 2012, 2016).

In the same vein, Zetter (1998, pp. 100–101) points out that the refugee experience, "may simultaneously create a parallel structure of 'new' and powerful agendas". These new agendas often become relevant to refugees' decisions about whether or not to return. The causes that precipitated flight may be replaced by new "causes" when repatriation is considered. This is in line with a Rwandan official who said that repatriation was becoming complex as Rwandan refugees' reasons for staying put keep changing most of the time. "When the causes of their flight are no more such as the genocide and *Gacaca* courts that were closed down, they cite totally new factors for their reluctance to return, which challenges the whole repatriation process." (Interview: Rwandan official, August 2012).

5.2.1 What and Where is Home?

With reference to my research, Rwandan refugees no longer perceive Rwanda as home. It was even difficult to carry on with the question: *What and where is home?* Because most of the interviewees categorically answered, "home is Uganda where we have peace." While different authors relate home to a physical space, the Rwandan refugees have redefined home in relation to peace in the country of asylum. For example in the words of a refugee man in Nakivale, "I neither have land nor property here, but I have peace. And home means where I live and have peace that is Uganda." An asylum seeker said, "Although I am not a legally recognized refugee with no humanitarian assistance, I am secure here and I can get some sleep unlike in Rwanda." (Interview, 2011).

5.2.2 Conditions in Exile: "A New Sense of Belonging"

The Rwandan refugees interviewed were unwilling to return to Rwanda. According to interviews conducted, the majority echoed a sentiment saying they wanted to be naturalized in Uganda where they feel they belong and have spent a long time. Considerable number of them said repatriation is not a preferred option at this point in time. As an interviewee said, "all we need is to be naturalized in Uganda. We neither have any special attachment

nor interest in returning to Rwanda." (Interview, April 2011). These can be categorized in Kunz's events-alienated refugees who frequently retain little interest in their former homes once they have left (Kunz, 1981). In this sense, home has been redefined to mean naturalization in Uganda where they feel they belong (Interviews: Rwandan refugees, 2011).

In the same vein, Ignatieff (1993, p. 6) argues, "belonging . . . is first and foremost protection from violence. Where you belong is where you are safe; and where you are safe is where you belong". He further notes that belonging also means, "being recognized and understood". As a Ugandan official said, "following little success in repatriating Rwandan refugees, people have a strong urge to stay with expectations of being naturalized in Uganda. However, some do not have a well-founded fear of persecution, but want to stay in Uganda for economic reasons and access to land since Rwanda is a small and densely populated country." (Interview, March 2011). Although naturalization is part of the comprehensive strategy to bring to an end the Rwandan refugee problem, according to UNHCR (2011), repatriation seems to be the only option available for the Rwandan refugees according to the Government of Uganda (GoU), Government of Rwanda (GoR) and UNHCR officials (Interviews, 2011).

The Rwandan refugee youths also ascribed home to mean the country of asylum because that is all they know. According to the settlement profile and statistics, the majority (60%) of the Rwandan refugees are youth and children born in exile (Nakivale Settlement Statistics as of November 2016). As McSpadden comments that, the fact that many refugees are born in exile, makes the meaning of home even more complex (1999). And Chimni (2004) states that second generation refugees may not want to return to a home they know little about (see also Rogge, 1994; Mesic & Bagic, 2011, p. 47).

In the words of the youths in Nakivale, "Uganda is our home because this is where we have been born, brought up and where we are studying from. We have parents, relatives and friends in Uganda. We therefore do not desire to return to Rwanda to be killed" (Group Discussion with youth, 2011). Another one said, "I am an orphan looking after my siblings. Our parents died and were buried here in the camp. I have never gone to Rwanda and I do not have any idea of our place of origin. How and where can we return? And to whose home do we return to?" As another youth said, "how can Rwanda be my home when I have never even seen my home? All we hear about Rwanda is negative information of people repatriating and being persecuted and every adult (above 18 years) being labeled a *genocidaire and* imprisoned. Some of us were born after the genocide, but we are associated with it which is unfair." (Focus group discussion: Youth, Nakivale, 2011).

