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Cultural kaleidoscope: challenges and opportunities for the local integration of refugees in Uganda

Introduction

In this study, the term “kaleidoscope” is used to symbolize the broad spectrum of cultural components that converge into a multifaceted and sophisticated community in the context of local refugee integration. The convergence of diverse cultures brings both challenges and opportunities. The multifaceted process also involves the strategies that individuals and communities employ to manage it effectively. This article aims to explore the intricacies of the local integration of refugees in their host communities. The article highlights various challenges and opportunities faced by both refugees and host communities in the diverse cultural landscape of the Rwamwanja refugee settlement. Rwamwanja Refugee Settlement in Kamwenge District, Uganda, serves as a residence for a variety of ethnic groups, including Batooro, Banyankole, Bakiga, Bamba, Bansongora, and Bakonzo (UBOS 2014). The area is also a staging ground for refugees from the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Rwanda, and South Sudan (UNHCR 2018a). The Ugandan integration policy and self-sufficiency strategy was introduced in 1999 as a model that enables the integration of refugees into local communities (Hovil 2018). This allows services provided to refugees to be integrated into existing public service structures so that refugees can share resources such as land, health services, and educational facilities with local communities. The pilot model was implemented in two refugee settlements of Bidi-bidi and Nakivale, which were founded on a community-based ideology and have a homogeneous cultural background (Frank 2018). Given the diverse cultural background of the Rwamwanja refugee settlement, the integration policy was not welcomed by both the local communities and the refugees. Therefore, the article aims to explore the challenges and

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opportunities of integrating refugees from diverse cultural backgrounds. This paper focuses on three interrelated objectives: examining the cultural challenges refugees face in the process of local integration in the Rwamwanja settlement, examining opportunities for refugees to embrace their own cultural identity and contribute to the local community in Rwamwanja, and investigating the effectiveness of existing policies, programs, and interventions to promote cultural integration and harmonious coexistence in the refugee settlements of Rwamwanja. The study is based on the work of Frank Ahimbisibwe, a renowned scholar in the field of refugee studies, as evidenced by his notable works (Frank 2019; Ahimbisibwe 2020; Opono & Ahimbisibwe 2023). By considering Ahimbisibwe's research, policymakers and practitioners can gain valuable insights into the complexities of refugee integration and make informed decisions to achieve successful outcomes.

The paper is organized as follows: the next section presents the integration theory, followed by the methodology and data used. In the third section, the results of the main challenges and opportunities for local integration with diverse cultures are presented. The fourth section discusses these in light of the literature on refugees' local integration in Uganda and the challenges of cultural diversity. The paper concludes by analyzing the implications of integration policies in the context of Rwamwanja Refugee Settlement. It further examines the implications for global policy and practice.

Integration theory of intergovernmentalism

In 1991, Moravcsik introduced the concept of intergovernmentalism as a crucial framework for promoting regional and global cooperation. This approach emphasizes the active participation of states in integration processes. Recent studies by Mugabe and Akello (2020) and De Wispelaere et al. (2020) have pointed out that there is a notable deficit in effectively addressing the problem of refugee exclusion and marginalization. In response to this, governments have introduced a range of provisions to support refugees in becoming self-sufficient, including allocating land to these households, ensuring their access to public social services, and granting them the freedom to seek employment and operate businesses (Mueller 2020a; Ribeiro & Santos 2023; Johnson & Smith 2022). Cooperation between multiple levels of government (intergovernmental cooperation; Leal & Fischer 2023; Smith 2019) has the potential to facilitate substantial cultural integration. Cross-cultural understanding and friendship can be promoted via the exchange of personal stories and insights. In response to the requirements of refugee settlements, the Ugandan Act of 2006 has been efficiently followed. This Act establishes a number of crucial provisions. Intergovernmentalism theory must be critically examined to ensure sufficient support for integration efforts in the Rwamwanja refugee settlement (Mueller 2020a). For integration to work smoothly, it is important to recognize the authority of local governments to address the specific needs of their constituents. It is especially crucial in the case of the Rwamwanja refugee settlement to acknowledge the capacity of local governments to handle the unique needs of their communities. The intergovernmental approach is essential in helping refugees become economically independent and socially integrated. This

can help with efforts to integrate the Rwamwanja refugee community. To further integration and strengthen social cohesion, local governance must also provide resources and devise policies that promote joint government, help refugees meet their cultural demands, and improve their well-being.

