

**REFUGEE-HOST COMMUNITIES AND RESOURCE ACCESS AT PALABEK REFUGEE
SETTLEMENT IN LAMWO DISTRICT, NORTHERN UGANDA: A HISTORICAL
ANALYSIS (2017-2025)**

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DECLARATION

I, Okwir Allan Daniel, hereby affirm that this research report is my original work and has not been submitted for any academic award in any institution of learning.

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APPROVAL

I certify that this research report titled: “Refugee-Host Communities and Resource Access in Palabek Refugee Settlement Lamwo District, Northern Uganda: A Historical Analysis (2017- 2025)”, has been written under my supervision and is approved for submission to the Directorate of Research and Graduate Training.

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DEDICATION

With heartfelt gratitude to the Almighty God for granting me this success, I dedicate this work to my family especially my father, Mr. Semei A. D. Okwir, my dear mother, Ms. Amono Betty Elizabeth, my beloved wife, Juliet Abalo, and all other family members for their unwavering emotional, financial, and spiritual support throughout my academic journey. May God bless you all abundantly.

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May God reward and bless you abundantly!

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ADF - Allied Democratic Forces

AVSI – Association of Volunteers in International Service

BMC - BioMed Central

COVID-19 - Coronavirus Disease 2019

CPA - Comprehensive Peace Agreement

CRRF - Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework

DFID - Department for International Development

DRC - Democratic Republic of Congo.

FCA - Finn Church Aid

FGDs - Focus group discussions

GBV - Gender Based Violence

GoU - Government of Uganda.

GUREC - Gulu University Research Ethical Clearance

IRC - International Rescue Committee

KII – Key Informant Interviews

LGBTQ+ - Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer/Questioning, and others

LSHTM - London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine

M Pox - Monkeypox

NGO - Non-Governmental Organisation

OAU - Organisation of African Unity

OPM - Office of the Prime Minister

PFDJ - People's Front for Democracy and Justice

PTSD – Post Traumatic Stress Disorder

RDC - Resident District Commissioner

ReHoPE - Refugee and Host Population Empowerment

RPF - Rwandan Patriotic Front.

SDG - Sustainable Development Goal

SLF - Sustainable Livelihoods Framework

SPLM/A - Sudan People’s Liberation Movement/Army.

UK - United Kingdom

UN - United Nation

UNDP - United Nations Development Programme

UNHCR - United Nations High Commission for Refugees

UNICEF - United Nations International Children’s Emergency Fund

USSR - Union of Soviet Socialist Republics.

WASH - Water, Sanitation and Hygiene

WFP - World Food Programme

WHO - World Health Organisation

WIU - Windle International Uganda

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ABSTRACT

This study examined resource access among refugee and host communities in Palabek Refugee Settlement, Lamwo District, Northern Uganda, from 2017 to 2025. Its objectives were to explore the settlement's history, establish evolving refugee resource needs, investigate resource-sharing dynamics, and examine experiences of accessing resources.

The study adopted a qualitative historical-ethnographic design involving 118 participants selected through purposive and snowball sampling. Data were collected through interviews, focus group discussions, non-participant observation and documentary review, and analysed using content, narrative and chronological analysis.

Findings revealed a shift from emergency assistance towards self-reliance through vocational training and economic empowerment. Although resource sharing and cultural interactions promoted cooperation, limited resources contributed to food insecurity, overcrowded schools and health facilities, inadequate healthcare, and competition between refugees and host communities.

The study concludes that the transition towards self-reliance remains fragile. It recommends strengthening livelihood and food security programmes, improving access to land and employment, investing in essential social services and infrastructure, and promoting equitable resource sharing and peaceful coexistence.

CHAPTER ONE:

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

1.0 Introduction

This chapter presents the background to the study, including the historical, conceptual, theoretical and contextual backgrounds. It also presents the statement of the problem, objectives of the study, research questions, scope, justification and significance of the study.

1.1 Background to the Study

Refugee displacement creates significant humanitarian, social and economic challenges for displaced populations and the communities that receive them. Access to essential resources, including food, land, water, shelter, healthcare, education and livelihood opportunities, is critical to the survival, dignity and well-being of refugees. However, the availability and distribution of these resources depend on historical circumstances, government policies, humanitarian interventions, local economic conditions and relationships between refugees and host communities.

