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**“IF YOU MISS FOOD IT’S LIKE A WEAPON, IT’S LIKE A WAR”  
REFUGEE RELATIONS IN NDUTA AND MTENDELI REFUGEE CAMPS  
WESTERN TANZANIA**

December 2017

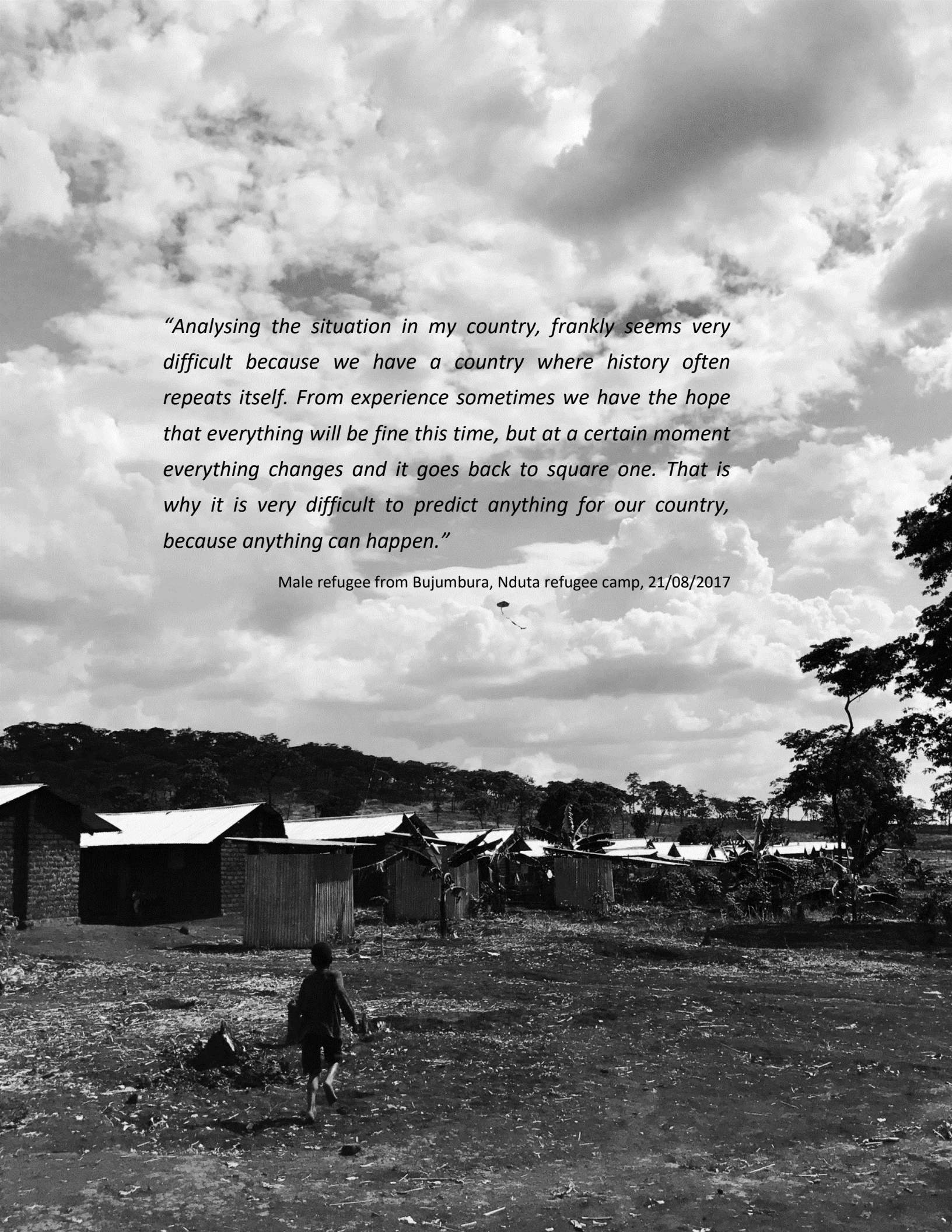


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*“Analysing the situation in my country, frankly seems very difficult because we have a country where history often repeats itself. From experience sometimes we have the hope that everything will be fine this time, but at a certain moment everything changes and it goes back to square one. That is why it is very difficult to predict anything for our country, because anything can happen.”*

Male refugee from Bujumbura, Nduta refugee camp, 21/08/2017



## FOREWORD AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The lead researcher and author of the study is Diana Felix da Costa, and she alone is responsible for any errors or misinterpretations in the report. The core research team was also composed of some protection officers with the Danish Refugee Council (DRC) Tanzania and Burundian volunteers working with DRC in Nduta and Mtendeli refugee camps. One month of qualitative field research was conducted in August 2017 in Mtendeli and Nduta refugee camps and surrounding host communities. Tanzanian host villages were selected based on their proximity to the refugee camps and included Kasanda, Kewe, Nkuba and Kazalamihunda villages in Kasanda ward (close to Mtendeli camp) as well as Kumhasha village in Murungu ward and Maloregwa and Rusohoko villages in Rusohoko ward (by Nduta refugee camp) (see map 1).

The overall purpose of the study was to improve DRC's understanding of the real and perceived causes of conflict between refugees in Nduta and Mtendeli camps, as well as between refugees and the host communities living in the areas surrounding the camps. The research tackled two different yet highly inter-connected themes: 1) refugee dynamics and relationships within Nduta and Mtendeli refugee camps; and 2) refugee and host community relations. Two reports have been produced referring specifically to each set of dynamics, which can be read independently but which also build on each other.<sup>1</sup> This report addresses refugee dynamics and relationships within Nduta and Mtendeli camps.

The analysis combines existing studies and reports collected in a literature review with empirical findings from 132 interviews. The methodology for this study was qualitative and relied on semi-structured individual interviews with a variety of informants (87), Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) (42) and life histories (3). Research participants include women and men of different ages from the refugee camps and the host communities, including community authorities and government authorities. Analysis is also drawn from participation in key events such as public meetings and forums. The report relies on extensive quotes and accounts from research informants that assist in relaying local perspectives and understandings held by Burundian refugees and Tanzanian host communities. All informants have been anonymised.

Most interviews with Tanzanian host communities were conducted in Swahili, while the majority of discussions with Burundians were carried out in Kirundi with interpretation to Swahili or to English. There are obvious limitations in the simultaneous translation of discussions, but due to the extensive number of discussions, findings have been triangulated and represent an accurate picture of the context

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<sup>1</sup> See also the other report originating from the study, Danish Refugee Council, 2017. *"You may think he is not a human being": Refugee and host community relations in and around Nduta and Mtendeli refugee camps, western Tanzania*, by Diana Felix da Costa for the Danish Refugee Council Tanzania.

of the camps as well as of the issues framing the interactions between Burundian refugees and Tanzanian host communities.

The study was made possible through European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (ECHO) funding. The research team is very grateful to all Burundian and Tanzanian stakeholders who offered their time to meet with the research team and share their views. Poul Thisted, Stefania Rigotto and Julia Butillon from DRC Tanzania provided valuable feedback to the two reports, as did Mads Frilander and Natasha Leite. Simon Turner from the Centre for Advanced Migration Studies at the University of Copenhagen provided peer review to the two reports. The contents of the two reports are the ideas and opinions of the author and do not necessarily represent the views of the donor agency, the organisation or the people above.

Photographs from cover pages: 1) DRC signpost 'Service Desk' which supports the management of conflicts in Mtendeli refugee camp; 2) child running in Mtendeli refugee camp; 3) woman chopping wood in Mtendeli refugee camp.

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## ACRONYMS AND TERMS

<b>CWT</b>	Community Watch Team; refers to a group of refugees expected to voluntarily assist in the community's safety and security (CWT is the name for sungusungu in the refugee camps)
<b>DRC</b>	Danish Refugee Council
<b>ECHO</b>	European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations
<b>EFS</b>	Emergency Family Shelter
<b>GoB</b>	Government of Burundi
<b>GoT</b>	Government of Tanzania
<b>GoU</b>	Government of Uganda
<b>HH</b>	Head of Household
<b>Imbonerakure</b>	The ruling party's youth militia (literally "those who see from far")
<b>MHA</b>	Ministry/Minister of Home Affairs
<b>Mwenyekiti</b>	Village leader normally in charge/overseeing 64 households in a zone; term used both in Burundi and Tanzania
<b>NFI</b>	Non-Food Item
<b>NGO</b>	Non-Governmental Organisation
<b>Nyumbakumi</b>	Local chief normally in charge/overseeing roughly 10 households within a village; term used both in Burundi and in Tanzania
<b>Sungusungu</b>	Village defence groups which have become formalised as community volunteers in crime prevention
<b>TCRS</b>	Tanganyika Christian Refugee Service
<b>TRCS</b>	Tanzanian Red Cross Society
<b>UN</b>	United Nations
<b>UNHCR</b>	United Nations High Commission for Refugees
<b>VEO</b>	Village Executive Officer (Tanzanian administrative unit)
<b>WEO</b>	Ward Executive Officer (Tanzanian administrative unit)
<b>WFP</b>	World Food Programme (UN)
<b>WLAC</b>	The Women's Legal Aid Centre

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report explores the dynamics of relationships among Burundian refugees in Nduta and Mtendeli refugee camps. The report begins by deconstructing and disaggregate the broad notion of ‘refugee’, exploring the nuance within this broad and monolithic category. It explores the diversity in causes of Burundian displacement and experiences of displacement, considering also how memories of previous exile shape current experiences, expectations and fears. The report then turns to the core themes of the research, exploring types, triggers and causes of conflict and violence in the two camps. It explores two types of conflict: within the family/household unit and between neighbours, followed by a short discussion on witchcraft as a balancing act. The report then turns to the causes of conflict. First, the connections between and spill-over of causes of conflict in Burundi and those in the camps. Second, the ways in which aid – or the lack of it – is contributing to an increase in tensions and conflict in the camps. Third, returns as a source of conflict. The report concludes with a short discussion of existing structures of authority in the camps as well as existing social support mechanisms before offering some final considerations. While there are certainly common elements in Nduta and Mtendeli camps as well as with regard to the dynamics with host communities, there are also important nuances that this report will raise and seek to explain. Key findings include:

- Burundian refugees in Tanzania have great diversity among them, in their areas of origin and in the causes and experiences of displacement. The reasons which continue to lead people to flee Burundi since 2015 are diverse, complex and often entailing more than one single factor and consideration.
- Because of the various rounds of conflict, political violence and exile in Burundi – as well as the geographical proximity to and relative safety of Tanzania – many of the refugees interviewed in this study had previously been displaced in western Tanzania, some even in the same camps they currently found themselves in. It is through those memories of previous experiences of displacement and life in Tanzania that refugees in Nduta and Mtendeli make sense of the camps and its challenges.
- Burundian people’s current experiences of displacement in Tanzania are framed by their histories of previous political violence and conflict in their home country, but also by their previous decisions to flee and experiences of displacement and of navigating a refugee camp in Tanzania. Burundians in Nduta and Mtendeli were also making sense of the then recent new dynamics of repatriation to Burundi through their memories and trauma of how repatriation was carried out in the last round of displacement. Not all Burundian refugees experienced forced returns but the memories of some feed the experiences, anxieties and expectations of all.
- Not everyone displaced in western Tanzania had previously fled their country and thought they knew what they would find in Tanzania. Those displaced for the first time are more vulnerable and less able to navigate the challenges of living in a refugee camp. Camps are not homogenous spaces and are

experienced in very different ways by their inhabitants depending on their social networks, economic capabilities and previous experiences of displacement.

- Although there are some nuances between the two camps, it is possible to identify common dynamics because the institutional environment framing the lives of people in the camps was the same and with some exceptions, the same UN agencies and NGOs operated in both camps providing similar services. Most significantly, the same limitations applied to both camps, in terms of restrictions in movement and (un-)availability of food.
- The study identified four main differences between the two camps. First, Nduta is more than double the size of Mtendeli. Second, until August 2017 (when this research was conducted) Nduta continued to receive asylum seekers, while Mtendeli ceased to do so from October 2016; the arrival of new asylum seekers affected the relative harmony and social cohesion of a camp. Third, Mtendeli is located in a less isolated area and closer to Tanzanian villages which meant there was greater informal interaction between refugees and hosts. Lastly, the dynamics of a camp are also determined by the approach and the decisions of the individuals running them.
- People living in Burundi but also refugees in the camps have come to understand violence as part of social life and people react to anticipated violence. This is all the more important to understand because of the power that rumours have played and continue to play in the history of the conflicts in Burundi. Rumours have the power to mobilise people into action, but also in more abstract terms, rumours are able to muster fears and anxiety.
- There are two key types of conflict: 1) Family conflict; and 2) Neighbourhood conflict, both with gendered repercussions.
- Family conflict often derives from the social transformations experienced in displacement, in large part due to unintentional consequences of social policies by aid agencies. Notably, changing gender roles create friction within some families. Resistance comes not only from men, who may feel their authority being challenged but also from women, who may also resist the changes to the comfort of habit. These socially engineered changes, such as 'promoting' women as 'formal' heads of household, need to be accompanied by discussion with men and women, in order to mitigate the social disruption and potential violence they bring with them.
- Conflicts between neighbours can arise when the fragile social balance is disrupted. This can occur due to minor events which quickly escalate into feuds between neighbouring families. As easily as they can escalate, conflicts can de-escalate equally quickly when and if the appropriate mechanisms are in place. Common reasons for disagreement between neighbours mentioned often in interviews included not knowing each other well; originating from different areas of Burundi; social inequality; the borrowing of money and inability to pay back; stealing food or other goods; abusive language; children quarrelling.