Methodology and data use

Qualitative research was conducted, focusing on the collection and analysis of data from semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions (FGDs). The choice of this analytical approach is motivated by the desire to gain a comprehensive understanding of participants' perspectives and experiences regarding the cultural challenges and opportunities refugees face during the process of cultural integration in the Rwamwanja settlement. A total of 100 respondents were surveyed for this study, including 50 refugees, 40 host community members from Nkoma-Katalyeba village, and 10 key informants. The selection of the sample size was based on a combination of convenience and purposive sampling methods. The refugee sample was selected using purposive sampling to ensure diversity in age, length of stay, and country of origin, while the host community sample was selected using convenience sampling, taking into account age, occupation, and ethnicity. For the key informant interviews, 10 individuals were purposively selected, including policy makers, community leaders, settlement staff, and representatives from the Office of the Prime Minister (OPM) and relevant non-governmental organisations. Data collection for this study was conducted over two months, from June to August 2019. A qualitative research design using semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions was used for data collection. The interview and discussion questions were designed to explore the research objectives. The researcher conducted the interviews and discussions in a culturally sensitive manner and ensured that participants felt comfortable expressing their experiences and perspectives. Qualitative data were analyzed using content analysis and thematically analyzed with NVivo12 software to identify patterns, recurring themes, and key findings. The results of the primary data were discussed in the context of the existing literature to reach a conclusion. Ethical considerations such as informed consent, confidentiality, and participant anonymity were strictly adhered to during data collection, and OPM approval and ethical clearance letter were obtained from the Mountains of the Moon University in Fort Portal, Uganda.

Results

The results of the study suggest that there are several important findings to consider.

The integration of local refugees has emerged as a significant concern in Uganda, given the country's diverse cultural heritage and the intricate array of opportunities and challenges it presents. This study aims to examine the intricacies of cultural adaptation and analyze the approaches taken by refugees and their host communities in addressing matters of identity, belonging, and coexistence.

The following table provides statistical data on participants.

Table 1. Respondents

Respondents	Number	Method
OPM representative	1	Personal interviews
Community leader representatives	2	Personal interviews
Local Council representative	1	Personal interviews
NGO representatives	2	Personal interviews
Settlement staff	1	Personal interviews
Refugee head representatives	2	Personal interviews
Police	1	Personal interviews
Female host community members (non-leaders)	15	FGDs
Male host community members (non-leaders)	25	FGDs
Male refugees (non-leaders)	24	FGDs
Female refugees (non-leaders)	26	FGDs
Total	100	

The study indicates several key individuals who played important roles in promoting cultural integration. These included the representative of the Office of the Prime Minister (OPM), the representative of the local council, the representatives of the non-governmental organization (NGO), the representatives of the refugee leader, and the representative of the police. Each of these individuals made a valuable contribution to the study of promoting cultural integration within the community. The involvement of the Local Council and representatives from the Office of the Prime Minister (OPM) were instrumental in shaping the governance and decision-making processes that affect both host communities and the refugee population during integration. Local councils focused their efforts on integrating cultural initiatives into local development plans. Representatives from diverse non-governmental organizations provided updates on their respective initiatives in the domains of service provision, humanitarian assistance, and community development projects, where SOS Children’s Villages and Lutheran organizations played a significant role in these endeavors. Representatives of refugee leaders were involved in effectively communicating the concerns and requirements of the refugee community and collaborating with diverse stakeholders to identify and implement comprehensive solutions. The police representative emphasized the urgent concerns pertaining to security, law enforcement, and conflict management within the settlement. During his address, the police emphasized the significance of giving priority to security measures and fostering an environment conducive to peaceful coexistence. The collaborative efforts of these actors have contributed to various aspects, including settlement management, community needs, resource allocation, infrastructure development, and cultural integration in the Rwamwanja refugee settlement.