However, a few refugees redefined home in light of resettlement in the third country for security purposes. Some refugees expressed feeling insecure in Uganda and highlighted examples of those refugees who have been killed and those abducted. Refugees cited the presence of spies from Rwanda in the settlements, while other refugees cited encounters where they have been attacked by unknown people. This has influenced them to redefine home as being resettled in a third country. When interviewed about the refugees' position on citizenship and resettlement, UNHCR and Ugandan officials responded that there is no way the Rwandan refugees can be given an option other than repatriation because their country is safe and willing to receive them (Interviews with GoU and UNHCR officials, 2012).

The protracted exile (more than two decades) was also found to have affected individuals and groups of Rwandan refugees in a profound way so that the meaning of home has transformed. Because of the duration of Rwandan Refugees in Uganda, the refugees tend to feel more at home in Uganda than Rwanda. It was found that with the time spent, the links of these individuals with their country of origin may have weakened considerably. Some of them have been born in exile. Many refugees have established family ties through marriage to Uganda

nationals or third country nationals residing in Uganda like fellow refugees from other countries. The majority refugees interviewed said that they have relatives and friends in Uganda, some are in the camps, others self-settled, while others are Ugandan nationals (Interviews: Rwandan Refugees, 2011). As noted by the Camp Commandant of Oruchinga refugee settlement, the presence of social networks for the Rwandan refugees in Uganda has become a challenge to repatriation process because on hearing the news of repatriation, the majority tend to escape to their relatives and friends in Uganda's communities as a strategy not to go home (Interview, 2011).

In addition, my research found out that Rwandan refugees also rely to a certain extent on their ability to interact with the host community in Uganda which has led to redefinition of home. They have integrated in Uganda's community which makes them feel at home. They have adopted Uganda's cultures and they speak the local language "Runyankole". They live harmoniously with the local community. They reported sharing markets, going to same churches, accessing same social services, i.e., schools and hospitals together, sharing grazing land, trading together, bartering their non-food items for food from nationals, being employed by the nationals and some have acquired land through the host community. This harmonious relationship with the host has also influenced refugees to call Uganda home.

Uganda's refugee policy which encourages self-reliance strategy was found to have empowered refugees economically leading to transformation of the concept of home. Through this strategy, refugees access land for agriculture. The study found out that some Rwandan refugees are economically and socially adapted in exile. Some are contributing to the local economy through agriculture. Some refugees were found to be practicing large scale agriculture while some were found to own more than 50 heads of cattle. Some refugees noted that through selling their agricultural products, they have managed to start up different businesses which have enabled their economic status in Uganda. Refugees further said that they have managed to educate their children through the sale of their agricultural produce. Therefore, they find no reason of returning to Rwanda because their children have studied and are employed in Uganda. For instance, a man said:

> "My son is a doctor and he is practicing in Uganda, he is married to a Ugandan and they have an established home here. If we are forced to go back to Rwanda, we shall escape to my son's home."

Other refugees talked of owning property such as land in Uganda, while others had well-established and furnished houses that look much better than for some Ugandans. All these have transformed the meaning of home.

5.2.3 Conditions at Home-Rwanda and Redefinition of Home

(1) Refugees' Perspectives

In another sense, based on refugees' perception of the conditions in the country of origin, the concept of home was transformed. In the words of a refugee, "I am not sure whether to go back or remain in Uganda because we are told that peace has not returned and that people are still being persecuted for crimes they did not commit. It's better in Uganda." (Interview: male, 41 years, Oruchinga, 2011). Another refugee said, "how can they talk of repatriation to a home when people (including genocide survivors, elites, i.e., journalists, judges, lawyers, social workers, army generals and government officials) are still fleeing Rwanda and even those who repatriated have come back to Uganda citing violation of human rights and reigning persecution? Rwanda will never be home unless people stop fleeing from it" (Interview: Refugee, 2012).