- Accusations of witchcraft can occur between neighbours or even within a family. While it is possible to find cases of accusations of witchcraft against men and women, the latter is much more common and these have a very gendered dynamic. There are also generational dynamics at play, with older women being most vulnerable of being accused of being witches. Witchcraft can be understood as a means to maintain social equilibrium in the community by targeting individuals who may be perceived as not adhering recognised social norms, such as refusing to share resources.
- The study found that the most common triggers of conflict in the camps are those which provoke abrupt changes in social dynamics. Changes can occur due to the arrival of new refugees to a neighbourhood or the decrease in food rations which directly impacts social dynamics in the family and in neighbourhood relations, as well as in the relationships between refugees and staff providing aid. Witchcraft is sometimes used as a means to explain and address conflict.
- The study identified three key causes of conflicts in the camps: 1) The spill-over of causes of conflict imported from Burundi into conflict into the camps; 2) The consequences of the delivery of aid, including in terms of the unintended consequences of social engineering; and 3) the recent pressure and dynamics around returns and repatriation has led to conflict in the camps.
- In many ways the dynamics in the camps are microcosms of social and political life in Burundi, where the environment from home is inadvertently imported and replicated. In addition, events that may occur in the Burundian refugee camps in Tanzania but also in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Uganda and other contexts, diaspora communities further away, as well as events within Burundi, are constellations that belong to the same system and intimately connected, meaning that what affects one camp is likely to spill-over to the other. Information (including rumours) flows between the camps and elsewhere.
- As people cross to Tanzania and establish themselves in the camps they also bring with them their fears, anxieties, biases and the reasons which forced them to flee in the first place. In the camps of Tanzania, the *imbonerakure* remain greatly feared and were one of the prime reasons that caused people to flee.<sup>2</sup>
- The sensitive question of ethnicity remains a core element in considering the nature of power, the means it has been deployed in Burundi and the subtle ways in which it frames all relationships. While ethnicity does not at first appear to be a central feature in the dynamics of the camps, it is part of shaping relationships in the camps.
- The delivery – as well as the withholding or the mismanagement – of aid in the refugee camps is directly linked to an escalation (as well as decrease) of tensions, conflict and violence between refugees, as well as between refugees and host communities. Patterns and trends of food distribution can be correlated with patterns of conflict within the camps as well as between refugees

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<sup>2</sup> *Imbonerakure* is the ruling party's youth militia (literally "those who see from far").

and Tanzanians outside the camps. There is a clear correlation between decrease in food rations and an increase in theft by refugees among themselves and in the host communities.

- During the research period, returns were a significant cause of tension, anxiety and fear among refugees in the two camps. Returns led to tensions between refugees who registered to return and the majority of Burundians who still fear returning to Burundi. On the one hand, those who were not willing to return feared those who registered to return and perceived them as infiltrators in the camps who deliberately caused havoc. On the other hand, discussions on returns also triggered the fear of forced returns, based on memories from Lukole and Mtabila refugee camps. According to refugees interviewed, many who registered did so under fear of a perceived escalating possibility of forced returns, rather than a recognition that the situation in Burundi was safe to return. Others, in turn, registered to repatriate due to the hardships in the camp, especially insufficient food rations. In sum, the perceived fear of possible forced returns caused a lot of uncertainty and anxiety which led to tensions. Ultimately, in the absence of security and insufficient food, many refugees also felt compelled to voluntarily register to return as the only option they perceived to have.
- Refugee structures of authority in the camps are heavily influenced by aid agencies, but also appear to reflect local leadership structures from Burundi. Issues, concerns or calls for help are first taken to the *nyumbakumi*, then *mwenyekiti* and if still unsolved on to the zone leader.<sup>3</sup> There is an important distinction between conflicts which may belong to the private sphere of the 'home', and those belonging to the public sphere that may require the intervention of the police or of more official authorities. Family and neighbourhood conflict are typically solved by refugee structures of authority unless they involve a crime.
- It is important to recognise the existence of organic community support structures that reveal how despite the common claims of social chaos and disarray in the camps, the alleged lack of social cohesion and the distrust between neighbours, there are also important social support community networks between neighbours as well as some social solidarity between refugees. Self-organised yet formally structured social support groups are common across the two camps, indicating a positive level of social mobilisation and organisation as well as of mutual support. *Ishirahamwe*, the Kirundi word for 'together' or 'to gather together', refers to support groups established between friends or neighbours.

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<sup>3</sup> A *nyumbakumi* is a local chief normally in charge of and overseeing roughly 10 households within a village. A *Mwenyekiti* is a village leader normally in charge/overseeing 64 households in a zone. Both terms are used in Burundi and Tanzania.

## REFUGEE RELATIONS: RECOMMENDATIONS

1. *All actors involved in humanitarian and development programmes in western Tanzania must make sure they understand the context and its interaction with their programmes, taking concrete actions to maximise positive impacts and avoid contributing to further conflict and tensions.* Among other elements, this may involve the following aspects:
  - a. *Develop responses that build on a comprehensive and thorough understanding of social and cultural dynamics, including gender relations and family dynamics, in order to mitigate the negative impact of aid on social changes.* Forced displacement can lead to individual and collective social transformation both among displaced populations as well as hosting communities. This can be seen as an opportunity but it also presents risks, which can lead to further inter-personal and inter-community conflict and should thus be mitigated through deep socio-cultural understanding.
  - b. *Recognise how language may perpetuate social stereotypes.* For instance, ‘host communities’ are not monolithic and homogenous entities. Concretely, in terms of promoting peaceful coexistence, focus on shared history and values in terms of communication strategies as opposed to focus on differences. This does not mean that groups with special protection needs should not have targeted programming.
  - c. *In the context of Tanzania’s commitment to the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (CRRF), ease the current encampment policy that is 1) limiting interaction between Tanzanian host communities and refugees and 2) preventing refugees from pursuing self-reliance strategies and alternative livelihoods.*
  - d. *Reduce restrictions on the movement of refugees by issuing more movement permits,* in order to promote self-sufficiency and create economic inter-dependency and social integration. Refugee policies that allow integration and sustainable livelihoods are beneficial not only for better co-existence, they are also key for communities’ economic development.
  - e. *Consider increasing financial support to allow for the restoration of full and adequate food rations.* It is critical to re-establish full food rations that reflect and respect international standards, but also due to its direct impact on the level of conflict between refugees in the camps as well as between Burundian refugees and Tanzanians outside the camps. Insufficient food also places pressure on refugees to illegally exit the camps in search of alternative economic opportunities, exposing them to protection risks outside the camps.

- f. *Ensure that repatriation to Burundi remains fully voluntary.*
  - g. *Ensure that all recruitment is conducted in a conflict sensitive manner, including awareness of recruitment dynamics and how these can fuel conflict as well as affect the success of humanitarian programming.* Specifically, this may involve privileging employing Tanzanians from the host communities, as much as this may be possible; greater efforts in promoting understanding and communication between Tanzanian staff and Burundian incentive workers; among other measures.
2. *Put in place measures that mitigate the social disruption triggered by some policies in the camps:*
- a. *Changes in family dynamics designed to improve individual well-being (usually of women and/or children) need to be accompanied by measures that will prevent and mitigate their negative impacts.* Instead of considering the individual, policies of ‘empowerment’ must consider the collective and the relationships within an individual’s wider network as intricately connected. Socially engineered changes, such as promoting women as ‘formal’ heads of household, need to be accompanied by discussion with men and women, in order to mitigate the social disruption and potential violence they bring with them.
  - b. *Recognise that protection of refugees extends beyond the boundaries of the camp and programme accordingly.* The understanding of protection of refugees, as well as their needs, should not be limited to the boundaries of the camp. Instead these should reflect the lived experiences of refugees, including when refugees illegally leave the camps and expose themselves to various protection risks.
3. *Strengthen support to local authorities, especially security providers:*
- a. *‘Peaceful Coexistence’ interventions should be planned in a conflict-sensitive manner, mainstreaming conflict management* in order not to replicate the conflict dynamics present on the ground or from the country of origin. This also involves identifying and involving informal and/or customary sources of authority and influence in State-Community dialogue processes.
  - b. *In the context of dialogue initiatives, integrate specific elements of Conflict Management Education/Training to relevant local authorities in refugee camps.* Drawing on well-established Danish Demining Group (DDG) conflict management methodologies and approaches, DRC staff could be trained in Conflict Management and a plan developed for rolling out Trainings in Conflict Management skills to relevant local authorities in host community villages and refugee camps.

These are likely to include WEOs, VEOs, zone leaders, mwenyekiti, nyumbakumi and other local level authorities, as well as sungusungu and other local level security providers.<sup>4</sup>

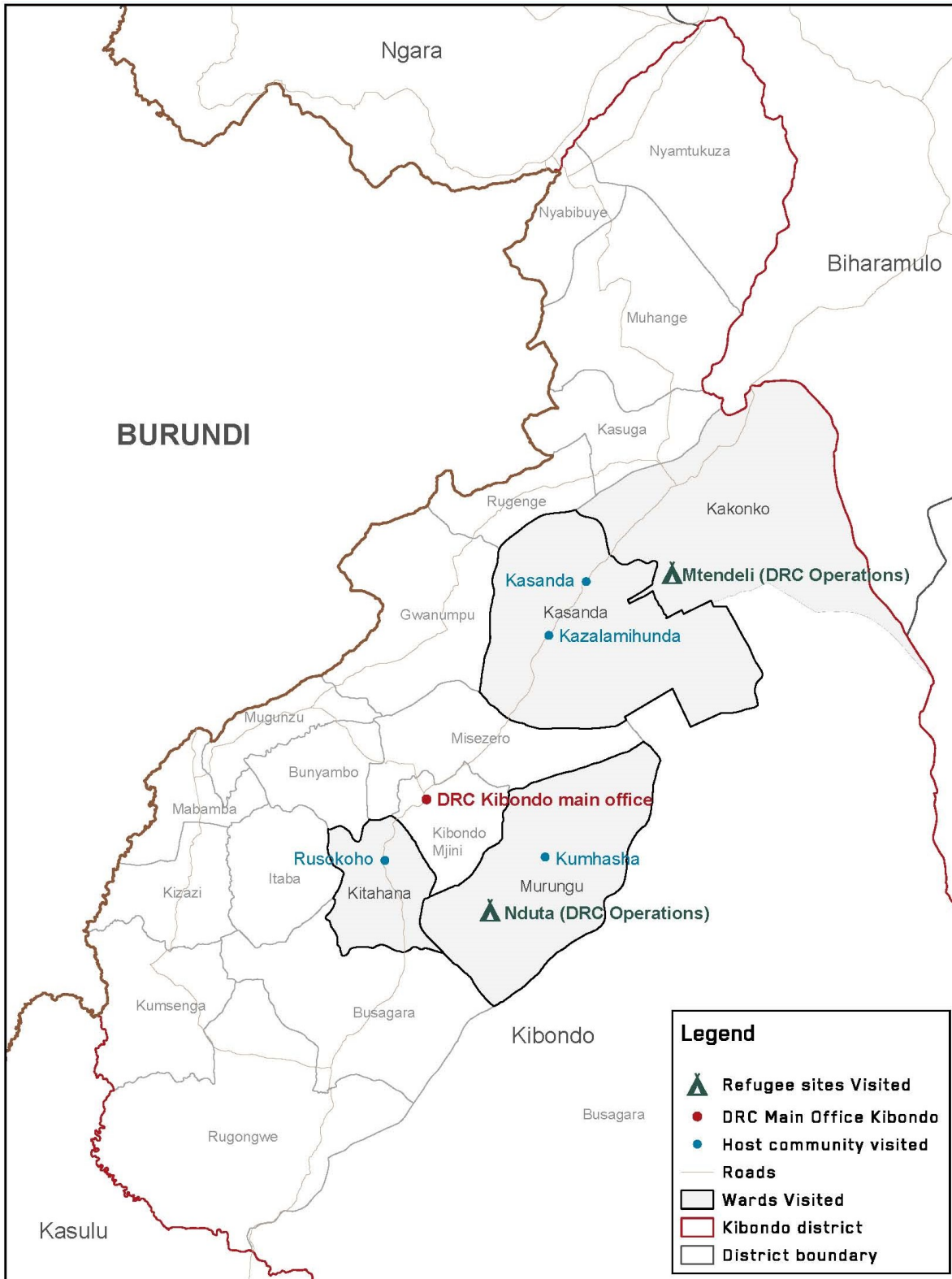
- c. *Train police, sungusungu and other relevant authorities in conflict management and rights-based policing, specifically adjusted to the context.*
  - d. *Support Community-Police Dialogue Forums that can strengthen trust between police and the community, possibly between police and refugees and police and host communities.*
  - e. *Support police operating in areas hosting refugees with more resources, including vehicles and fuel that will allow them to conduct more frequent and effective patrols.*
4. *Strengthen information-sharing and communication across the camps*
- a. *Develop guidelines and a proactive communication strategy that addresses the ways in which rumours and misinformation spread, seeking to counter these as causes of conflict, panic and anxiety. This is especially relevant when there are events that are likely to impact dynamics in the camps (such as high-level visits or rumours around forced returns);*
  - b. *Carry out information and sensitisation campaigns with refugees which may involve, among others, information sessions on Tanzanian law, roles and responsibilities of different authorities and feedback mechanisms in case of any problems;*
  - c. *Consider the establishment of a refugee-run radio station broadcasting from Nduta, which would promote a better flow of information.<sup>5</sup>*
  - d. *In the context of support to voluntary repatriation, ensure there refugees have access to clear communication materials and messages that explains the process on both the Tanzanian and Burundian side of the border. In order to ensure that the rights of refugees are guaranteed throughout the process and agencies are not doing harm, this may involve coordinated information sessions and transparency within all agencies about the steps in the process.*