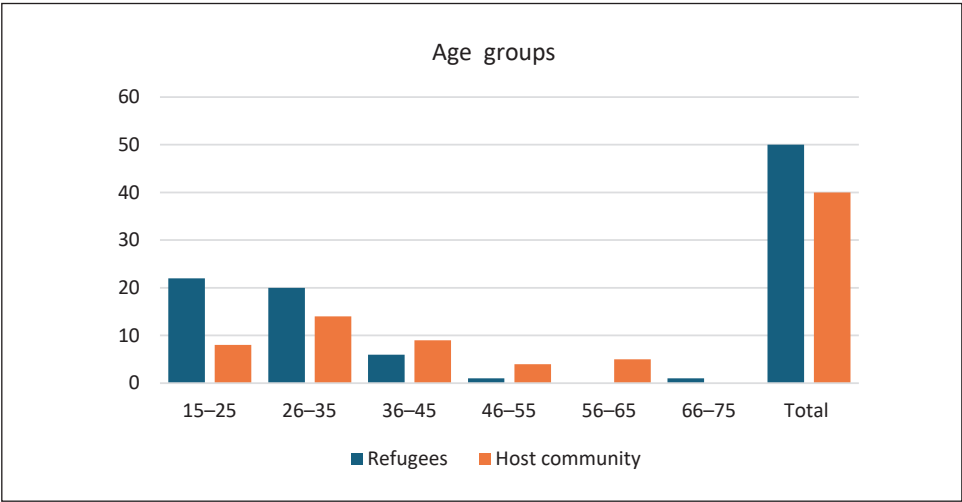
It is noted that the key respondents were independent. Therefore, it was not necessary to record their age place of origin, and tribe as they were neutral in their assessment.

The age groups of refugees and the host community

It is essential to consider the varying ages of both the refugees and the host population when analyzing demographic data. Gaining an understanding of the age distribution among these populations can offer valuable insights into the distinct challenges and opportunities that arise in the context of forced displacement. The demographic composition of age groups in both refugee and host communities presents an intriguing aspect of their interaction. Gaining insight into the disparities and interactions among different age groups within these two categories can yield valuable observations regarding the challenges and prospects that emerge in the process of cultural assimilation. The presented data illustrates the various age cohorts.

Table 2. Age groups of refugees and the host community

Age group	Refugees	Host community
15–25	22	8
26–35	20	14
36–45	06	09
46–55	1	04
56–65	0	05
66–75	1	00
Total	50	40



The age distribution observed within the Rwamwanja refugee settlement carries substantial implications for the effective implementation of refugee policies and the formulation of integration strategies. Based on the data at hand, a notable portion of individuals from both the refugee and host communities can be categorized into the age groups of 15–25 and 26–35. This implies that the demographic makeup of the population residing in and surrounding the settlement is predominantly composed of younger individuals. On the other hand, people between 46 and 55 and 66 and 75 are scarce. This observation suggests a noticeable absence of elderly refugees and individuals from the host community. The implications of this distribution hold significant importance in the context of implementing refugee policies and integration strategies. In the realm of education and skills development, the significant presence of young individuals highlights the imperative of prioritizing education and skills initiatives. Refugee policy should prioritize fair access to high-quality education for young refugees. Furthermore, it is imperative that they establish educational initiatives aimed at equipping individuals with skills that are relevant for both present and future integration. It is imperative to undertake initiatives aimed at identifying and mitigating educational disparities among elderly refugees. It is important to highlight the influence of age distribution on the dynamics of social and cultural integration as well as the specific services required for varying age groups. In order to cultivate an atmosphere characterized by acceptance and mutual respect between refugees and the host community, it is imperative to implement policy interventions. This policy should promote an inclusive culture that values diversity and promotes understanding among people of different origins. By fostering an inclusive environment, policies can effectively address and overcome barriers and preconceived notions that often hinder the successful integration of refugees into their host communities. To achieve this goal, educational programs can promote tolerance and empathy, and initiatives can help refugees and the host community engage. Promoting mutual respect is another crucial aspect that ought to be emphasized through policies. This entails acknowledging the rights and dignity of both refugees and the host society, while also ensuring that their perspectives are acknowledged and respected. Promoting intergenerational activities can help close the age gap and create a more harmonious society.