Based on their personal experiences and traumatic events in Rwanda, they see Uganda as "home". A participant said, "I survived mass killings and massacres after the 1994 genocide where most of my relatives and family members were killed. So far, I have fled Rwanda three times and I cannot go back because there is no

solution in sight to eradicate the causes of our flight. Uganda is our home and that's where we belong'' (Participant in a group discussion, Nakivale, February 2011). Because the ideal home is as much about the memory of customs, traditions or beliefs as it is about a physical place, it may be impossible to return to a home where they feel they do not belong.

Refugees further said that they cannot return or call Rwanda home because there is nothing in place for them after two decades of exile. As an interviewee said:

> We have nothing in place for us to return to. We get information that our pre-exile homes have new occupants. We have lost a lot including property, houses, land, jobs and time. Our home is forever lost, so where do we return to and to whose home? It is better in Uganda "without land" than returning to a place (Rwanda) where our property has been taken away (Interview, 2011).

Similarly, from the opening quotation of this article, Levy (1999) questions, "Refugees are going home. But to what….?" In the same vein, Warner (1994, p. 168) states, "there is confusion, therefore, in the concept that returning to home is going back to something, while at the same time recognizing that there has been an evolution among the refugees and within the country of origin…. Even if the pre-exile situation that caused the refugee to leave can be stabilized, there is no going back to the situation as it was before the crisis that caused exile….How can we go back to anything? We can go back to a place, but we cannot go back in time. …We cannot become pre-modern because we cannot become pre-anything." (Warner, 1994, p. 172). The durable solution of voluntary repatriation denies the temporal reality of our lives and the changes that take place over time (1994, p. 173).

(2) Recyclers and the Meaning Ascribed to Home

Some of those people who have been repatriated to Rwanda and came back to Uganda-*recyclers* reported harassment and nasty experiences on return forcing them to make a U-turn. For example, those who tried to claim and restore their property were harassed. In the words of a recycler:

> When we reached Rwanda in 2003, we were told to go back to our original villages. But actually, there was no home at all because people who had occupied our land had a negative attitude towards our return and we were not welcome. My land was occupied by an army general who gave me a room in his kitchen; however, he later set a grenade in the room which killed my wife and children at night. I survived narrowly and you can see the scars on my body. Therefore, when they talk of repatriation and home, I wonder to whose home I have to return too? I cannot therefore return to meet the person who took my land and killed my family.

Most refugees/recyclers interviewed supported the view that when you claim your land in Rwanda, you are either killed or reported as a *genocidaire* which scares them away. "What is a home in this case?" an interviewee asked. Other recyclers said that they neither had relatives nor friends in Rwanda to lean on. The people they found in a place called "home" were said to have been suspicious of them. They do not see them as Rwandans and part of their culture and community. They added that everything in their communities has changed including the names of their original villages. "It's not like we left and it is no longer like the pre-war time," as a respondent said, "we did not feel at home at all, so we decided to come back." (Group discussion: Recyclers, Nakivale, 2011). According to Warner, "If we imagine that the refugee's social networks have been uprooted during flight, during a stay in a refugee camp, and eventually during some form of integration into a receiving country, what do we imagine has happened in the country of origin [home] while the refugee has been away? Can't we also assume that the community in the country of origin has evolved as well?" (1993, p. 331).

In addition, Mesic and Bagic (2011, p. 48) suggest that homeland communities and the returnees no longer share many of the basic concepts, on which their traditional culture was based, including more practical problems

such as loss of property. "How can it be assumed that refugees are returning home when the very reasons they left were that they did not feel 'at home' anymore". Therefore, returning to a changed country, where social relations, political structures and economic conditions are not what they used to be may be equivalent to arriving in a new place. Based on this, home is not a physical place, but it is a collection of social relations and cultural meanings, because the very concept of home is changed in a war.