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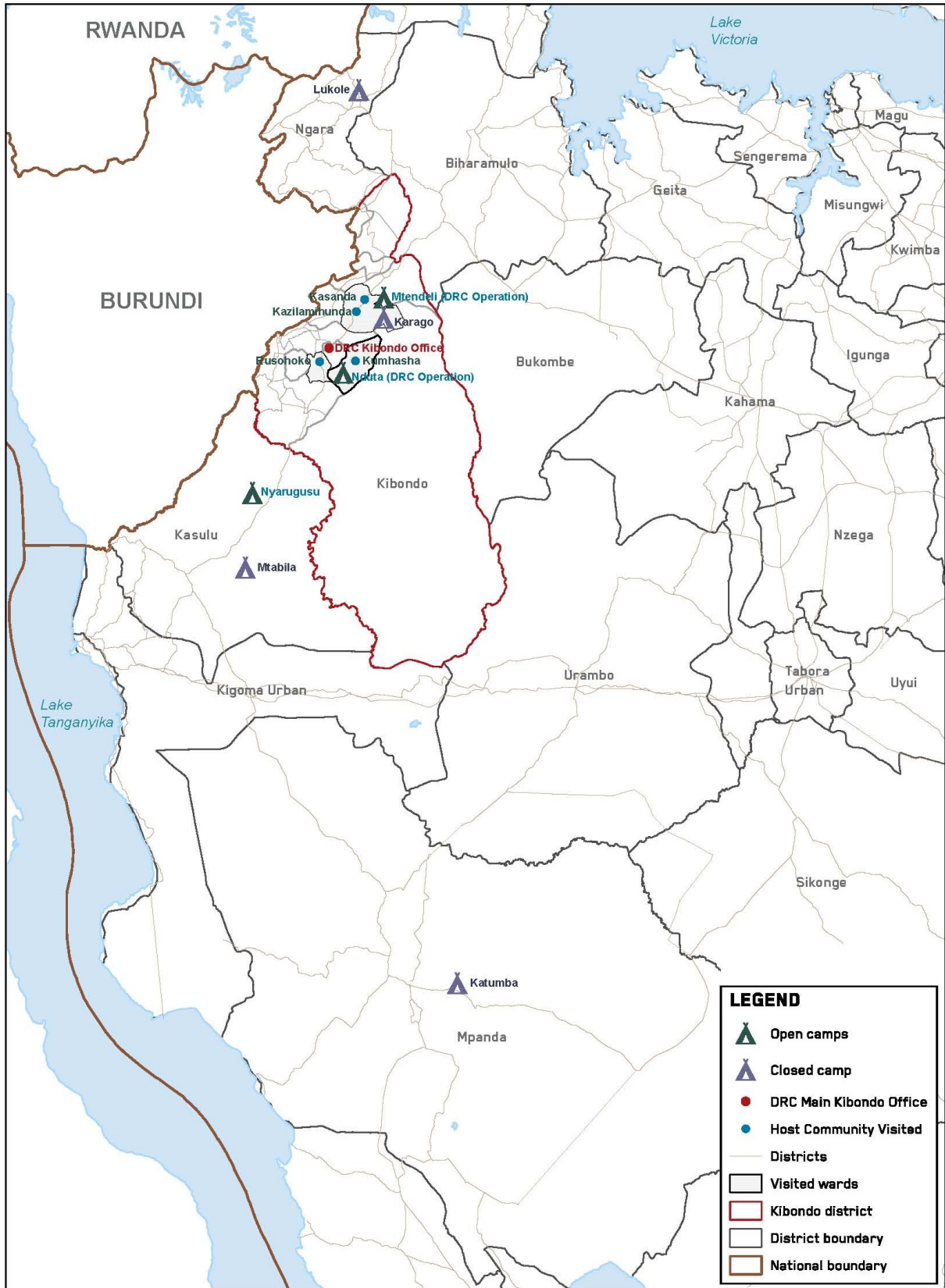
<sup>4</sup> Sungusungu are village defence groups that have become formalised as community volunteers with a role in crime prevention. For a historical analysis of sungusungu, see Abrahams, R. 1987. 'Sungusungu: village vigilante groups in Tanzania', *African Affairs* 86, no. 343 (1987): 179–196; and Heald, S. 2002. *Domesticating Leviathan: Sungusungu groups in Tanzania*, Crisis States Programme Working paper no.16, London: London School of Economics

<sup>5</sup> Nyarugusu refugee camp (which has a similar population to Nduta refugee camp) has a radio station called Radio Umoja broadcasting from Nyarugusu.

# MAPS



Map 1. Field sites visited during the research



Map 2. Regional map identifying locations mentioned in the report.

## INTRODUCTION AND RATIONALE FOR THE STUDY

The political crisis in Burundi triggered by President Pierre Nkurunziza's efforts to change the constitution and be elected to a third term in office in April 2015 led to a spiral of political violence and human rights abuses, protests and civil unrest, amid a growing socio-economic crisis in the country.<sup>6</sup> These political developments reversed a decade of refugee repatriation after the 1993-2005 civil war that saw some 500,000 refugees return home between 2002 and 2010, as a result of the 2000 Arusha Peace and Reconciliation Agreement.<sup>7</sup> The political crisis also contributed to a new wave of displacement to neighbouring countries, especially to Tanzania which has hosted Burundian refugees since the 1970s.

Since the 2015 political stalemate in Burundi, close to 250,000 Burundians have fled to refugee camps in Tanzania.<sup>8</sup> Causes for flight include generalised insecurity, political violence and repression throughout Burundi, including land disputes exacerbated by local level conflicts playing out under the banner of the political conflict. There are fears among affected populations of forced recruitment or targeting by the *imbonerakure*, the ruling party's youth militia, as well as extra-judicial killings, disappearances and detentions.<sup>9</sup>

The Burundian government has maintained that the crisis is over and that those fleeing "are either insurgents or have fallen victim to the economic problems brought about, in their eyes, by international sanctions".<sup>10</sup> On 20 July 2017 President Pierre Nkurunziza made a one day visit to Kagera in Western Tanzania to meet with his counterpart, President John Magufuli. The fact this was the Burundian president's first trip abroad since he survived a coup in May 2015 is indicative of the political friendship between the two leaders.<sup>11</sup> In this visit, the Burundian leader maintained that "Burundi has gained peace and stability," and "call[ed] on all the refugees, our sisters and brothers who fled here to Tanzania, to return in Burundi so that we build together our nation."<sup>12</sup> The Tanzanian president also

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<sup>6</sup> International Refugee Rights Initiative (IRRI) 2017. "I fled because I was afraid to die": causes of exile of Burundian asylum seekers, August 2017, Kampala: IRRI; IRRI 2016a. "I know the consequences of war": Understanding the dynamics of displacement in Burundi, December 2016, Kampala: IRRI; IRRI 2016b, *Burundi: a country on the edge: A briefing paper by the International Refugee Rights Initiative*, April 2016 Kampala: IRRI

<sup>7</sup> IRRI 2016a.

<sup>8</sup> UNHCR, 2017. 'Tanzania Inter-Agency Operational Update on the Burundian Refugee Operation' *Bi-Weekly Operational Update*. Reporting Period: 28 April-11 May 2017, Available at: <http://data2.unhcr.org/en/situations/burundi>

<sup>9</sup> See FIDH, 2017. *Burundi on the brink: looking back on two years of terror*, Report by FIDH with League Iteka, APRODH, ACAT-Burundi, FOCODE, FORSC et CB-CPI, Report No. 693a. June 2017

Available at: [https://www.fidh.org/IMG/pdf/burundi\\_jointreport\\_june2017\\_eng\\_final.pdf](https://www.fidh.org/IMG/pdf/burundi_jointreport_june2017_eng_final.pdf)

<sup>10</sup> Moncrieff, R. 'Three lessons about Burundi's crisis from speaking to those who fled it', *African Arguments*, 20 January 2017. Available at: <http://africanarguments.org/2017/01/20/three-lessons-about-burundis-crisis-from-speaking-to-those-who-fled-it/>

<sup>11</sup> Yihundimpundu, G. 'Burundi president goes abroad for first time in two years', *IOL South Africa*, 20 July 2017, Available at: <https://www.iol.co.za/news/africa/burundi-president-goes-abroad-for-first-time-in-two-years-10385994>

<sup>12</sup> The Citizen, 2017. 'Burundi President Nkurunziza calls on refugees to return home', *The Citizen*, 21 July 2017, Available at: <http://citizen.co.za/news/news-africa/1580729/burundi-president-nkurunziza-calls-on-refugees-to-return-home/>



“urge[ed] Burundians to remain in their country. I have been assured the place is now calm.”<sup>13</sup> On 25 August 2017, the Minister of Home Affairs of Tanzania, Mwigulu Nchemba visited Nduta and Mtendeli refugee camps relaying the presidents’ messages to refugees – Burundi is safe and refugees should return. He called on the UNHCR to facilitate the repatriation of those refugees who are said to want to return home, noting that “failure to repatriate the refugees, I will consult with the Minister for Defence to release military trucks that will ferry the refugees to Burundi”.<sup>14</sup>

By early September, some 11,600 Burundian refugees had registered for voluntary repatriation. On the one hand, many refugees pointed at food reductions as the main reason for registering for voluntary repatriation. On the other hand, some also explained that this was how the process of repatriation occurred in the late 2000s – refugees saw the reduction in food rations as a means to pressure refugees to return to Burundi. Many Burundian refugees previously displaced in Tanzania have traumatic memories of what was referred to as “orderly returns” back to Burundi in the late 2000s. According to reports from refugees (discussed further in the reports), “orderly returns” were violently staged, with homes being burnt, refugees deliberately dispossessed, people rounded up in markets and forced into buses, and many families separating as a result. Thus, the growing numbers of refugees registering to return must be understood in the context of the memories of the “orderly returns” of 2012 and fears these may occur again.<sup>15</sup>

Throughout 2017, the United Nations World Food Programme (UN WFP) severely reduced monthly food rations due to lack of funding.<sup>16</sup> These peaked in early September 2017 with 60 per cent reductions in food rations. In turn, the Government of Tanzania’s (GoT) encampment policy has meant that on the one hand, refugees are restricted in movement and are heavily dependent on aid, while also lacking the legal possibility of searching for other income-generating opportunities. On the other hand, the enforcement of encampment has also limited interaction and relationships between refugees and host communities, including opportunities and support for positive engagement. The Tanzanian host communities surrounding Nduta and Mtendeli are geographically isolated with limited socio-economic opportunities and services available. This increasingly restrictive institutional environment as well as overcrowded conditions and lack of food in the camps are contributing to growing tensions between refugees/asylum seekers within the camps, as well as between refugees/asylum seekers and host communities.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Nkengurutse, L. 2017. ‘Burundi 2020: Is President Nkurunziza already at it again?’, *African Arguments*, 15 August 2017. Available at: <http://africanarguments.org/2017/08/15/burundi-2020-is-president-nkurunziza-already-at-it-again/>

<sup>14</sup> Xinhua, “Tanzania demands UN agency to repatriate Burundian refugees”, *Xinhua*, 25 August 2017. Available at: [http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2017-08/25/c\\_136553066.htm](http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2017-08/25/c_136553066.htm)

<sup>15</sup> For a more in-depth analysis of this issue see below, section on ‘Memories of Tanzania, of displacement and of repatriation’.

<sup>16</sup> See WFP, *World Food Programme Tanzania Refugee Programme October Cycle - Food Ration Allocations 20 September 2017*, WFP Tanzania. See also All Africa, “Tanzania: WFP Cuts Food Rations for Burundi, DR Congo Refugees” *All Africa*, 28 August 2017. Available at: <http://allafrica.com/stories/201708280260.html>.

<sup>17</sup> Prima facie declaration for Burundian asylum seekers was revoked on 20 January 2017, meaning Burundians arriving have to undergo status determination processes. The research found that asylum seekers in Nduta did not experience any difference in

The Danish Refugee Council (DRC) has been operating in Tanzania since June 2015. By the time of the study, its activities included camp management, community services, protection, livelihoods and infrastructure. It began its operations in Nduta refugee camp in October 2015 and in Mtendeli refugee camp in January 2016 (opening of the camps), which by October hosted some 120,000 and 47,000 Burundian refugees respectively.<sup>18</sup>

This study is part of DRC's efforts to gain a better understanding of the interconnected macro and micro dynamics in the camps as well as between the refugees in the camps and the Tanzanian host communities. The overall purpose of the study is to improve DRC's understanding of the real and perceived causes of conflict between refugees in Nduta and Mtendeli camps, as well as between refugees and the host communities living in the areas surrounding the camps. The study is also expected to assist DRC and other humanitarian agencies operating in western Tanzania in further contextualising their humanitarian aid programmes, ensuring these are conflict sensitive.