Length of stay of refugees and host members

This study provides a comprehensive examination of the length of stay for both the refugee population and host groups living within or in close proximity to the settlement. It considers a variety of key elements that include legal frameworks, economic prospects, social harmony, and cultural integration. By analyzing these elements, we may better comprehend the complex dynamics that affect refugees and host communities.

Table 3. Length of stay

Years	Refugees	Host members	Total
Before 2012	00	31	31
2012–2014	16	07	23
2015–2017	19	02	21
2018–2019	15	00	15
Total	50	40	90

The results indicate that the number of refugees increases significantly at certain intervals. This demonstrates the importance of integrating treatments that take into account the different experiences of refugees depending on their year of arrival. Tailored solutions are able to improve the socioeconomic and cultural integration of refugees into the host society, promoting a more cohesive and durable coexistence. Between 2015 and 2017, the number of refugees climbed considerably, despite the indigenous community’s almost two decades of presence. To adequately address the diverse experiences and needs of individuals, it is essential to apply a tailored methodology when implementing integration activities. Effectively promoting cultural integration between refugees and the host community also requires a comprehensive understanding of the unique obstacles faced by different refugee groups. Understanding these issues will inform policy decisions aimed at effectively addressing them and promoting harmonious coexistence.

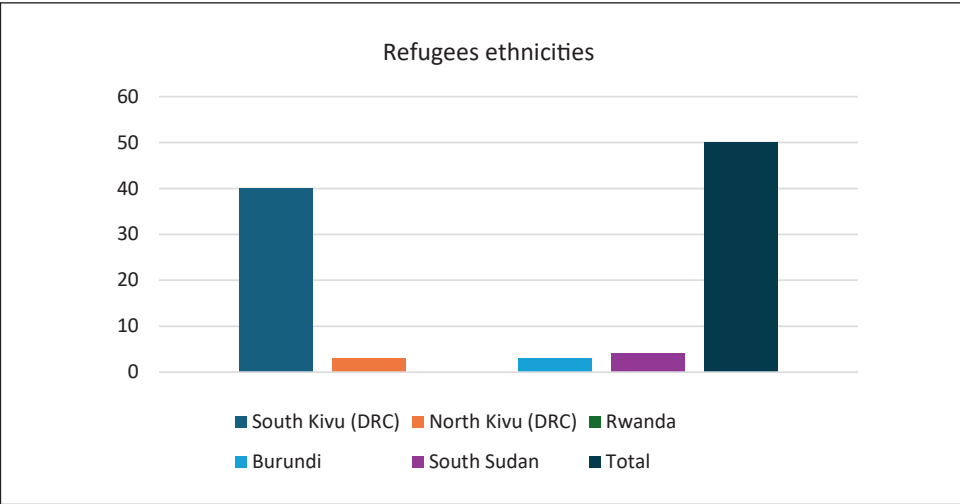
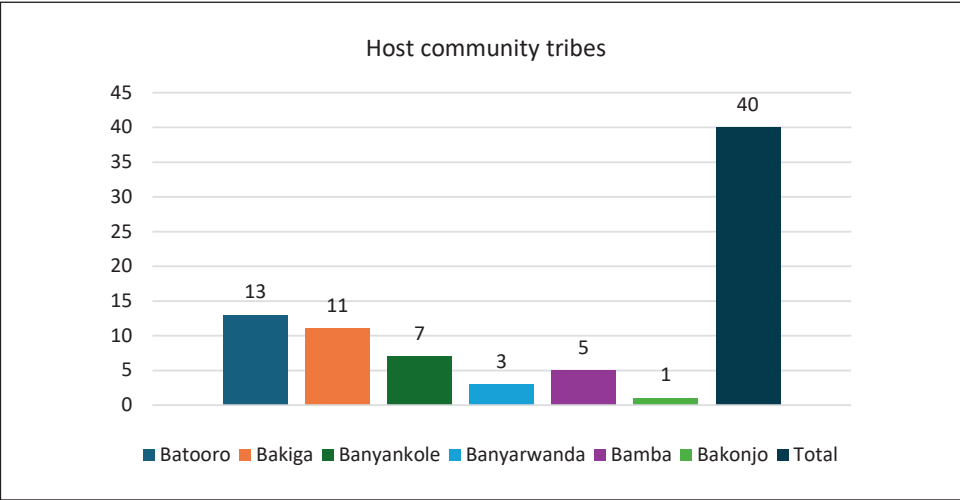
Places of origin and tribes