Uganda has a longstanding history of hosting refugees displaced by conflict and political instability in neighbouring countries. Although the country has developed policies that support refugee protection, freedom of movement and opportunities for self-reliance, refugee settlements continue to require substantial humanitarian assistance and investment in public services. These demands can also affect host communities that depend on the same natural resources, infrastructure and local economic opportunities.

Palabek Refugee Settlement in Lamwo District, Northern Uganda, provides an important setting for examining these relationships. Established in April 2017 following renewed conflict in South Sudan, the settlement brought a large displaced population into an area where land, water, vegetation and other resources already supported the livelihoods of the indigenous Acholi community.

Humanitarian assistance helped address immediate needs, while the settlement's development increased the importance of access to public services, productive land, markets and livelihood opportunities.

This study therefore examines the historical development of Palabek Refugee Settlement and the changing patterns of resource access among refugees and the host community between 2017 and 2025. It considers how resource needs evolved, how resources were shared, and how the two populations experienced access to essential resources during the study period.

1.1.1 Historical Background

The historical background examines refugee movements into Uganda, the historical and socioeconomic context of Palabek, the establishment of the settlement and the changing arrangements through which refugees and host-community members accessed and shared resources. It establishes the historical context for the four research questions concerning settlement development, changing resource needs, resource-sharing dynamics and experiences of resource access between 2017 and 2025.

1.1.1.a Historical Background of Refugee Movements into Uganda

Uganda has received refugees from several countries during different periods of political instability, persecution and armed conflict. These movements include Polish refugees during the Second World War and successive arrivals from Rwanda, Burundi, the Democratic Republic of Congo and Sudan. This history provides a broader context for understanding Uganda's experience in receiving displaced populations and organising refugee protection.

During the Second World War, approximately 7,000 Polish refugees, mainly women and children, were accommodated in Uganda at settlements including Nyabyeya in Masindi and Koja in present-

day Mukono District. The settlements provided accommodation, education, healthcare and other basic services. Following the war, many refugees were resettled in other countries. This episode illustrates Uganda's historical experience in accommodating displaced populations (Lwanga-Lunyiigo, 1993).

Subsequent refugee movements were closely associated with political instability and conflict in neighbouring countries. Political violence in Rwanda, including the 1959 revolution and the 1994 genocide, caused displacement into neighbouring states, including Uganda. Similarly, violence in Burundi during 1972, the civil war that followed in the 1990s and the political crisis of 2015 resulted in refugee movements. Conflicts in the Democratic Republic of Congo, particularly from the 1990s onwards, also contributed to continued displacement into Uganda (Hovil, 2007; Mamdani, 2001).

Of particular importance to this study are the Sudanese and South Sudanese refugee movements. The Sudanese civil wars, beginning in 1955 and recurring from 1983, displaced many people into neighbouring countries, including Uganda. South Sudan's independence in 2011 did not end displacement. Renewed conflict in December 2013 and further violence in 2016 and 2017 forced many civilians to leave their homes in search of safety.

These movements are relevant to Palabek because communities in parts of South Sudan, particularly Eastern Equatoria, have longstanding cultural, linguistic and kinship connections with communities in northern Uganda. Such relationships helped facilitate communication and social interaction when South Sudanese refugees arrived in the Acholi sub-region. Nevertheless, shared cultural identity did not automatically guarantee equal access to land, food, public services or livelihood opportunities.

The distinction between Uganda's broader history of receiving refugees and the specific history of Palabek Refugee Settlement is important. Earlier refugee movements provide a national and regional historical context, but Palabek became a formally established refugee settlement in April 2017 in

response to renewed displacement from South Sudan. The present study focuses primarily on the developments that followed this establishment and their implications for resource access between refugees and the host community.

1.1.1.b Historical and Socioeconomic Context of Palabek

Palabek is located in Lamwo District in the Acholi sub-region of northern Uganda, close to the border with South Sudan. The area is predominantly inhabited by the Acholi, a Luo-speaking community whose historical social organisation and livelihoods have been associated with kinship, customary land arrangements, agriculture and livestock keeping. Historical studies describe the importance of family and clan relationships, local authority and land-based livelihoods in the organisation of Acholi society (Atkinson, 1994; Girling, 1960).