Drawing from one month of intensive qualitative field research conducted in August 2017, this report seeks to better understand causes and triggers of conflict among Burundian refugees in Nduta and Mtendeli refugee camps. Findings and analysis in this report can be read alongside a second report produced from this research which considers relationships between Burundian refugees in Nduta and Mtendeli and Tanzanian host communities in villages surrounding the two camps.<sup>19</sup> Specifically, research was conducted in Nduta and Mtendeli refugee camps, as well as in Kumhasha village (Murungu ward) and Maloregwa and Rusohoko villages (Rusohoko ward) all immediately adjacent to Nduta camp; as well as Kasanda, Kazalamihunda, Kewe and Nkuba villages (Kasanda ward) by Mtendeli camp (see map 1). While there are certainly common elements in Nduta and Mtendeli camps as well as with regard to the dynamics with host communities, there are also important nuances that this report will raise and seek to explain.

The report begins by seeking to deconstruct and disaggregate the broad notion of 'refugee', exploring the variety and nuance that exists within this broad, monolithic and sometimes rather unhelpful category that often obscures more than it explains. It explores the diversity in causes of displacement and experiences of displacement, considering also how memories of previous exile shape current experiences, expectations and fears.

The report then turns to the core themes of the research, exploring types, triggers and causes of conflict and violence in the two camps. First, a discussion on local understandings of 'conflict' and 'violence',

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their treatment and in accessing services, and referred to themselves as refugees. For this reason, and for the sake of fluidity, this report will use the term 'refugee', while aware some of those spoken with during this study may have been asylum seekers.

<sup>18</sup> UNHCR, *North-West Tanzania – refugee camps population update as of 31 October 2017*, available at:

<https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/60685.pdf>

<sup>19</sup> See also the other report originating from the study, Danish Refugee Council, 2017. *"You may think he is not a human being": Refugee and host community relations in and around Nduta and Mtendeli refugee camps, western Tanzania*, by Diana Felix da Costa for the Danish Refugee Council Tanzania.

focusing mostly on the camps, but also drawing on ideas from Tanzanian host communities, including on perceptions of safety among refugees. Second, it explores two types of conflict: 1) within the family/household unit and 2) between neighbours. Third, the report turns to the causes of conflict. It begins with an exploration of the connections between and spill-over of causes of conflict in Burundi and those in the camps. This is followed by a discussion of the ways in which aid – or at times its absence – is contributing to an increase in tensions and conflict in the camps. Finally, a discussion on returns as a source of conflict. This report concludes with a short discussion of existing structures of authority in the camps as well as social support mechanisms before offering some final considerations.

## DECONSTRUCTING AND DISAGGREGATING 'THE REFUGEE'

### Burundian refugees in Tanzania: diverse causes, motivations for and experiences of displacement

Burundi's long history of conflict and displacement is important to understand the refugee exodus experienced since 2015. Current events should also be seen in the context of the challenges faced by the Burundian government and the international community in properly addressing refugee returns and reintegration.

Since April 2015, some 250,000 Burundians have fled to Tanzania most out of fear and insecurity, some having been directly targeted due to political differences and others fearing a potential escalation of the political crisis and violence into a full civil war. But as noted by Hovil, "these reasons dovetailed with broader social, economic and cultural concerns, many of which related to land disputes exacerbated by shortcomings in the wide-scale repatriation process in the 2000s."<sup>20</sup>

Burundian refugees in Tanzania have great diversity among them, in their areas of origin and in the causes and experiences of displacement: "We fled different areas, for different reasons. Some [of us] are from opposition parties, others the ruling party."<sup>21</sup> The reasons which continue to lead people to flee Burundi since 2015 are diverse, complex and often entailing more than one single factor and consideration. To some extent, the period of arrival can offer some insights into what led people to flee, although this is not always entirely precise. Interviews with members from the host communities revealed that many Tanzanians made no distinction between those fleeing war and physical insecurity and those fleeing food insecurity: "People are running away from war. Some are also running from hunger [food insecurity] but there is no difference as it is also connected to the war."<sup>22</sup>

Burundian refugees in Nduta and Mtendeli are coming from all of the 18 provinces in the country with different social, economic and political trajectories and histories. Some are from Bujumbura, urban and peri-urban areas, activists and intellectuals with university degrees and highly involved in politics, others are farmers from more remote rural areas who fled generalised insecurity.<sup>23</sup> Some were part of organising the anti-government protests of 2015 and thus forced to flee, some are escaping land disputes, some with ethnic identity-based fears and traumas, others actively escaping the *imbonerakure*, others escaping forced recruitment, others farmers that saw their neighbours flee and no longer felt safe in Burundi. Some directly experiencing persecution or a violent act, others fearing the generalized

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<sup>20</sup> Hovil, L. 2016. 'Burundi's Refugee Crisis Propelled by Injustice and Broken Promises' *Refugees Deeply*, 8 December 2016. Available at: <https://www.newsdeeply.com/refugees/community/2016/12/08/burundis-refugee-crisis-propelled-by-injustice-and-broken-promises>

<sup>21</sup> Interview with male refugee, Nduta 17/08/2017.

<sup>22</sup> Interview with Nyumbakumi, Kasanda 04/08/2017.

<sup>23</sup> For an analysis of levels of formal education of the refugee population in the camps see DRC, 2017. pp.17-20.

insecurity in the country.<sup>24</sup> As explained by one 61 year old man in Mtendeli, “We left because of insecurity, we saw our neighbours being killed, others taken to prison and *imbonerakure* were intimidating us, stealing from us, anytime they could kill us so we decided to leave”.<sup>25</sup>

Yet key to understand the speed with which the current displacement crisis unravelled, we must consider people’s previous experiences of political violence and displacement as critical to their own understanding of the current situation. Hovil argues that the pattern of previous rounds of violence in Burundi where “political repression was a pre-cursor to war” are key to make sense of the dynamics of current Burundian displacement, in terms of its overwhelming speed and scale: “The extent to which these previous rounds of violence – whether the identity-based killings in 1972, or the decade-long civil war in the 1990s – weighed on people’s minds signifies the extent to which they do not see drivers of these conflicts as having been sufficiently addressed.”<sup>26</sup>

Although Burundi is geographically very small, refugees make reference to their differences in terms of their origin, cultural habits and behaviour, even down to food habits, as posing challenges in forming relationships. As noted by a 65 year old former magistrate displaced in Mtendeli, “For those who we are living here, we differ in tribes and behaviour, sometimes we clash with each other.”<sup>27</sup>

Due to the institutional refugee framework in Tanzania, Tanzanian host communities perceive being a refugee to be closely associated with being in the camp. Thus, locally, if a Burundian is not in the camp they will not be considered to be a refugee. One nyumbakumi in Kasanda provided insights into the geographical diversity and nuanced decision-making encountered among refugees: “Burundians have come from far away, as far as Bujumbura. Those close to the border are the last to flee because for them it’s easy to cross” while another local authority remarked that “what also motivates some of them to come is the hope of being resettled in America”.

### **Male refugee, 65 years old: a life of constant movement**

Previously a judicial officer in Bujumbura, this 65 year old man lives in Mtendeli with some of his children and relatives where he has since become a preacher. As many other Burundians, his life has involved constant movement back and forth from Burundi to Tanzania:

*“In 1965, I fled to Mukongoro, Kigoma because [prime minister prince Louis] Rwagasore was killed, even those in parliament who were Hutu, so we fled to Tanzania because it was nearby with Burundi and we heard from my neighbour and my father that Tanzanians were kind. In 1968, I returned to Burundi for my studies but in 1972 we fled again to Tanzania because [president Michel] Micombero killed a lot of Hutus so we stayed at Katumba camp here in Tanzania. In 1993 I went back to Burundi because president Ndadaye won the elections as*

<sup>24</sup> See IRRRI 2016a, 2016b and 2017 for detailed accounts.

<sup>25</sup> Interview, Mtendeli 19/08/2017.

<sup>26</sup> IRRRI, 2016a: 24.

<sup>27</sup> Interview, Mtendeli 15/08/2017.

*president of all tribes regardless if Hutu or Tutsi, but then [he was murdered and] there was a war. But we stayed there until 1997 when again we fled to Mtabila camp in Kasulu until 2010 when we were forced to go back to Burundi. They said there was peace, but in that period they were forcing us to go back to Burundi by committing a lot of torture and physical abuse [...]. In 2015 I came back to Tanzania because of the war which intended to kill people who are against the government under Nkurunziza. I was in Prison but the human rights agencies helped release me and after been released I fled directly to Tanzania at Nyarugusu camp, then to Mtendeli camp through tracing and reunification of the family because my family fled before when I was in prison.”<sup>28</sup>*

## Memories of Tanzania, of displacement and of repatriation

*“If you insist on forced return while in our country we see fire, it means you aren’t respecting refugee rights.”<sup>29</sup>*

Because of the various rounds of conflict, political violence and exile in Burundi – as well as the geographical proximity to and relative safety of Tanzania – many of the refugees interviewed in this study had previously been displaced in western Tanzania, some even in the same camps they currently found themselves in. It is through those memories of previous experiences of the conflict and of displacement and life in Tanzania that refugees in Nduta and Mtendeli were making sense of contemporary life, its challenges and its limitations, especially in relation to tight restrictions in movement and employment, and thus of relationships with Tanzanians. Many of the Burundians interviewed compared their current lives in Nduta and Mtendeli to “how things used to be”. Experiences from camps in the 1980s differ from those in the 1990s and 2000s when there were already some legal restrictions on movement but less enforced. One man, whose parents had fled Burundi to Tanzania in 1972, was born in 1980 and raised in Katumba camp in Mpanda, Rukwa region (see map 2). He compared life then to his current life in Nduta:

*“In the nineties people fled because of the conflict around ethnicity but now it’s mostly because of the insecurity and political instability in Burundi. In the nineties we were allowed to go outside of the camp to interact with Tanzanians, do business and even farming activities, and it was very easy to get permits even to go outside of the region, but also the refugees had farms and they were harvesting and selling it to Tanzanians. But now the situation is very different and difficult to go outside of the camp and even to get a permit is very difficult, even to go to Kibondo.”<sup>30</sup>*

Burundian people’s current experiences of displacement in Tanzania are framed by their histories of previous political violence and conflict in their home country, but also by their previous decisions to flee and experiences of displacement and of navigating a refugee camp in Tanzania. More than half of those

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<sup>28</sup> Interview male refugee, Mtendeli 15/08/2017.

<sup>29</sup> Interview with male refugee, Nduta 17/08/2017.

<sup>30</sup> Interview male refugee, 37 years old, Nduta 14/08/2017.

interviewed as part of this study had previously lived in Tanzania as refugees, some returning to Burundi as late as 2012.

But Burundian refugees hold memories not only of life in the camps and the by then, much greater interaction with Tanzanians due to a more open institutional environment. Burundians in Nduta and Mtendeli were also making sense of the current pressure to ‘voluntarily’ return to Burundi through their memories and trauma of how repatriation was carried out in the last round of displacement: “Last time we returned by force. If you don’t register now you’ll be forced later. Last time, our houses were burnt to make people leave.”<sup>31</sup> One young woman explained why she had registered to return:

*“For those who don’t go there to register [to repatriate], you’ll go by force. Then I feared to go by force. Many of us have registered by fear. Many are registering because they’re hungry. Me, even now, I’ve registered because of fear. But in Burundi it’s not a good situation.”<sup>32</sup>*

#### **Refugee elder, Mtendeli**

*“I was in Mtabila [refugee camp] before [1994-2012] and back then, first they said those who want to go to Burundi can go [voluntarily]. But then the GoT said those who had returned were fine so now you all have to go. And then they forced all Burundians to leave by force. So many people are now thinking of how to go to Mozambique, Malawi or Uganda... I’m afraid that Tanzania will use force, many people are afraid of this. The problem is those who want to go to other countries have no way, if they’re caught on the way they’re sent to Burundi, but if they’re in Burundi they’ll be killed by government. (...). [Last time] first, they sent my three children and one week later they caught me and sent me back.”*

#### **Female refugee, 21 years old, Mtendeli**

*“During that time [2012] they sent security and said ‘you have to get into that bus’, by force. But many people didn’t want to return so they ran away, and they were caught and beaten and many people shot. Many family members got separated. Me, I returned to Burundi alone. I was in the market when police made me board the bus and return. (...) They didn’t give us the chance to pack, they just told you to go now. They thought if you went to pack you’d run away. (...) I was 16 years old by then, in 2012. There was a village they had prepared for those returning [before moving to their original homes], but since I didn’t know my homeland I just stayed there. I had been born in Mtabila and it was my first time in Burundi. (...) If the decision to repatriate by force happens, I’m afraid that my family members will be lost. One of my sisters and brother are still lost since 2012. This can happen again.”*

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<sup>31</sup> Interview with male refugee, Nduta 25/08/2017.

<sup>32</sup> Interview with female refugee, Nduta 17/08/2017.