Geographical origins and ethnic groups play a crucial role in understanding refugees. Many of these elements have significantly influenced and contributed to global cultural, social, and historical contexts. These elements, which are crucial to comprehending human history, have shaped global contexts. When examining these factors, they have had an immense impact on the growth and evolution of social, cultural, and historical contexts all over the world. The importance of culturally sensitive approaches and intercultural understanding in promoting peaceful coexistence and successful integration is illustrated by Table 4 showing the places of origin and tribes of both refugees and members of host communities. This section highlights the need to recognize and respect cultural differences in order to promote harmonious relationships and facilitate the integration process.

The study highlighted many benefits associated with embracing multicultural diversity. Most refugees come from South Kivu in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), while smaller populations come from North Kivu in the DRC, South Sudan, and Burundi. The absence of Rwandan refugees who were previously resettled is particularly noticeable, due to specific policy decisions. The harmonious coexistence between the Batooro and Bakiga tribes is a testament to the immense opportunities offered by cultural exchange.

Table 4. Showing the places of origin and tribes

Refugees		Host communities	
Place of origin (Ethnicities)	Number	Tribes	Number
South Kivu (DRC)	40	Batooro	13
North Kivu (DRC)	03	Bakiga	11
Rwanda	00	Banyankole	07
Burundi	03	Banyarwanda	03
South Sudan	04	Bamba	05
		Bakonjo	01
Total	50		40



However, these linkages might cause conflict if not handled carefully. In order to promote cultural exchange and create a harmonious environment for both refugees and the host community, it is critical to understand, appreciate, and embrace the cultural diversity within the Rwamwanja refugee settlement. The importance of places of origin goes beyond the realm of humanitarian organizations and policy-makers. By analyzing geographic origins and tribal relationships, conflict and cooperation may be identified.

Discussions

Cultural challenges refugees face in the process of cultural integration

The process of cultural integration poses a significant challenge for refugees seeking asylum as they navigate a journey filled with various obstacles. As they try to rebuild their lives in a foreign country, refugees face a number of cultural problems that can make it harder for them to fit in with the host society. The study found out that the biggest barriers to integration are cultural discrimination and language barriers. In their responses, participants highlighted how cultural discrimination affects their ability to authentically express and present their cultural heritage. According to the first respondent, *"it is impossible for us to present our cultural heritage in an environment where we face discrimination."* Discrimination expressed itself particularly in the field of education, with the regrettable outcome that children dropped out as a direct result of discriminatory behaviors. According to respondents 2 and 3, *"it can be challenging to fully embrace and appreciate a culture when surrounded by discrimination."* The difficult circumstances in this unfriendly environment present significant obstacles for refugees to preserve and embrace their cultural heritage. In addition, language barriers exacerbate the problem of social isolation and challenge refugees to make connections with the host society. According to a study conducted by Hadi (2019), it was found that language barriers often lead to social isolation.