In addition, recyclers reported other repatriation experiences that have transformed the meaning of home for instance a woman talked of the murder of her husband on arrival, an elderly woman reported the disappearance of her two sons who were got from their house at night and others talked of having been convicted by Gacaca on alleged genocide charges. Refugees reported imputed cases and collective guilt in Rwanda. For instance, a man and former worker of Electricity Company reported having been associated with participation in genocide and another one said that he was interrogated to produce the father's (former army general in President Habyarimana's regime) gun. "What kind of 'home' is that where you are accused of what you did not do? We live peacefully in Uganda and we have freedom unlike Rwanda." (Focus Group Discussion: Recyclers, 2011). In this case, Mesic and Bagic (2011, p. 47) suggest that the refugees may be associated with previous regimes and attached to former ethnic and political elite structures, and thus be subject to hostility and jealous once they return.

(3) New Asylum Seekers in Uganda and the Interpretation of Home

Despite the promotion of repatriation and invocation of cessation clause, Uganda continues to receive new asylum seekers from Rwanda. For example, in 2010, Uganda received over 1700 Rwandan asylum seekers. The Refugee Desk officer reported that they receive about 14 people from Rwanda seeking asylum on a weekly basis (Interview, 2011). Despite living in a state of limbo with no refugee status, the voices of asylum seekers redefined home to mean Uganda.

Asylum seekers said that Uganda is home in relation to their history of flight and conditions in Rwanda. They highlighted violation of human rights, persecution, political repression, genocide ideology, ethnic discrimination and lack of freedom as some of the causes of their flight. For example, a man talked of having fled Rwanda in 2009 following the nasty experience of having been forced to drink waste water used to wash unearthed bones/fossils during Ibuka[1] days (Interview, 2011). Other refugees talked of tyrannical laws such as genocide ideology. One refugee said:

> I was accused and imprisoned of being guilty of "genocide Ideology"[2] because I asked a question about the discrimination of Hutus during a village meeting. I did not know the exact meaning of the word and the case was not clear. The word "genocide ideology" gave me hard time and I decided to escape, never to return to Rwanda. In Rwanda you must be silent, no questioning, no freedom of speech, so what kind of home is that? I do not have a refugee status here, but I have peace. I feel more at home here than in Rwanda (Asylum Seeker, Nakivale, 2011).

(4) Returnees Voices from Rwanda and Their Perspective of Home

> Home was Uganda, we feel like strangers or even refugees here in Rwanda. In Uganda, we had relatives and friends and we lived in a community that appreciated us. But here, we are not liked by the people we found. There is also lack of freedom and we must dance to the tunes of authorities. It was better there (A statement by a returnee in Rwanda 16 August 2012).

1 Ibuka means remember. During the first week of April, genocide is remembered and some of the activities carried out are unearthing bones and washing them. However, refugees said that all the bones are passed as for Tutsis.

2 Rwanda authorities found defining "genocide ideology" a difficult task. Even a Senate report (2006) stated that it was not easy to provide a "systematic definition" of "genocide Ideology".

Returnees interviewed in Rwanda reported difficulties in reintegration in Rwanda's communities. In the words of a returnee who returned to Rwanda in 2009, "I was excited that I was coming home-Rwanda, little did I know that I was leaving home-Uganda. Everything has changed, we are discriminated against in our society and we have to start from scratch." As noted by Mesic and Bagic (2011, p. 48), returnees are often faced with a home that has changed in its essence during the time they were absent, and it now requires a difficult process of integration into some new society.

Returnees in Rwanda redefined home as impoverishment, imprisonment, lack of freedom and lack of means of livelihoods like land and sources of income. The majority interviewed recounted challenges of landlessness, lack of food, lack of employment, lack of freedom and limited social services. Others reported persecution on ethnic grounds, complicated Rwandan policies, labeling, i.e., interahamwe/genodaires, son of a murderer. Three women returnees in Rwanda talked of arrest and imprisonment of their husbands by Gacaca leaders on arrival. Most returnees interviewed still had a strong attachment to Uganda and they said that exile was better than Rwanda, thus some of them said that they are likely to escape back to Uganda because they feel it is their home. "We are strangers and refugees here, we want to return home-Uganda," said a returnee in Rwanda. One returnee put it, "in Uganda, you cannot go hungry; someone can give you what to eat unlike here. And it is easier to earn a living in Uganda than Rwanda because the standards of living and the quality of life there are higher than here." "I am longing for home," said a returnee. (Interviewees: returnees in Rwanda, August 2012).