As reported by the two accounts above, Burundian refugees who had been in exile in Tanzania reported that the “orderly returns” of the late 2000s were violently staged and traumatic evictions, with homes being burnt, refugees deliberately dispossessed, people rounded up in markets and forced into buses, and many families separating as a result.<sup>33</sup> Thus, the growing numbers of refugees registering to return must be understood in the context of the memories of the “orderly returns” of the late 2000s and fears this could occur again. The nature of many of the current registrations is effectively voluntary, but also based on traumatic memories, fear and on harsh living conditions in the camps. The refugee elder, whose account is shared above, explained that the current anxiety stemmed from the similarity to what occurred in 2012 in Mtabila (see map 2):

*“What happened in Mtabila, there were many NGOs and UN agencies, but those organisations did not stop the forced returns then. If we knew that international organisations would stop the forced returns that would be good. But from what we experienced in Mtabila we think it can happen here again, even with organisations looking.”<sup>34</sup>*

Not all Burundian refugees experienced forced returns. But the memories of some feed the experiences, anxieties and expectations of all. One young man who had never lived in exile before until moving to Mtendeli explained: “I was discussing with my friend who used to be in Mtabila. He said last time they started reducing food until there was no food at all. What may happen here is that when they cancel the food, people will start returning not because they want to, but there is no choice.”<sup>35</sup> Another first-time refugee in Mtendeli added that based on the events in Mtabila back in 2012 as well as on the message by Tanzanian government officials some days earlier [24 August 2017] during his visit to Mtendeli, the UN would stop giving food and people would eventually be obliged to register to return: “they’re politicians and if they see one way is not working they’ll find another way to get their way. They’ll reduce food as a weapon and a tactic.”<sup>36</sup>

### The camp ecology: understanding vulnerabilities

Not everyone displaced in western Tanzania had previously fled their country and thought they knew what they would find in Tanzania. Many informants reported it was their first time in Tanzania and the first time they were refugees. Those displaced for the first time are out of place, more vulnerable and less able to navigate the challenges of living in the strange space which is a refugee camp. Less able to negotiate with aid agencies, accept and adjust to the social transformations and adaptations that are

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<sup>33</sup> See for instance Amnesty International, *Burundian refugees in Tanzania intimidated into returning home*, News 29 June 2009 Available at: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2009/06/burundian-refugees-tanzania-intimidated-returning-home-20090629/>

<sup>34</sup> Interview male refugee, Mtendeli 26/08/2017.

<sup>35</sup> Interview male refugee, 24 years old Mtendeli 26/08/2017

<sup>36</sup> Interview male refugee, 41 years old, Mtendeli 26/08/2017.



inherently part of movement, and even more so of forced movement. As noted by one nyumbakumi in Nduta who was born in Tanzania and displaced back and forth several times, having also married a Tanzanian woman, “For those fleeing for the first time, they don’t know what they’ll find.”<sup>37</sup>

Camps are not homogenous spaces and are experienced in very different ways by their inhabitants depending on their social networks, economic capabilities and previous experiences of displacement. It is important for aid agencies to recognise this and to understand and engage with the social geography of a camp. For instance, at the time of research, in Nduta, zones 1, 2 and 3 hosted the earlier arrivals of 2015 and early 2016, who incidentally were often people with previous experiences of displacement in Tanzania. This was also the area with better shelters and homes. This is important to highlight because the Burundians who decided to flee early in the current crisis are also the ones who had previously been refugees in Tanzania. In this regard, to a great extent, they also know much better how to navigate a refugee camp, extract and access its resources and manage social life and the dynamics of the constricted space of the camp.

In turn, Burundians in zones 19, 20 and 21 had generally arrived more recently, most at the end of 2016 and early 2017 and reported that it was their first time fleeing Burundi. They had temporary homes, some in tents and others in plastic sheets, they lacked strong social networks in the camps, and importantly, as their first time both in Tanzania and in a refugee camp, they lacked the ability and skills to manoeuvre the camp, adapt to its social and political limitations and transformations and the sometimes strange logic of aid agencies. Still, it should be noted that refugees frequently move to live from one zone to another in the camp (sometimes by themselves and other times the relocation is facilitated by DRC), especially since the start of the voluntary repatriation process as the DRC Camp Management unit reassigned empty shelters left by returnees.

#### **First time in exile, a young couple in Nduta**

One 20 year old young man arrived in Nduta with his wife in February 2017. A Hutu, he had married a Tutsi woman and both their families rejected their relationship, which is why they had decided to flee to Tanzania:

*“I was a driver for public transport in Burundi and sold diesel. Here I’d like to go out to find work, I don’t like staying at home without anything to do. Once I went out of the camp to the village to find work but I got sick because I’m not used to doing these hard labour jobs and because we eat bad food. Before I lived in the rural area but I worked in town so I wasn’t used to do farming.”*

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<sup>37</sup> Interview with nyumbakumi, Nduta 25/08/2017

They were sharing an Emergency Family Shelter (EFS) with another family. It was the first time this man had fled Burundi, and he was disillusioned with life in Tanzania: *"In Burundi, if we wanted to eat meat or beans we could get anything, but here we have nothing. (...) If I were to have a job I'd get a good life. I could get some money to survive, but now I cannot imagine a future for myself".*<sup>38</sup>

There are also important differences between the two camps of Mtendeli and Nduta.<sup>39</sup> Most obvious is the fact that by end of August, Nduta had double the population of Mtendeli, with roughly 127,000 people. In turn, in the same period Mtendeli was home to some 50,000 people. Mtendeli camp was originally intended to host a larger number of people, but the lack of water resources meant it could no longer receive new arrivals.

As a result, Mtendeli had not received any new arrivals since October 2016, and had thus been able to achieve some fragile stability among its refugee population. Nduta, on the other hand, had not only a much larger population, but had also continued to receive new arrivals that raised new suspicion, new dynamics and new rumours. Newer arrivals were generally perceived to have fled due to the harsh economic crisis and food insecurity in Burundi, representing a break with previous arrivals who were perceived to be "more genuine refugees" fleeing insecurity. However, most importantly, many new arrivals were also suspected by other refugees of being closely associated with *imbonerakure* and of having been sent by the government of Burundi to infiltrate and destabilize the camps, spy on refugees, create chaos, disarray and promote misinformation.<sup>40</sup> This may also partially explain why by end of August some 8,000 Burundians in Nduta had voluntarily registered to return to Burundi, when compared to the 300 registered to return in Mtendeli.<sup>41</sup> The other significant difference between Nduta and Mtendeli is their geographical location and social and economic implications, but this is discussed in greater detail in report two.

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<sup>38</sup> Interview with male refugee, Nduta 12/08/2017.

<sup>39</sup> See also DRC, 2017. *Livelihoods Snapshot Assessment Context and Capacity Analysis, Market Analysis, Cash Feasibility Study Mtendeli & Nduta Refugee Camp and host communities in Kibondo and Kakonko Districts*, Danish Refugee Council report. pp.12-13.

<sup>40</sup> Interviews in Mtendeli and in Nduta, August 2017.

<sup>41</sup> Information provided during the visit of senior Tanzanian government officials to Nduta and Mtendeli refugee camps on 24/08/2017.

## TYPES, TRIGGERS AND CAUSES OF CONFLICT AND VIOLENCE IN THE CAMPS

The following research findings offer insights into the types, triggers and causes of conflict and of violence in Mtendeli and Nduta refugee camps. Although there are some nuances between the two camps, it is possible to identify common dynamics, particularly because the institutional environment framing the lives of people in the camps was the same and with some exceptions, the same UN agencies and NGOs operated in both camps providing similar services. Most significantly, the same limitations applied to both camps, in terms of restrictions in movement and insufficient food. For these reasons, the following sections present findings through themes, distinguishing sometimes the nuances between the camps. Specific recommendations follow the discussion of findings.

As noted earlier, there are perhaps four main noteworthy differences between the two camps. First, Nduta is more than double the size of Mtendeli. Second, until August 2017 (when this study was conducted) Nduta continued to receive asylum seekers, while Mtendeli ceased to do so from October 2016; the arrival of new asylum seekers affected the relative harmony of a camp. Third, Mtendeli is located in a less isolated area and closer to Tanzanian villages which meant there was greater informal interaction between refugees and hosts. Lastly, the dynamics of a camp are also determined by the approach and the decisions of the individuals running them.

The section starts by proposing that violence be recognized as embedded in meaning, followed by a discussion of refugees' perceptions of safety. It then turns to the analysis of the instances and types of conflicts that occur in the camps, discussing family conflicts and neighbourhood conflicts. The section argues that the most common triggers of conflict in the camps are those which provoke abrupt changes in social dynamics. Changes can occur due to the arrival of new refugees to a neighbourhood or the decrease in food rations which directly impacts social dynamics in the family and in neighbourhood relations, as well as the relationships between refugees and staff providing aid. Witchcraft is sometimes used as a means to explain and address conflict, as discussed briefly below. Having laid out the types and triggers of conflict, the section explores three key causes of these conflicts, namely:

1. The spill-over of causes of conflict imported from Burundi into conflict into the camps;
2. The consequences of delivery – or the withholding or mismanagement – of aid, including in terms of the unintended consequences of social engineering; and
3. The recent pressure and dynamics around returns and repatriation as a cause of conflict in the camps.

Significantly for agencies seeking to mitigate conflict, triggers and causes of conflict can be divided as belonging to two separate spheres of life: that of the 'home'/'private' and the 'public' sphere, which are also addressed through different mechanisms and processes.

### Understanding 'conflict' and recognising meaning in 'violence'

Conflict is a natural and necessary part of life and can be constructive and transformative when it is appropriately channelled. To understand acts of violence in the refugee camps as well as between Burundian refugee camps and host communities, we should first recognize violence as embedded in meaning and carrying certain messages. Contrary to how it is often portrayed, violence is not senseless, irrational and incomprehensible, rather it has its own rationality and messaging.<sup>42</sup> Highlighting the importance of 'meaning' does not necessarily advance a cultural-relativist view of the meanings of the performance of violent acts. Rather, it accentuates the contexts in which these performances are enacted, and what communicative messages they may carry. Thus, violent behaviour can only be understood within the socio-cultural and historical elements key to situate the violent act, before adding a moral dimension. Violence is best, or perhaps only, understood when examined within its social and historical context, since it is the social and cultural dimensions of violence that give it its power and meaning.<sup>43</sup>

People living in Burundi but also in the camps have come to understand violence "as a quasi-present feature of social life" and have developed anticipatory actions in the light of prospects of violence.<sup>44</sup> In this sense, violence constitutes and is part of daily life, even when it is invisible and not 'actively' present. People's fears are legitimate and real, but not concrete and specific. Rather, they are often reacting to anticipated violence.<sup>45</sup> This is all the more important to understand because of the power that rumours have played and continue to play in the history of the conflicts in Burundi. Rumours have the power to mobilise people into action, but also in more abstract terms, rumours are able to muster fears and anxiety.

In the camps, rumours can also spread due to lack of transparency and appropriate communication channels. Lack of accurate information, lack of knowledge and lack of control, not having the full picture, can have direct implications in promoting fear and conflict. Violent events such as the riots that took

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<sup>42</sup> Scheper-Hughes, N. and P. Bourgois, eds. 2004. *Violence in War and Peace*. Blackwell Readers in Anthropology 5. Malden, Mass; Oxford: Blackwell Publishing.

<sup>43</sup> Nordstrom, C. and A. Robben, eds. 1995. "Introduction: The Anthropology and Ethnography of Violence and Socio-political Conflict." In *Fieldwork under Fire: Contemporary Studies of Violence and Survival*, 1–24. Berkeley; London: University of California Press.

<sup>44</sup> See Vigh, H. 2011. "Vigilance: On Conflict, Social Invisibility, and Negative Potentiality." *Social Analysis* 55 (3), p.94.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

place in mid-August in Nduta – but also rumours – remind people of the insecurity and uncertainty of everyday life. Perceptions of increased risks of violence can lead people to take pre-emptive action.

When asked about safety, some people connected safety to their physical security:

*“Here we feel safe because we sleep, we get food even if it’s not enough, if we’re sick we get good treatment in hospital. To live in this camp is difficult, but it’s harder to return to Burundi. If this camp closes I don’t know what I’d do”.<sup>46</sup>*

Other refugees revealed a more nuanced, comprehensive and holistic understanding of safety, perhaps closer to the idea of human security: “We don’t feel safe because of the food decreasing and our children crying of hunger, that makes us feel unsafe.”

Some informants expressed fear of being in the camp due to its physical proximity to Burundi. There were rumours of infiltration from Burundi:

*“Here in the camp I feel safer compared to Congo [where I was before] because there is nothing that puts my life in danger, though the camp is close to Burundi... maybe they should put the camp further away from Burundi. [To make the area safer] food rations should be increased and water services improved because we don’t have enough water which leads to conflict by the water taps. Firewood should be available in the camp because most people are afraid to go outside of the camp to look for the firewood.”<sup>47</sup>*

*“I feel unsafe because there some people who sent from Burundi to come to kill us who are used to work in the government, they just follow us here in the camp (...) I reported it to [a national NGO] and they advised me, but I’m still not feeling safe, I would prefer to be moved from this country to another place where I could stay safely.”<sup>48</sup>*

## Types of conflict: within the household unit

Many of the refugees interviewed blamed poverty and destitution as factors leading to family conflict, with gendered repercussions. For instance, men feel emasculated by being unable to support one’s family and being challenged by their wives on this failure; girls and women pushed into sexual relationships, what some referred to as prostitution but may be more nuanced than that and involve the creation of a financial support system. As explained by one woman in Nduta, “Due to the lack of enough food most of us, we suffer from medical condition for example stunted growth of children. Some

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<sup>46</sup> Interview with male refugee, Nduta 11/08/2017.