Language is key to unlocking the subtleties of different cultures and having important dialogs. In the absence of a common language, refugees struggle to make meaningful connections with the community that hosts them. The study found that in addition to cultural challenges, economic issues are a large part of the difficulties refugees face. Access to employment and health care is limited. In the study, participants openly admitted that economic constraints played an important role in their path to integration. Consistent with respondent 4's observations, it is clear that the prospect of integrating people from diverse backgrounds brings with it a degree of uncertainty. The respondent emphasized that *"it is impossible to state with certainty which individuals' will successfully integrate with others"*. This highlights the potential challenges and unpredictability associated with fostering coexistence among people from diverse backgrounds.

The challenges refugees face are compounded by the fear of encountering individuals with malicious intent. According to respondent 5, integrating individuals

from different cultural or social backgrounds can pose unforeseen risks and uncertainties. The clarity of integration in the face of cultural diversity becomes unclear when we examine the complicated nature of cultural diversity in host communities. As Respondent 6 astutely pointed out, *"it is evident that our society currently encompasses a diverse mix of cultures."* In the context of a diverse host community, preserving and transmitting cultural heritage can be challenging not only for those who are native, but also for those who live in the community and may have multiple cultural identities. The complicated environment highlights the challenges refugees face in fully engaging in their own cultural practices. In the area of refugee integration, the prevailing strategy places great emphasis on promoting self-reliance and inclusion. Nonetheless, a more comprehensive approach is essential to address the issue of cultural diversity and related barriers to integration. Refugee integration is a multi-faceted process that requires collaboration among various stakeholders. In their recent study, Sambu et al. (2020) highlight the importance of initiatives that aim to bridge the gap between refugee and host communities. Initiatives offer refugees the opportunity to gain insight into their host country, which fosters a sense of security and permanence.

To improve on the security and permanence, the concept of *intergovernmentalism* is crucial in this context. According to Moravcsik's 1993 theory, intergovernmentalism assumes that the most effective way to promote international cooperation is for governments and international organizations to work together. The framework places great emphasis on cooperation among governments in addressing global challenges, including the integration of refugees. To improve educational opportunities and promote cultural exchange between refugees and host communities, close cooperation between governments and international organizations is essential. When they join forces, they can effectively address the needs of refugees and host communities while promoting mutual understanding and integration. Governments and international organizations should prioritize the establishment of schools and learning centers in refugee settlements and host communities and ensure that quality education is accessible to all. This will not only help refugees, but also contribute to the overall development of host communities. In addition, facilitating cultural exchanges between refugees and host communities is critical to promoting social cohesion and breaking down barriers. Governments and international organizations can organize events, workshops, and programs that promote interaction and dialog between different cultural groups. In addition, it is essential that public policies take into account the complexity of cultural diversity and ensure the creation of a safe and secure atmosphere for refugees. Initiatives of this nature are essential to ensure a comprehensive and successful integration process. To ensure a more inclusive and promising future, it is critical that public policy initiatives take into account the importance of cultural differences. In this way, we can ensure that our policies and decisions are better aligned with the diverse needs and perspectives of all people.

Opportunities for refugees to embrace their own cultural identity and contribute to the local community