The geographical position of Palabek has contributed to longstanding connections between communities in northern Uganda and neighbouring areas of South Sudan, particularly parts of Eastern Equatoria. Shared languages, cultural practices, family relationships and cross-border movement have connected communities on either side of the international boundary. These relationships remained relevant when renewed conflict in South Sudan displaced people into Uganda. Mylan (2025), for example, examines how cross-border social connections and mobility influenced refugees' experiences in Palabek during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Before the establishment of the settlement, land and natural resources in Palabek supported the livelihoods of the local population. Land was important for residential purposes, cultivation and livestock keeping, while vegetation provided firewood, grass and poles for construction. Water sources supported household consumption and farming. These resources were embedded in established social and economic relationships and cannot be understood simply as physical assets

available for settlement.

The arrival of refugees introduced additional demands on this resource base. Refugees required land for shelter and, where possible, cultivation, while host-community households continued to depend on land for agriculture, grazing and other livelihoods. Consequently, resource access became central to the relationship between the two populations.

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP, 2018) identifies land as a major productive asset in refugee-hosting districts in northern Uganda. Its analysis highlights how local social, political and economic conditions influence decisions about land use and affect household livelihoods and the environment. This perspective is particularly relevant to Palabek because access to land influenced whether refugees could establish homes, cultivate food, earn income and reduce dependence on humanitarian assistance.

Other resources were similarly interconnected. Food security depended on assistance, household income, agricultural productivity and access to markets. Healthcare and education depended on the availability and capacity of services, while access could be influenced by distance, transport and household resources. Water and vegetation supported domestic activities and livelihoods, but increasing demand could place pressure on the existing resource base.

These historical and socioeconomic circumstances provide the foundation for examining how resource needs evolved, how refugees and host-community members shared resources, and how their experiences of access changed between 2017 and 2025.

1.1.1.c Establishment of Palabek Refugee Settlement and Emergency Resource Access, 2017–2018

Palabek Refugee Settlement was established on 12 April 2017 following renewed violence in Pajok, Eastern Equatoria, South Sudan. UNHCR reported that fighting broke out on 3 April 2017, forcing

thousands of South Sudanese civilians to flee into Uganda. The Government of Uganda, through the Office of the Prime Minister (OPM), and UNHCR opened the new settlement in Lamwo District to accommodate the arriving population (UNHCR, 2017).

The arrival of refugees created immediate demands for land, food, shelter, water, sanitation, healthcare and other essential services. Humanitarian assistance was organised to address urgent needs, while land was made available for settlement and the development of facilities. The host community's contribution of land was important in accommodating refugees, but the process also introduced a population whose needs overlapped with those of established households.

The early period was characterised by emergency resource provision. Refugees required food assistance and materials for shelter, while access to water, sanitation and healthcare was essential for meeting basic needs. Education and protection also formed part of the humanitarian response as families established themselves in the settlement.

Evidence from a multi-sector needs assessment conducted between 31 May and 14 June 2018 illustrates the extent of these needs. The assessment interviewed 104 refugee households in Palabek. Food was identified as a need by 80% of the assessed households, health and nutrition by 52%, and livelihoods by 48%. Although 81% of the assessed households reported having access to agricultural land during the most recent harvest season, 81% of those with land reported that it had not produced sufficient food for their entire household. Furthermore, 65% reported difficulties accessing markets to buy or sell agricultural products and livestock (UNHCR, 2018).

These findings demonstrate that access to land did not necessarily guarantee food self-sufficiency. Households could have some land but still struggle to produce enough food because of plot size, soil quality, limited farming inputs, weather conditions or poor market access. Humanitarian food assistance therefore remained important even for some households that engaged in cultivation.

The establishment of schools, health facilities, water points and other services also influenced resource access during this period. However, the physical presence of a service did not necessarily mean that it could adequately meet the needs of a growing population. Access depended on the number of facilities, their distribution across the settlement and the availability of staff and other operational resources.