<sup>47</sup> Interview with female refugee, 22 years old, Mtendeli 18/08/2017

<sup>48</sup> Interview with male refugee, 65 years old, Mtendeli 15/08/2017

women and young girls engage in prostitution that lead into family conflicts.”<sup>49</sup> Other causes of family conflict related to the selling of NFIs by one family member, often the male, against the will or knowledge of the other; getting a second wife and among other things, the consequent logistical headache of having to split a ration card.

Yet family conflict also derived from the social transformations experienced in displacement, in large part due to the social engineering and pressures inadvertently exerted by well-meaning UN and NGO policies of gender empowerment, using the language of human rights, child protection and gender equality. These changes in social family dynamics which are designed to improve individual well-being (usually of the woman or the child) need to be accompanied by measures that will prevent and mitigate their negative impacts. Instead of considering the individual, policies of empowerment must consider the collective and the relationships within an individual’s wider network as intricately connected.

It has become socially accepted that women are generally better at managing household finances, often placing the needs of their children above their own. One married man in Mtendeli reflected: “women have a spirit that is stronger than men, men get discouraged.”<sup>50</sup> In Nduta and Mtendeli camps women are officially recognised as heads of household, and this is stated in both their UNHCR household proof of registration as well as in what is perhaps one of the most prized possessions of a refugee household, their food ration card. The UNHCR household proof of registration identifies the woman of that family as ‘household representative’, followed by the husband and their children, while the ration card identifies the ‘HH’ (head of household) followed solely by the woman’s name. These concrete challenges to what men perceive to be the social and cultural ‘natural order of things’ (a patriarchal system of authority and power deeply) disturb the negotiated social balance of many homes in Nduta and Mtendeli. This was reported mostly by men, who felt visibly shaken by these changes: “There are disagreements between husband and wife concerning women as heads of the family. So a man comes home and tells his wife to do something, and the wife says ‘turn your ration card and see who the head of household is!’”<sup>51</sup> As noted by Turner, men feel challenged in being able to perform their expected roles in society as “fathers, husbands, protectors and providers; in short: as men”.<sup>52</sup> One man in Mtendeli reflected on these changes:

*“Life in the camp is quite different from life in Burundi. Here women get more power than in Burundi. Here women see they have their own rights. Husbands in Burundi were respected but here because of those NGOs, they’re no longer respected. They direct their anger and frustration against NGOs, they know that if their wives had not attended those courses, it would’ve been fine. There is a conflict of*

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<sup>49</sup> Interview with female refugee, Nduta 12/08/2017

<sup>50</sup> Interview with male refugee, 41 years old, Mtendeli 19/08/2017.

<sup>51</sup> Interview with Mwenyekiti, Nduta 14/08/2017.

<sup>52</sup> For a greater discussion of this see Turner, S. 1999. ‘Angry young men in camps: gender, age and class relations among Burundian refugees in Tanzania’, *Working Paper No. 9* New Issues in Refugee Research, UNHCR Centre for Documentation and Research

*cultures, when they return to Burundi. The way that women in refugee camps behave is quite different from the way women in Burundi behave.”<sup>53</sup>*

Changing gender roles create friction within some families. Resistance comes not only from men, who may feel their authority being questioned but also from women, who may also resist the changes to the comfort of habit. One female refugee in Nduta complained of growing disrespect between husband and wife in the camp because of changing roles: “both wife and husband are staying at home, which is different to Burundi whereby men used to go out and make money while women stayed at home making meals”.<sup>54</sup> These processes are nothing new. Drawing from research in the 1990s in Lukole camp in Kagera region (see map 2), Turner provides a rich account of how relief operation’s policies equality challenges entrenched hierarchies of authority.<sup>55</sup> Two neighbours in Nduta shared some thoughts on these social changes:

**“UNHCR is their husband!”: Two male refugees, 35 and 32 years old, Nduta**

“We don’t have enough food. The disagreement begins there. If a wife wants to exchange something and the husband disagrees... the second issue, when my wife asks for clothes and I have no money to buy them for her, it leads to disagreement. We ask you [NGOs] to give women clothes so the disagreement [on this issue] stops. For instance, if a woman’s clothes become old she harasses you to buy her another one. If we look back to our culture in Burundi, we’re responsible to buy it for her, but here we have nothing to buy with. Disagreements between husbands and wives are often because of this. Second, in Burundi you work to get money, but here we just stay idle... a woman can say, ‘this is not my husband!’. Here, women don’t follow what we say. If the husband has no money he has no value for the wife”

“If your wife knows you have money in Burundi but here you have nothing, if she’s walking on the road and sees others with more, that’s when she will begin to disagree with you. (...) In the UN card, it’s the woman who’s responsible for the food. The UN harassed us because the head of household is the man, but for our wives, UNHCR is their husband!”<sup>56</sup>

These socially engineered changes, such as promoting women as ‘formal’ heads of household, need to be accompanied by discussion with men and women, in order to mitigate the social disruption and potential violence they bring with them.

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<sup>53</sup> Interview with male refugee, 41 years old Mtendeli 19/08/2017.

<sup>54</sup> Female respondent 35 years old, FGD with women, Nduta 14/08/2017.

<sup>55</sup> Turner, 1999.

<sup>56</sup> Joint interview with two male refugees, 35 and 32 years old, Nduta 12/08/2017.

Similar to the changing family dynamics between husbands and wives, there are also changes seen between parents and children. One nyumbakumi noted how teenagers were challenging their parents' authority, accusing their parents that "we get our food and help from Plan and WFP". The same nyumbakumi shared one account he was involved in, in his neighbourhood:

*"There was a mama with three children, and one of the teenagers stole the food from the home. When the mama got home and found the food had decreased, she beat the child and the child went to complain to [an international NGO], and then on to the police. But then the police arrested the child and beat him. When the boy was released he told his mother he didn't want to live with her anymore."<sup>57</sup>*

What the account by the nyumbakumi suggests is that the social changes promoted by NGOs can lead to family conflict and division if not accompanied by mitigating measures.

### Types of conflict: between neighbours

In the context of an overcrowded refugee camp where basic needs are not being fully met (especially with regard to sufficient food), the continuous arrival of new asylum seekers inevitably disrupts the fragile social balance constantly being negotiated. Minor conflicts and events can easily escalate out of proportion in this context of social tension and scarcity. Knowing one's neighbours is of paramount importance in Burundi, as well as in the camps: "it is important to know each other, we are one. When a neighbour misses water, the other one can help." But as noted by another man in Nduta pointing around to his neighbours: "Here, we come from different areas, from different families, and you live with people you don't know. When you live together, it's like a new life. You meet some you agree and others you disagree."<sup>58</sup>

Conflicts between neighbours can arise with something as innocuous as children quarrelling and can quickly escalate into feuds between neighbouring families. The latter was pointed out by many informants as a common trigger for neighbourhood conflict. One woman explained:

*"The last time we had conflict in our area was on Friday last week [when] children in one family threw stones at the neighbour's house. When the woman, owner of that house, was reprimanding them for throwing stones the mother of the children reacted and they started insulting each other. The conflict was reported to the nyumbakumi and was resolved."<sup>59</sup>*

This story also reveals that as easily as they can escalate, conflicts can de-escalate equally quickly when and if the appropriate mechanisms are in place. Common reasons for disagreement between neighbours

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<sup>57</sup> Interview with nyumbakumi Nduta 26/08/2017.

<sup>58</sup> Interview with male refugee, Nduta 17/08/2017.

<sup>59</sup> Female respondent 35 years old, FGD with women, Nduta 14/08/2017.



mentioned often in interviews included not knowing each other well; originating from different areas of Burundi; social inequality; the borrowing of money and inability to pay back; stealing food or other goods; abusive language; escalation over children fighting. Conflict between neighbours also occurs when individuals who may have had a conflict in Burundi find themselves in the camp: “some people who come from Burundi and find each other here, they’ll continue to disagree.”

But perhaps one of the most common and mundane triggers of violence among families and neighbours is alcohol abuse, as observed by a man in Mtendeli: “Those people who fled in 2016, they are very frustrated with the things that happened to Burundi, they just drink too much alcohol in the camp to reduce stress but it leads to conflict in the family and in the local bar.”<sup>60</sup>

### Accusations of witchcraft as a balancing act

Witchcraft is a cultural practice employed to control flows of power in a community.<sup>61</sup> In Nduta and Mtendeli refugee camps accusations of witchcraft occur between neighbours or even within a family. While it is possible to find cases of accusations of witchcraft against men and women, the latter is much more common and these have a very gendered dynamic. There are also generational dynamics at play, with older women being most vulnerable of being accused of being witches. Although there are many accusations of witchcraft in Nduta and Mtendeli, it was not an easy subject to discuss with people. While often recognised as widespread, most people were reluctant to expand and would say it was very common in Burundi as well as in other areas of the camp, but not in their own neighbourhood.

Accusations of witchcraft often emerge from tensions between members of a tightly knit social community especially in relation to conflicts over scarce resources and when individuals are perceived to deviate from recognised social norms. These are social and moral practices and processes which connect to the distribution of wealth and justice in the community. Rumours can also play a role in catalysing accusations of witchcraft.

Therefore, in some ways it is surprising that Mtendeli appears to have more cases of witchcraft than in Nduta, as witchcraft is often used as a means to address and banish individuals who may be disturbing the social harmony of a particular area. Accusations of witchcraft are tied to adverse occurrences such as someone falling sick, the inability to conceive children or a husband who finds himself a second wife without the blessing of the first wife. Accusations of witchcraft can also be deployed strategically as a means to shape certain processes or events, or even evict someone from a certain neighbourhood. WLAC and Help Age work to support those accused of witchcraft. One Tanzanian NGO worker in Kibondo explained: “last month, a woman in Mtendeli came to our office complaining of being accused

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<sup>60</sup> Interview with nyumbakumi, 40 years old, Mtendeli 18/08/2017.

<sup>61</sup> See James, E. C. 2012. ‘Witchcraft, bureaucracy, and the social life of (US)AID in Haiti’, *Cultural Anthropology* 27 (1): 50-75.

of being a witch. If you're not accepted in your community or in your zone, you can be accused of witchcraft with the intention of forcing you to move away."<sup>62</sup>

But witchcraft accusations can also be made against someone who may be perceived as relatively wealthier and seemingly unwilling to share their wealth, on the logic that social inequality at a micro-level can promote conflict and social disharmony. As explained by one man, "to escape witchcraft better to give to others, 'if you don't give me what I'm asking I can do something that can hurt you'".<sup>63</sup> Another woman explained the connection between jealousy and witchcraft:

*"Men can be accused of witchcraft but there are more accusations against women because they are more jealous of other women. For example, if you give birth to another baby your ration card increases, so another woman may accuse you so you decrease your food, she will be envious. I had twins so my card increased by two, we were five and are now seven, so we get some food extra that we are able to sell."*<sup>64</sup>

Witchcraft is illegal in Tanzania and thus accusations of witchcraft cannot be taken nor addressed by government authorities, witchcraft dynamics have to be necessarily dealt by community leaders, such as nyumbakumi and mwenyekiti. Thus, cases of witchcraft are not taken to the police as people lack tangible proof. If the case is taken to the police, it will often be the complainant who will be charged by the police, rather than the accused.

### Causes of conflict: connections between causes of conflict in Burundi and the camps

The manifestations of conflict in the home and in the neighbourhood can generally be connected to two broad causes: 1) conflict imported from Burundi; and 2) the political economy of aid in the camps. During the time of research, returns were also emerging as a common cause of conflict in the home and in the neighbourhood.

In many ways the dynamics in the camps are microcosms of social and political life in Burundi, where the environment from home is inadvertently imported and replicated. In addition, events that may occur in the Burundian refugee camps in Tanzania but also in DR Congo, Uganda and other contexts, diaspora communities further away, as well as events within Burundi, are constellations that belong to the same system and intimately connected, meaning that what affects one camp is likely to spill-over to the other.

Information, including rumours, flows between the camps. There are two radio stations broadcasting in Kirundi from Rwanda that are perceived by refugees to "speak the truth". Radio Humura and Radio Inzamba (perceived as politically aligned to the opposition) are seen as providing accurate information

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<sup>62</sup> Interview with NGO worker, Kibondo 15/08/2017.

<sup>63</sup> Interview with male refugee, Nduta, 11/08/2017.

<sup>64</sup> Interview with female refugee, 27 years old Mtendeli 19/08/2017.

on all Burundian issues, both internal and in neighbouring countries. The information is gathered by mostly professional journalists in exile as well as other informants feeding information from the camps. In addition to the radio stations, there are areas within both Mtendeli and Nduta where the network picks up the network from Burundi and it is often where people go to attempt to call home via Burundian network. While there are positive elements in staying in touch with social networks of support at home and beyond, there is also the risk of further inflating the ways in which Burundian grievances imported from home affect the dynamics in the camps.