Finding opportunities for refugees to embrace their unique cultural identities while making valuable contributions to the local community has proven to be a great opportunity. In the area of successful cultural integration, the story of older Rwandese refugees is a testament to resilience and adaptation. Their journey is a powerful example of the human capacity to overcome adversity and make a new start. The presence of Rwandese who migrated to various host communities during the tragic events of the 1994 genocide is a testament to their remarkable success in integrating. In a poignant statement, a respondent expressed, *"Our status as basuhuki (refugees) has ceased to exist because we no longer live in the camps."* In today's world, there is a growing trend toward self-sufficiency and sustainability. One way to support this movement is to take control of your own food production. *"When we grow our own crops, we not only have the opportunity to enjoy the fruits of our labor, but also earn additional income by selling the surplus. We have even intermarried with the Batooros and our children know how to greet in our culture which is important."* In line with Peters' (2009) insightful observation, this represents the manifestation of a "culture of integration" in which both refugees and host communities gain mutual benefits through the exchange of their respective cultures. A 1992 study by Kritz and Sollom highlighted that the integration of different cultures plays a critical role in personal growth, economic progress, and the promotion of harmonious coexistence. Another example of integration is the experience of Congolese refugees who arrived in 2012 and have lived in the settlement for more than five years. These people, who have faced numerous challenges and hardships, shared their experiences of making the most of available resources and forging a path to a better future. They hope their stories will inspire others and illustrate the transformative power of seizing new opportunities to successfully integrate into a new culture. In the study, one participant shared his experience, *"I participate in the trade of traditional clothing known locally as bitenge by selling it to local people. In some cases, I am able to successfully market and sell these products to the local community, with residents showing interest and making purchases. When I decide to postpone the sale, they are curious about the reason for my delay in obtaining fresh bitenge fabric."* The following narrative illustrates the economic opportunities that arise from cross-cultural interaction, as refugees not only share their cultural artifacts with others, but also make valuable contributions to the local economy. The importance of promoting cultural exchange between refugees and host communities is illustrated by the success stories from the Rwamwanja settlement. These stories underscore the need to develop policies that facilitate and encourage such exchanges. To cultivate an atmosphere of mutual learning and respect, governments and policymakers need to view integration as a two-way process.

Various measures can be taken to promote social cohesion and strengthen the sense of belonging among refugees and locals. These initiatives can include cultural festivals, language exchange programs, and skill-sharing workshops. Through such activities, people from diverse backgrounds can come together, leading to stronger bonds within the community. These efforts aim to create an inclusive environment

that promotes integration and mutual understanding between all stakeholders. Government recognition of cultural integration is critical to ensuring that refugees develop a sense of belonging and adapt seamlessly to their new host society. Promoting cultural exchange and mutual understanding can be achieved through intergovernmental initiatives in which governments work together to formulate policies. In addition, it is the responsibility of governments to undertake initiatives aimed at providing refugees with education, vocational training, and various other resources to facilitate their seamless integration into host societies. It is imperative that governments support local organisations that help refugees adapt to their new environments. In addition, governments should take proactive measures to develop initiatives that promote cultural exchange and intercultural dialogue. Through such measures, governments can ensure that refugees are given the opportunity to actively integrate into their new society, fostering an atmosphere of cohesion and fruitfulness for both refugees and host communities.

Existing policies, programs, and interventions for cultural integration and harmonious coexistence

Cultural integration and harmonious coexistence have become increasingly important in today's diverse societies. As a result, various policies, programs, and interventions have been introduced to address these issues. These initiatives aim to promote understanding, respect, and cooperation among different cultural groups to ultimately create a more inclusive and cohesive society. An important aspect of these efforts is the implementation of policies that promote cultural integration. These policies often focus on creating opportunities for people from diverse backgrounds to interact and engage with each other. According to a recent study by Fevre et al. (2019), the existing literature on policies and refugee integration suggests that implementing certain policies has the potential to promote social cohesion between refugees and host communities. The promotion of cultural integration and harmonious coexistence between refugees and host communities is strongly influenced by integration policies. These policies are of utmost importance for a smooth and successful integration process. In the refugee settlement of Rwamwanja, both the local host community and refugees face challenges in understanding and implementing integration policies. According to the study, local community members perceive the policy as a potential risk to their personal well-being, express concerns about potential displacement, and see the policy as favoring refugees. In contrast, refugees often feel that they are being singled out as the primary recipients of the policy, leading to feelings of isolation and exclusion. The lack of mutual understanding between the different parties has led to a lack of trust and misinterpretation of the government's intentions, which in turn hinders cultural integration efforts. It was expressed by several respondents that they never received a clear explanation of the policy. There were discussions among individuals about the possibility of leaving together with the refugees. However, it is worth noting that refugees continue to be housed in their assigned settlements. It is plausible that this idea of departure may be a strategic maneuver aimed at forcing us to leave the area, similar to what our colleagues in other zones have experienced.

