

Coloniality and Ethics in Development Research: the Case of Refugee Youth Volunteering Uganda project

Dr. Moses Okech (PhD, MA, PGD, BA, AFHEA).

Uganda Martyrs University, Uganda.



**Northumbria
University**
NEWCASTLE



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Outline

- An Overview of the RYVU Research Project
 - The Team
 - Key Research Questions
 - The Context
- Scaling the Ethics in the RYVU Approach
- Unpacking the theme of Coloniality
- Reflective Questions for Discussion

Volunteering, skills and livelihoods



Youth employment and skills in Uganda

- Youth as 83% of unemployed in Uganda (ADB, 2014)
- Unemployment largely attributed to skills mismatch – with focus on BTVET
- Important to distinguish formal/informal; decent/vulnerable; employed/self-employed
- Further constraints faced by refugee youth

Volunteering, skills and employability

- Volunteering promoted as 'win win' through benefits to communities, country and volunteers:
 - pathway to employability
 - low-cost 'service delivery'
 - 'self-reliance'

BUT:

- 1) policy and evidence reflects experiences and ideas of voluntary labour in the global North
- 2) focus on 'programmed' over 'everyday' volunteering

Project team:



Prof. Matt Baillie Smith, Northumbria University
Principal Investigator



Prof. Peter Kanyandago, Uganda Martyrs University
Co-Investigator



Dr. Cuthbert Tukandane, Uganda Martyrs University
Co-Investigator



Dr. Frank Ahimbisibwe, Mbarara University of
Science and Technology
Co-Investigator



Dr. Sarah Mills, Loughborough University
Co-Investigator



Bianca Fadel, Northumbria University
Co-Investigator



Dr. Moses Okech, Uganda Martyrs University
Post-Doctoral Researcher



Dr. Robert Turyamureeba, Mbarara University of
Science and Technology
Post-Doctoral Researcher



Dr. Owen Boyle, Northumbria University
Project Manager

Aim: Understand whether volunteering by refugee youth in Uganda helps their skills acquisition and employability and reduces the inequalities they experience

Research Questions:

- Where and how are young refugees engaged in volunteering?
- What factors shape their participation?
- How do different forms of volunteering shape skills development?
- What impact does volunteering have on meaningful work and employability?

Approach:

Qualitative interviews; large scale quantitative survey; participatory photography; participatory mapping; life history interviews

Four case study areas:

- Kampala (urban setting)
- Nakivale (refugee settlement)
- Rwamwanja (refugee settlement)
- Bidibidi (refugee settlement)

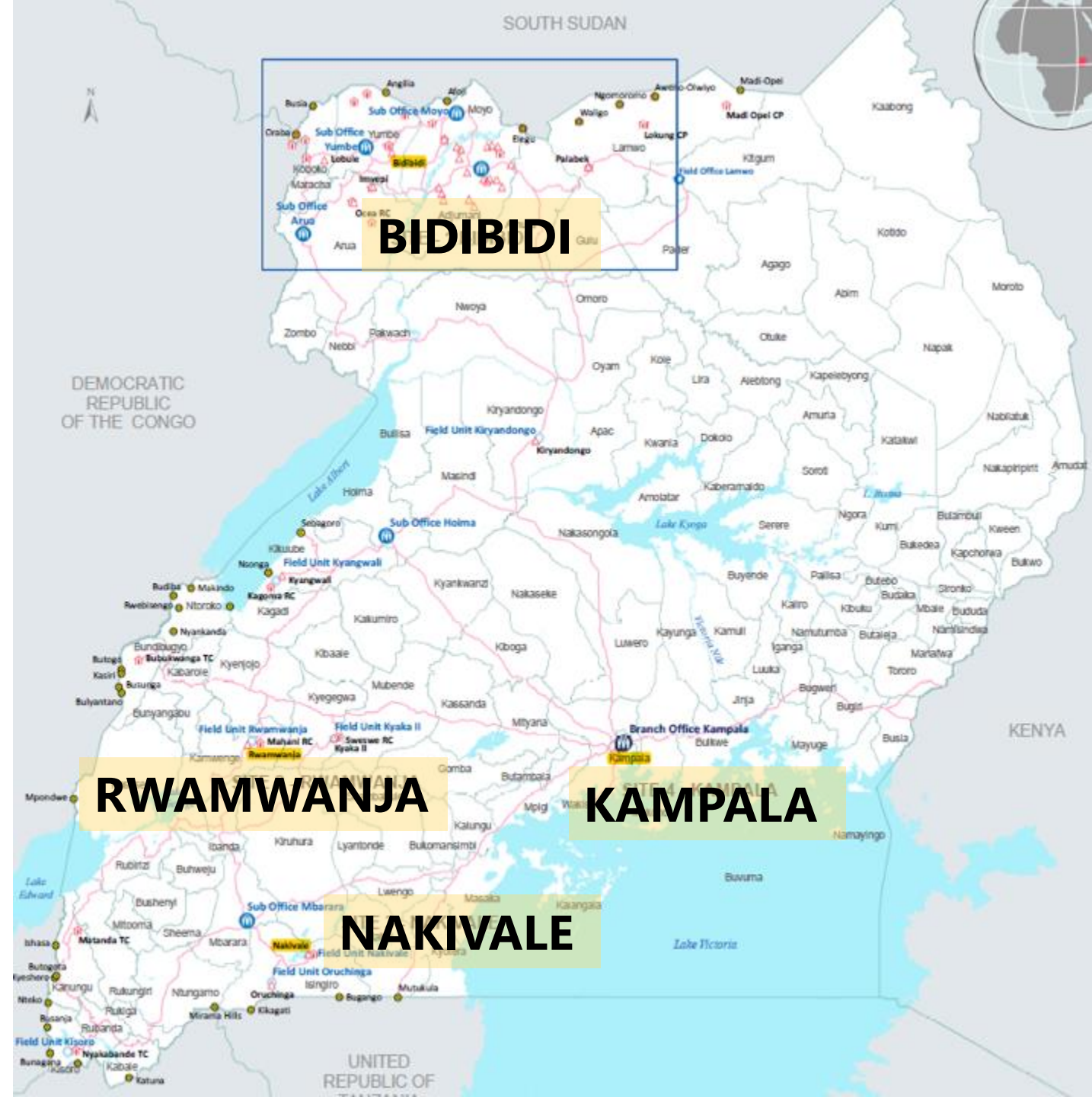
Four refugee groups:

- Congolese
- Somali
- South Sudanese
- Burundian

Project has formed Youth Advisory Boards in each site and partnered with local and international NGOs



Finnish Refugee Council
Finnish Refugee Council



Contested meanings of volunteering

"There is hope for some kind of reward – monetary or non-monetary.... A way to get a job, a gateway to proper employment" – *Young Refugee*

"Volunteering is to provide a service freely and willingly with little or no pay" – *Public Sector / Government*

"Volunteering is offering a service without expecting gratitude or payment from anyone" – *Private Sector*

"We know there are some who use volunteering to dodge taxes, to hide costs...making tea or photocopying, this is an inconvenient truth...yet UN volunteers can be paid 3 or 4 times someone else...but for some [refugees] it is a necessity, it builds the communities that they have lost" – *Civil Society*



THE RYVU APPROACH TO DECOLONIZING PARTICIPATORY METHODOLOGY

- Working with the Researched

- Hosts vs Refugees
- Youth Voices
- Community Participation
- Private Sector Engagement



RETHINKING THE CONCEPTS OF 'FORMAL' & 'INFORMAL' VOLUNTEERING

Whose Reality Counts?

African Volunteering Concepts

- **“Bulungi bwansi”** - Uganda (for the good of the nation): Voluntary community involvement to keep the environment clean.
- **Ubuntu** – Southern Africa (humanness or being human (Lutz, 2009); I am because we are (Mbiti 1969))
- **Harambee** – Kenya (Self-help) denotes collective effort, community self-reliance, cooperative enterprise and all forms of collective self-reliance (Mbithi and Rasmusson, 1977).

- **Umuganda** – Rwanda (coming together for a common purpose)
- **Ujamaa** – Tanzania (familyhood and communalism of traditional African society) (Ibhawoh and Dibua, 2003)
- **Iddir** – Ethiopia - traditional financial system (Aredo, 1993): This was a kind of insurance programme run by a community or a group to meet emergency situations. The original purpose of the **iddir** was the burial of the dead.
- **Ibikorwa Rusangi** – Burundi : Activities organized at community level for purposes of public interest (Muchiri et al 2019). Working together is the main objective. It is organized by elders to bring community spirit together to accomplish a particular task within a short period of time.

In Uganda, these practices have weakened due to influx of foreign aid and popularization of government welfare programmes (Park, J.D 2019).

Unpacking the Theme

- The concept of South-South volunteering has often been in existence and mostly driven by altruism and response to community needs
- **Horizontality:** Volunteering is common in situations where the volunteer and the recipient share similar socio-economic profiles
- Volunteering as a bottom-up approach – e.g. Hrambee where ideas and projects for volunteering are initiated from the community rather than from the top.
- Volunteering in Africa was mostly informal but in some cases organized through community structures such as the institution of elders.

Colonization

- ❑ is space and time-bounded, and it refers to the conquest, subordination and administration of a place.

Colonialism

- ❑ is “a power structure that subverts, destroys, reinvents, appropriates, and replaces anything it deems an obstacle to the agenda of colonial domination and exploitation.

Coloniality

- ❑ Coloniality, in its turn, refers to “the trans-historic expansion of colonial domination and its replication in contemporary times.”

Decolonizing Everyday Concepts in Research Literature through Peer Engagement

❖ Tribes or Ethnicity

❖ Beneficiaries/Subjects or Respondents/Participants

Reflection/Discussion Questions

▪ *In what ways can development work be fashioned to challenge the norms of coloniality that shape our understanding of developing countries?*

▪ *Is volunteering a form of precarious work that can reinforce vulnerabilities?*

▪ *In what ways can the North-South Research Institutions build mutual partnerships amidst diverse institutional policies, funding models and competitiveness of research agenda: **Are scholars in the marketplace?***

THANK YOU

More information:
okechm@yahoo.com
www.ryvu.org

@RYVUganda on Twitter

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