### Political division, fear and distrust

As people cross to Tanzania and establish themselves in the camps they also bring with them their fears, anxieties, biases and the reasons which forced them to flee in the first place. As noted by Lucy Hovil, “this latest round of displacement is the continuation of events that are deeply embedded in Burundi’s post-colonial history, and the current crisis must be seen as part of a wider story of conflict and displacement that continues to haunt the country.”<sup>65</sup>

In the camps of Tanzania, the *imbonerakure* remain greatly feared and one of the prime reasons that caused people to flee. Many refugees expressed concerns and fear that the *imbonerakure* (literally “those who see from far”) that operate across Burundi as a parallel security force, conducting the government’s dirty work outside the formal state structures, had infiltrated the camps hunting government opponents. In some cases *imbonerakure* could be identified by people who knew a certain individual known to be part of *imbonerakure* in Burundi. In other cases, anxiety and paranoia of persecution haunted people who felt they were being hunted by Bujumbura’s security forces, preventing them from feeling safe and trusting their neighbours: “people sometimes feel safe because they’re in another country, but if you’re ‘known’, you can be killed.”<sup>66</sup> As noted by Hovil, “part of the effectiveness of the *imbonerakure* – and one of the reasons they are so feared – is that they operate from within communities. Their identities are not necessarily known and, therefore, people feel that anyone could be spying on them.”<sup>67</sup> This secrecy contributed to a general sense of mistrust between the population of the camps.

Causes of displacement cannot be left at the border nor easily forgotten and haunt people in the camps. Due to a complex mix of factors, including the history of conflict and displacement in Burundi, land conflicts remain a sore issue and the current cause of exile for many of those in western Tanzania. Yet, “land is not only critical for ensuring livelihoods, it is also symbolic of reintegration and represents a (re-)connection with both local communities and the broader polity.”<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> Hovil, 2016.

<sup>66</sup> Interview with male refugee, Nduta 21/08/2017.

<sup>67</sup> IRR, 2016a, p. 6.

<sup>68</sup> IRR, 2016a, p. 20.

## From land disputes and persecution from *imbonerakure* in Bujumbura to life in Nduta

Land issues are also intimately tied to the political conflict as illustrated by one man's personal account:

*"I moved to Tanzania with my parents in 1994 when I was 12 years old. I returned in 2010 to Bujumbura but all the land of my parents was occupied by a stranger. My parents were killed by imbonerakure because he [the man who took our land] was connected to government. I tried to go to court but nothing came out of it. They wanted to kill me too, so I fled. I reached here [Nduta] in October 2015, but then in December I got a call from Burundi saying that wherever I go they'll try to kill me. They told me, if you die, no one can come claim that land. So I destroyed that SIM card. That man [who took the land] is a very rich man so there's nothing I can do. He can use other people to hunt me, because I'm known in this camp. The problems we have in this camp is they [government] are sending imbonerakure to kill us. People feel safe sometimes because they're in another country, but if you're known you can be killed."<sup>69</sup>*

## Ethnic dynamics

*"If I go back to my country, my ethnic group is not accepted (...) as if we're not Burundians, like we need to go back home to Rwanda or Ethiopia or even to Somalia."<sup>70</sup>*

The sensitive question of ethnicity remains a core element in considering the nature of power, the means it has been deployed in Burundi and the subtle ways in which it frames all relationships. The country's history of violence perpetrated and instrumentalised along ethnic lines – from the 1972 violence, often called genocide, to civil war in the 1990s – suggests there are legitimate fears that political repression and violence could mutate into ethnically-aligned violence. However, as noted by Hovil, the key driver of violence in the current crisis is the abuse of power, regardless of ethnic affiliations, even if "the organisation of this power has an ethnic dimension to it".<sup>71</sup> Considering the country's history, ethnicity could –once again– be used as a tool for mobilisation to violence, but thus far it remained secondary to the conflict dynamics in Burundi.

However, the deployment of ethnic identities has played a central role in the history of conflict in Burundi and there are deep resentments and grievances still buried within which have also been imported to the camps.<sup>72</sup> While ethnicity does not at first appear to be a central feature in the dynamics of the camps, in the sense that informants did not raise it as a source of conflict, it pervades existing

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<sup>69</sup> Interview with male refugee, 35 years old, Nduta 11/08/2017.

<sup>70</sup> Interview with male refugee, 36 years old, Nduta 21/08/2017.

<sup>71</sup> IRR, 2016. pp. 37-38.

<sup>72</sup> See Watt, N. 2017 *Burundi: the biography of a small African country*, London: Hurst & Company

relationships in the camps, perhaps specially for those who are Tutsi, thus a minority in the camps in Tanzania. But it is not only ethnic identities that shape one's experiences of life in the camp. In his account below, One male refugee in Nduta made reference to his ethnic identity as a Tutsi, but also his urban origin of Bujumbura and his educational background as the lens by which he makes sense of life in Nduta, but also the lens by which other Burundians accept and trust – or reject and distrust – him in Nduta.

### Escaping Bujumbura to life in Nduta: “wherever I am, I cannot accept injustice”

“When I arrived here to Nduta, I was registered by UNHCR as a refugee, I also received NFIs and a tent (House). The same ethnic problems started among the neighbours this time with my compatriots. They were asking each other ‘How is it that this kind of person comes to live here among us? But these fellows are Rwandan and Ugandan, we're going to follow his situation closely, and we'll eventually find out’. I tried to create a kind of friendship among my neighbours until some accepted me, but there are those who say they would never accept to live together with a Tutsi, reminding them of the misfortunes they experienced in the past under the Tutsi government.

Frankly I could not say that here Nduta I live in security, not only my physical safety which is in danger given the insults and misunderstandings that I have with my neighbours and my compatriots in general, first and foremost due to our ethnic differences. But also misunderstandings related to my education. Imagine me, I've had the chance to study up to finishing my university studies and I live together with people who have never been to school, it's caused me too many problems here. I can't mention my origin which is Bujumbura, this also causes me problems. Seriously, I have no life here, I only survive.”<sup>73</sup>

### Causes of conflict: aid, survival and the socio-economic context of the camps

The delivery – as well as the withholding and the mismanagement – of aid in the refugee camps is directly linked to an escalation (as well as decrease) of tensions, conflict and violence between refugees, as well as between refugees and host communities (discussed in detail in report two). Refugees in both Mtendeli and Nduta agreed on the supreme importance of accessing sufficient food in order to be able to live a dignified life and maintain social peace within the home, the neighbourhood and within the camp as well as with host communities. This section will focus on how the substantial decrease in the distribution of food by the UN's WFP was being understood and some of its social, political and economic repercussions.

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<sup>73</sup> Interview with male refugee 36 years old, Nduta 21/08/2017.

Patterns and trends of food distribution can be correlated with patterns of conflict within the camps as well as between refugees and Tanzanians outside the camps. There is a clear correlation between decrease in food rations and an increase in theft by refugees among themselves and in the host communities, discussed in detail in report two. Throughout 2017, WFP food rations decreased in May then stabilised in June and then decreased again. Over 2017, WFP decreased its food rations by at its peak nearly 40% of what they should be.<sup>74</sup> Both Burundian refugees and Tanzanians in neighbouring communities saw the decrease in food rations as directly connected to an increase in conflict both within the camp and well as with host communities.

One nyumbakumi in Nduta made the point that “If you miss food, it’s like a weapon, it’s like a war. Many people have discussed with us, the fighting and disagreements in the camp are connected with the lack of [enough] food.”<sup>75</sup> This Nyumbakumi was referring to the violent events of mid-August, the riots and stone-throwing, but this is equally true with reference to family and neighbourhood conflicts. These thoughts were echoed by various informants. A nyumbakumi in Kasanda observed: “I heard some rumours that food rations were reduced so I expect that theft will increase. If refugees are provided with adequate services then they won’t steal.”<sup>76</sup> The decrease in food also leads many families to sell their Non-Food Items (NFIs) and to misuse supplementary food rations for children: “we’ve all sold our NFIs to buy food in the Wednesday market, the bucket, even the blankets and mattress.”<sup>77</sup> Lack of food also leads to disagreement within the household, the husband may ask for one kilogram to sell for cash and the wife may refuse.

Enquired over whether he felt welcomed in Tanzania, this nyumbakumi in Nduta answered: “I don’t feel welcomed because today I spent all day without eating and the food we get from WFP isn’t enough, so I don’t feel welcome.”<sup>78</sup> Most refugees reported that current levels of food distributed were over after two weeks, instead of the expected four weeks. There were also many unverified reports and accusations of corruption and misuse of aid by UN and NGO staff.

The all-encompassing presence of aid agencies and of hand-outs has also contributed to social transformation and negative coping mechanisms. For instance, one 71 year old man, who had previously been displaced in Tanzania twice, said “I don’t see the importance of knowing my neighbours [here] because I get assistance, food and health services from the agencies.”<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>74</sup> See for instance WFP, *World Food Programme Tanzania Refugee Programme October Cycle - Food Ration Allocations 20 September 2017*; and WFP, *WFP Tanzania: Situation Report #62, 19 July 2017*, available at: <https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/WFP%20Tanzania%20Burundian%20Refugees%20Situation%20Report%20%2362%20-%2019%20July%202017.pdf>.

<sup>75</sup> Interview with male refugee, Nduta 25/08/2017.

<sup>76</sup> Interview with nyumbakumi Kasanda, 04/08/2017.

<sup>77</sup> See also DRC, 2017. pp.17-18.

<sup>78</sup> Interview with nyumbakumi 55 years old 12/08/2017.

<sup>79</sup> Interview with male refugee, 71 years old Mtendeli 19/08/2017

In Mtendeli, in addition to widespread complaints over insufficient as well as poor quality food, the greatest concern revolved around insufficient water and, thus, overcrowded and uneasy conditions around “the water taps which lead to a lot of conflict”.<sup>80</sup> Contrary to Nduta where neither the availability of water nor the quality of health services were prime concerns, people in Mtendeli also complained about the very poor quality of healthcare, both due to lack of medicine and the quality of treatment.

Shelters were also a concern and a cause of conflict in the two camps. There are three types of shelters provided to refugees: 1) Tents, which are expected to last for six months; 2) Emergency Family Shelters (EFS), with a life-span of 9-12 months; and 3) what are termed ‘Transitional Shelters’, yet contrary to what the name suggests, are by far the most long-lasting and permanent as they tend to be made of mud bricks and have a zinc roof. Tents and EFS’s of most refugees that took part in this study had all passed their life-span, and there were many concerns that as the rainy season approached, these homes would not provide shelter from the elements. Tellingly, the most recent tents and EFS’s in Mtendeli had been installed in October 2016.

In addition to concerns around the life-span of tents and EFS’s, shelters lead to conflict through two ways. First, as noted by the one senior camp authority in Nduta, “shelters have created two classes of citizens” in the camps. With this he was referring to the fact that some refugees lived in ‘Transitional Shelters’ made of bricks and zinc and others in tents and EFS’s, creating resentment among people who aspired for a better shelter. In principle, upon arrival in the camp, a refugee is given a tent or EFS and eventually agencies may support him or her with the building of a transitional shelter. However, due to the scarce resources, coverage has been (and continues to be) very low, resulting in some zones in the camps having transitional shelters, while others remaining with tents/EFS’s.

Second, because of overcrowded conditions, lack of space and of enough shelters, households with no prior knowledge or connections between themselves, were being housed together in the same home, predictably leading to tensions between as well as among families. One unit should house a group of five refugees or a family of four according to UNHCR’s Standard Operating Procedures for shelter allocation. If the size of a household is less than four, they are placed with a second family. One old woman complained of how she had been forced to share a home with a stranger: “People are living together in one house while we come from different areas. These people you’re forced to live together may be bad people. Like me, I’m old and I have to live with young people... and she accuses me of stealing things, until we want to fight each other.”<sup>81</sup>

Finally, it is important to raise the sensitive topic of the sometimes uneasy relationships between Tanzanian NGO staff and Burundian ‘incentive workers’. These troubled relationships are not only a

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<sup>80</sup> Interview with nyumbakumi, 33 years old, Mtendeli 18/08/2017.

<sup>81</sup> Interview with female refugee, Nduta 17/08/2017.

potential source of conflict, but are also likely to have a major impact on the effective delivery of humanitarian services and in the well-being of the population of the camps.

According to the Refugee Act of 1998, refugees are prohibited to work in Tanzania unless they obtain a work permit. For this reason, Burundians ‘volunteering’ with aid agencies are not employees, but are instead considered ‘incentive workers’ who receive roughly a dollar a day for their work (a remuneration policy institutionalised by UNHCR which also encompasses its implementing partners).<sup>82</sup> But not all NGOs remunerate their incentive workers so poorly; some have a remuneration policy for Burundian incentive workers that is perceived to be fairer.