The study found that the integration policies implemented in the settlement are inconsistent and ineffective. Respondents expressed confusion about the implementation of this policy, particularly in relation to length of stay and eligibility criteria for integration. *“Some refugees managed to integrate into society before the mandatory five-year period, while others were unable to do so.”* According to one interviewee, the Prime Minister’s Office, which is responsible for refugee management, provides clear instructions for refugee arrivals. Integration policies regarding refugees remain unclear, as some refugees are settled before the five-year period, while others are not. When it comes to achieving success, it is critical to have a clear understanding of the people involved and the actions to be taken. It is worth noting that there are refugees who are entrepreneurial and seamlessly integrating into society. The presence of this disparity suggests that the development of personal networks and the availability of resources play a critical role in successful integration. A recent study by Elmhaga et al. (2020) found that these inequalities not only affect fairness and transparency, but also exacerbate pre-existing tensions.

The study brought to light an additional barrier related to the lack of clear guidelines in cultural integration policies. The lack of clarity regarding these policies was acknowledged by settlement staff, non-governmental organizations, and policy makers. According to one respondent, there is a lack of clarity regarding the policy. As he said, *“The policy was never adequately explained to us.”* The main focus seems to be on ensuring that refugees’ basic needs are met and that they receive psychosocial support, rather than on fostering a deep sense of cultural integration. According to one informant, cultural integration may not be considered necessary because the focus is on adaptation to difficult situations. *“The main goal of our initiative is the successful integration of refugees into their new communities, which we consider extremely important. Psychosocial support is provided to them by a number of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) as well as by the government.”* The need for cultural integration is being questioned. While people are moving through difficult circumstances, they are also acquiring language skills. It is of utmost importance that cultural integration be a seamless, comprehensive, and understandable process for both refugees and the host society.

In order to achieve this goal, it is critical to clearly explain these measures and address any misunderstandings or fears that may arise. Recognition of cultural integration as an essential component of this policy is essential. Recognizing the broad range of cultures within a community and promoting opportunities for intercultural engagement can lead to the development of a dynamic and vibrant “cultural integration.”

Conclusion

Successful integration of refugees requires strong collaboration among various government agencies and international institutions. Effective use of resources and policies is critical to successful refugee cultural integration. Recognition by governments of the importance of cultural integration is critical in providing refugees with a sense

of belonging and facilitating their seamless integration into the host society. Promoting cultural exchange and mutual understanding can be achieved through intergovernmental initiatives that facilitate cooperation between governments in formulating policies. Uganda has the potential to serve as a global model for refugee integration by promoting a culture that embraces inclusion, education, and economic empowerment. Strengthening intergovernmental partnerships, targeted and flexible policy implementation, and continued support from the international community are all critical factors to consider. It is imperative that the government expand its support for local organizations that help refugees transition to new lives. In doing so, the government should also take proactive measures to establish programs that promote cultural exchange and intercultural dialog. Rwamwanja has the potential to transform into a more inclusive and culturally vibrant environment that promotes the growth and prosperity of both refugees and the local community.

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Abstract

This article explores the cultural complexities of the Rwamwanja refugee settlement in Uganda and examines the challenges and opportunities associated with local integration. Qualitative research was conducted to understand the multifaceted process of cultural integration. The findings revealed a range of cultural challenges faced by refugees, such as language barriers, discrimination, and a lack of meaningful access to resources leading to mistrust. Additionally, the study found that refugees have the potential to positively contribute to the host community through sharing their cultural beliefs, and joint activities. The research identifies potential interventions and policies to support successful cultural integration and reconciliation between refugees and the host community.

Keywords: culture, kaleidoscope, refugee, integration, Uganda