(5) Voices of Governments and UNHCR Officials about Home

Although the Rwandan refugees suggested that home is Uganda. The GoU, GoR and UNHCR had a different view of what home is for the Rwandan refugees. For example, a UNHCR-Uganda protection officer said that

> "home for Rwandan refugees is Rwanda. Therefore, when they cross the border to Rwanda, then they have gone home. Where returnees reside after return, that's the role of Rwandan government? Our concern now is to facilitate repatriation and hand refugees over to the government of Rwanda." (Interview: February 2011).

In my analysis, she shows that home is the country of origin for refugees. On the other hand, the Ugandan and Rwandan officials said that the home for Rwandan refugees is the ancestral place from where they originally fled? "East or west home is best," said a Ugandan official. "Therefore, crossing the border is not home, refugees must freely join the communities where they fled, re-unite with their relatives/community/clan members; fully re-integrate and participate in activities at home; then that is home." (Interview, 2011). A Rwandan official said,

> "even if some people fled from urban areas, they must have been having a root in rural areas where they originated. When people come, they are taken to their original rural ancestral areas. This helps us in trucking their flight history and why they fled? It also helps them to re-establish in their communities." (Director Refugee Affairs, Ministry of Disaster Management and Refugee Affairs-MIDIMAR, Rwanda: 14 August, 2012).

6. Conclusion

In conclusion, a number of factors that have led to re-definition of home have been raised by the Rwandan refugees in Uganda. Their voices have in principle redefined home to mean the country of asylum where they have peace. From observation, the majority are no longer interested in returning to Rwanda. Factors like persecution and human rights violations in their country of origin have also contributed to transformed meaning of home. Although repatriation seems to be the only option available for the Rwandan refugees, the majority prefer

acquisition of new citizenship or naturalization in Uganda where they feel they belong. A few suggest resettlement for security purposes, while a very small number defined home as post-Kagame regime. As different authors have defined home as return to the country of origin, thus repatriation = homecoming model, the study of Rwandan refugees gives an alternative that home does not necessarily mean the country of origin, but a place where they have peace. The Rwandan refugees in Uganda have a negative perception towards returning to Rwanda and they no longer see it as the same place they used to call home in the pre-flight time. In the words of a refugee, "repatriation is not the best option for us, if Rwanda was a right home, we would have long gone, we do not need to belong to Rwanda, moreover Uganda is a better home." In the context of the Rwandan refugees, repatriation as constituting a solution to the problem of displacement is a misconception. The majority are reluctant to return to Rwanda and their arguments were based on conditions at home and conditions in exile. This is in line with Brun (2001), who states, the decision of refugees to call a place "home" depends on the perceptions of refugees, which are influenced by incentives and disincentives in the host communities or countries of origin. As "rational beings", if the conditions in their host countries are more favourable than their countries of origin, they are likely to stay in the host country even if they are given the opportunity to repatriate. This view regards home as a "psycho-social" issue rather than just an issue of space and place. Hence Rwandan refugees view home as a place where they can live in relative peace and a place with established networks where they can live harmoniously with the host communities. In my opinion, Rwandan refugees have redefined home to mean the host country because of their protracted displacement (over two decades) which has made them adapted to the conditions in the host country.

This article shows that there are disparities between refugees', governments' and UNHCR's definition of home. Whereas refugees defined home as the country of asylum; the GoU, GoR and UNHCR officials defined home as the country of origin-Rwanda basing on the saying, "east or west home is best", which is a challenge. As Koser and Black (1999, p. 10) note, "a challenge to policy makers is to incorporate in repatriation initiatives refugees' own meanings of repatriation and their perceptions and expectations of home." The article suggests that it is pertinent to involve refugees in planning and implementation of durable solutions like repatriation of Rwandan refugees to understand where home is according to them. Hence a paradigm shift from tripartite agreement to quadripartite commissions where refugees are involved in negotiating repatriation should be put into consideration as Long and Crisp (2016) suggest.

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