Tensions between Burundian and Tanzanian NGO employees derive from a number of factors. First, Burundian employees fixate their frustrations against the occasional failures of NGOs as well as the low salary they receive on Tanzanian staff. Second, the discrepancy in salary between employees. As noted by an incentive worker in Mtendeli: “the misunderstanding between Burundian and Tanzanian staff is mostly due to salary, which isn’t enough. We don’t know where decisions are made, [but] they are the ones we see everyday so we get angry at them.”<sup>83</sup> Third, the hierarchy of power and potential abuse of power or perceived disrespect by Tanzanians in higher roles. Fourth, the problematic stereotypes held by Tanzanian staff of Burundians, including of their Burundian colleagues. Finally, the less common – yet still acknowledged as a grievance by a number of Burundian employees – reports of discriminatory behaviour by some Tanzanian NGO staff against Burundian ‘incentive workers’. These were a cause of frustration against and distrust of Tanzanian staff.

On the other hand, there were also many protests by Burundian refugees – non-employees of NGOs – against the perceived misbehaviour of Tanzanian NGO staff, who many informants accused of mishandling aid. There were very serious accusations which should also be investigated. However, these accusations also need to be contextualised into the broader anti-Burundian sentiment experienced by Tanzanians outside the camps, to which Burundian refugees may only feel able to protest in the way of their rejection of Tanzanian NGO staff. This is well noted in the account shared by two incentive workers in Mtendeli:

*Incentive Worker 1: The security is generally good, except when there’s no food, which can lead to other problems...*

*Incentive Worker 2: In general it’s OK, but if someone leaves the camp and something happens to that person, people can get very angry and want to revenge. For example, in April 2017 two women went to search for firewood, they were stopped and beaten and people [in the camp] were very upset and wanted to revenge against Tanzanians. Against any Tanzanians, whether Waha [local ethnic community*

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<sup>82</sup> See also DRC, 2017. pp.16-17.

<sup>83</sup> Interview with male incentive worker, Mtendeli 18/08/2017.



*in Kigoma] or Tanzanian staff in the camp. People threw stones at NGO cars with Tanzanian staff, all activities were stopped and all Tanzanian staff left. In that case people wanted to go to the area where the crime happened but because police intervened and we couldn't go to the area, people blocked the roads in the camp and threw stones.<sup>84</sup>*

However real or imagined, the consequences of this distrust need to be considered and addressed by aid agencies since it impacts of the success of humanitarian delivery and programming.

## Returns as a source of tension

During the time of research, returns were a significant cause of tension, anxiety and fear among refugees in the two camps. Returns had led to tensions between those refugees who registered to return and the majority of Burundians who feared returning to Burundi. On the one hand, those who were not willing to return feared those who registered to return and perceived them as infiltrators in the camps who deliberately caused havoc and called for repatriation. On the other hand, discussions on returns also triggered the fear of forced returns, based on memories from Lukole and Mtabila (see map 2). According to refugees interviewed during the research, many who registered did so under fear of a perceived escalating possibility of forced returns, rather than a recognition that the situation in Burundi was safe to return. Others, in turn, registered to repatriate because of the hardships in the camp, especially due to the lack of sufficient food. In sum, the perceived fear of possible forced returns caused a lot of uncertainty and anxiety which led to tensions. Ultimately, in the absence of security and the unavailability of sufficient food, many refugees also felt compelled to voluntarily register to return as the only option they perceived to have.

The Tripartite Commission for the voluntary return of Burundian refugees made of both Governments of Burundi and Tanzania as well as UNHCR met on 31 August 2017 to discuss the modalities of facilitating the return of 12,000 Burundian refugees who had registered to return. Between the 7-19 September, DRC assisted the GoT and UNHCR in the repatriation of 1,510 Burundians from Nduta refugee camp to Bujumbura, Ruyigi, Gisuru and Gitara with repatriation planned to continue until all those registered had returned by the end of December 2017. According to UNHCR, by early November some approximately 32,000 Burundian refugees/asylum seekers from the three camps (Nduta, Mtendeli and Nyarugusu) had registered with the MHA to repatriate. However, the repatriation of the additional 20,000 refugees (on top of the 12,000 included in the tripartite agreement) will require a new tripartite agreement/amendment of the current agreement.

One woman in Nduta used a proverb to refer to what should be done with regard to those registering to return to Burundi: "If a child is crying for a razor, give it"<sup>85</sup>. She meant that those who had voluntarily

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<sup>84</sup> Interview with two male incentive workers, Mtendeli 18/08/2017.

<sup>85</sup> Interview with female refugee, Nduta 25/08/2017.

registered, and were perceived by the majority (who did not want to return) to be infiltrators from the government of Burundi and the source of tension and violence in the camp, they should be supported with transport to return: “transport them to allow us to have peace”, with another informant insisting that “if they want to go, let them go.”<sup>86</sup>

#### **The fear of forced returns: ‘When a hippo moves, some insects will follow him’**

“‘When a hippo moves, some insects will follow him’ [*Ingona yigoroye nimburu irakurikira*]. My understanding of this proverb is – if there are some people going to register at MHA, then you should follow to register too. If you don’t, you’ll go by force. It’s not the first time to hear these words.”

The man, who had previously lived in Mtabila camp, was referring to events in Mtabila and Lukole camps (see map 2) when houses were allegedly burnt and people chased away. He continued, “until now we fear this proverb, it was also spoken in Mtabila.”<sup>87</sup>

Tensions around returns materialised at both the level of the neighbourhood as well as the level of the home and family. At the neighbourhood level, registering to return provoked suspicion and division between neighbours. At a family level, a husband may be keen to return while the wife is adamant in remaining in the camp.

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<sup>86</sup> Interview with male refugee, Nduta 25/08/2017.

<sup>87</sup> Interview with male refugee, Nduta 17/08/2017

## AUTHORITY STRUCTURES AND EXISTING SOCIAL SUPPORT NETWORKS IN THE CAMPS

Refugee structures of authority in the camps are heavily influenced and engineered by aid agencies, but also appear to reflect local leadership structures from Burundi.<sup>88</sup> Predictably, informants reported that leadership in Burundi, especially zone leaders, “have more power than those in the camp, he has the authority to arrest somebody and to bring him into “rumande” [custody]. In Burundi the zone leader is appointed by the District Commissioner not elected as in the camp. But mwenyekiti and Nyumbakumi [in Burundi] are the same as here in the camp.”<sup>89</sup>

Issues, concerns or calls for help are first taken to the nyumbakumi, then mwenyekiti and if still unsolved on to the zone leader. There is an important distinction between conflicts which may belong to the private sphere of the ‘home’, and those belonging to the public sphere that may require the intervention of the police or of more official authorities. Family and neighbourhood conflict are typically solved by refugee structures of authority unless they involve a crime. One nyumbakumi in Nduta offered the example of two women fighting over the area where they both wanted to sell local brew and approached him for his help. He mediated between the two “and the conflict was solved.” Surprisingly, religious leaders were not mentioned as a means to address and solve conflicts.

In terms of formal security provision, there is one police station in each camp. In Nduta, there are 45 Tanzanian police officers that work alongside 89 Burundian sungusungu, “but sungusungu are not respected.”<sup>90</sup> In Mtendeli there is a lower number of Tanzanian police officers (reflecting the size of the camp) and 87 Burundian sungusungu. There were many grievances surrounding security providers in the two camps.

DRC is responsible for Camp Management and Community Services, both crucial in the daily functioning of the camps. For this reason, DRC was often raised as a ‘go-to’ organization in both Mtendeli and Nduta when refugee authority structures were unable to solve calls for assistance or address conflicts. In addition to DRC, WLAC was also mentioned as a useful and relevant conflict resolution mechanism to approach. WLAC have 25 paralegals in Mtendeli and 30 in Nduta.

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<sup>88</sup> Report two will discuss in greater detail authority structures. See DRC, 2017. “*You may think he is not a human being*”: *Refugee and host community relations in and around Nduta and Mtendeli refugee camps, western Tanzania*, by Diana Felix da Costa for the Danish Refugee Council Tanzania.

<sup>89</sup> Interview with male refugee, Nduta 14/08/2017.

<sup>90</sup> Interview with Tanzanian NGO worker, Nduta 24/08/2017.

## Community support structures

But perhaps it is most important to recognise how organic community support structures operate. These reveal how despite the common claims of social chaos and disarray in the camps, the alleged lack of social cohesion and the distrust between neighbours, there are also important social support community networks between neighbours. As noted by one young man in Nduta:

*"I know my neighbours of course, because when you have someone who's sick, or you miss something at home you can ask him, he can help you. He can share his clothes with you if you need to go to church and you may find that if the parents go out of the home and the child is sick, you can take care of the child. The neighbour can even leave a pot in the fire and I can look after it."<sup>91</sup>*

While, as noted earlier in the report, there is distrust and tension between neighbours with different social profiles and who may not know each other well, there is also some social solidarity between refugees.



Figure 1 'Ese twoba abarov yi' ['All people should (have compassion) to help each other']

<sup>91</sup> Interview with male refugee, 20 years old Nduta 12/08/2017.

The above drawing (figure 1) was done by one young man in Mtendeli and was hanging on the wall of his home. With Christian connotations, the drawing shows a man being carried away on a river and being saved from drowning by another man on the shore, with the message of *'Ese twoba abarov yi'*, loosely translated from Kirundi as *'All people should (have compassion to) help each other'*.

Self-organised yet formally structured social support groups are common across the two camps, indicating a positive level of social mobilisation and organisation as well as of mutual support. *Ishirahamwe* is the Kirundi word for 'together' or 'to gather together', and refers to support groups established between friends or neighbours. It was reported to be a common practice in Burundi and usually involved friends or neighbours coming together to chip in money (in Burundi) or food (in the camps) into a common pot that was distributed to the members on a rotational basis. One 20 year old refugee in Nduta explained:

*"We organise ourselves and per person each pay 1000TSH per week every Saturday, and because we are 12 people, 11.000 TSH go to one person who can buy something. I am the president of our group and collect the money and give it to the person. It is organised among our immediate neighbours and every week a different home receives some money. It was also done like this in Burundi, we were doing this between my driver friends. Here it's easy to put the money together, to collect it and automatically give to one person. But in Burundi we used to put it in the bank and then in special holidays like Christmas we took it out and shared it. Here, this is being done by neighbours, and it's very important because it helps people buy things they need like clothes for children or medicine they cannot get. When it's my turn to get the money, I use it to buy meat and fish because I'm from the lake."*<sup>92</sup>

Another man in Nduta explained how *Ishirahamwe* worked for his network: "We collect food in every distribution, so once a month, before it used to be twice, we collect the food and put it together. Our group has 30 people. In each distribution you provide for two people [members in the group] one bowl of maize flour. It is my wife who attends the group meetings."<sup>93</sup> Some informants in both Nduta and Mtendeli reported that *ishirahamwe* remained a common practice in the camps and that they personally belonged to these support groups. However, others noted that as food decreased and there was no existing surplus to draw from, *ishirahamwe* was no longer a common practice. The surplus food or money was then used by the rotating recipients as capital or as additional food.

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<sup>92</sup> Interview with male refugee, 20 years old, Nduta 12/08/2017.

<sup>93</sup> Interview with male refugee, 34 years old, Nduta 24/08/2017.

## CONCLUSION

A number of key findings emerge clearly from the field research on refugee dynamics in Mtendeli and Nduta refugee camps. First and foremost, the majority of Burundian refugees in Tanzania are not willing to voluntarily return to Burundi and do not feel it is safe to do so. Second, there are clear connections between the internal and external institutional context in the camps and their impact on conflict. Of these, it is worth highlighting the interaction between insufficient food rations provided every month and the enforcement in restrictions in movement outside the camps with and how these combine to raise tensions within the camps as well as placing pressure on refugees to return. The combination of these factors force Burundian refugees to leave the camps, exposing them to a variety of protection risks, including fatal risks. This suggests that the understanding of protection of refugees should not be limited to the boundaries of the camp, but rather to the lived experiences of refugees.

In turn, it is possible to draw a clear correlation between insufficient food in the camps with neighbourhood conflicts and violence as well as family conflict and domestic abuse. In addition, measures put in place by aid agencies to promote and improve individual well-being (usually of women and/or children) have had negative impacts in family dynamics and relationships. Instead of considering the individual, policies of 'empowerment' must consider the collective and the relationships within an individual's wider network as intricately connected. Socially engineered changes, such as promoting women as 'formal' heads of household, need to be accompanied by discussion with men and women, in order to mitigate the social disruption and potential violence they bring with them.

Burundian refugees in Nduta and Mtendeli are between a rock and a hard place. On the one hand, despite measures to encourage returns the majority of refugees remain reluctant to repatriate. On the other hand, the situation in the camps, especially in terms of insufficient food rations, is also deemed unsustainable and a push factor to repatriate. As noted by one Tanzanian farmer living close to the entrance of Mtendeli, "walking around the camp you can see people aren't ready to go, they fear because the last time they returned [to Burundi] they were forced to leave again." For that Tanzanian farmer living on the boundaries of Mtendeli and for thousands of Burundian refugees, their understanding of the current reality is shaped by their memories of previous refugee hosting (for Tanzanians) and of displacement and of forced returns (for refugees). This includes the gradual decrease in food rations throughout 2017 perceived by many Burundian refugees as a prelude to eventual forced returns, as was the case in Mtabila and Lukole refugee camps in the late 2000s.

Combined with the lack of sufficient food in the camps, the political connections between the governments of Tanzania and Burundi lead to uncertainty and anxiety about refugees' precarious futures in the camp. This, in turn, leads to rumours, suspicion, accusations of witchcraft and of infiltrators, which contributes to growing tensions and conflict.





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