The emergency phase was therefore important in two ways. First, it established the arrangements through which refugees accessed essential resources. Secondly, it brought refugees and the host community into closer interaction through land use, public services and local economic activities. Although these arrangements addressed urgent needs, they also raised questions about the adequacy, accessibility and sustainability of resources in the settlement.

1.1.1.d Land Access, Livelihoods and Resource Sharing, 2018–2020

As Palabek became more established, access to resources increasingly extended beyond emergency assistance to include cultivation, land rental, casual labour, local markets and shared public services. These arrangements were important because refugees needed ways to supplement humanitarian assistance, while host-community households continued to depend on land and local economic activities for their livelihoods.

Land was particularly important. Refugees needed residential plots, but some also required additional farmland for agricultural production. Where host-community landholders made land available, renting provided refugees with opportunities to cultivate, while landowners could earn income from making land available. Agricultural labour and other livelihood activities also offered opportunities for interaction between the populations.

However, these opportunities were not equally available to all households. Refugees with limited

income could struggle to rent land or obtain seeds, tools and other agricultural inputs. The amount and quality of available land also influenced agricultural output. Consequently, some households remained dependent on food assistance, purchased food or casual labour even when they had access to residential plots.

UNDP (2018) highlights the importance of understanding land access within its local social, political and economic context. In Palabek, land was both a livelihood asset for the host community and an important resource for refugee settlement and self-reliance. Agreements over its use could create mutual benefits, but their terms and security influenced whether those benefits were realised.

Resource sharing also developed through markets and everyday economic interaction. Refugees and host-community members bought and sold goods, accessed casual work and engaged in small-scale livelihood activities. These exchanges enabled households to obtain resources outside formal humanitarian distributions. However, the ability to benefit depended on income, productive assets, market opportunities and social networks.

Shared public services also connected the two populations. Refugees and host-community members could use the same schools, health facilities and water infrastructure, but the adequacy of those services depended on their capacity to meet growing demand. Service expansion therefore created opportunities for both populations while leaving challenges relating to congestion, staffing, supplies and accessibility.

The historical development during 2018–2020 involved a wider range of resource-sharing arrangements. Humanitarian assistance remained important, but cultivation, land rental, markets, labour and shared services became increasingly relevant. These arrangements created opportunities for cooperation, although unequal access to land, income and productive resources continued to shape household experiences.

1.1.1.e COVID-19, Food-Assistance Reductions and Changing Resource Access, 2020–2022

The COVID-19 pandemic introduced additional difficulties in accessing resources in Palabek. Movement restrictions, economic disruptions and school closures affected the ways in which refugees obtained food, earned income and maintained social relationships. Mylan (2025) demonstrates that the pandemic response interacted with existing socioeconomic challenges, particularly food insecurity and the importance of mobility and social networks to refugee survival.

Food assistance was especially important during this period. On 22 December 2020, the World Food Programme announced further reductions in food and cash assistance for refugees in Uganda because of funding shortfalls. From February 2021, refugees were expected to receive 60% of a full ration, following a 30% reduction in April 2020 (World Food Programme [WFP], 2020). This national development provides context for the food-security challenges experienced by refugees, although assistance levels for individual households depended on the arrangements applicable to them.

Reduced assistance increased the importance of alternative means of obtaining food and income. These included cultivation, land rental, casual labour, small-scale trade and reliance on social networks. However, households did not have equal capacity to pursue these alternatives. People with limited land, income or productive assets could find it more difficult to compensate for reduced assistance.

The pandemic also highlighted the relationship between mobility, livelihoods and resource access. Movement restrictions could affect the ability of refugees to reach markets or participate in economic activities, while food insecurity increased the importance of maintaining access to resources. Mylan (2025) shows that refugees used social relationships and mobility as part of their responses to pandemic restrictions.

These developments revealed the limitations of relying on a single source of support. Humanitarian assistance remained necessary, but access to land, income-generating opportunities, markets and social networks influenced households' ability to cope with shortages. The period reinforced the importance of examining both the provision of resources and the capacity of households to obtain them under changing social, economic and institutional conditions.

1.1.1.f Livelihood Development, Self-Reliance and Integration, 2022–2025

From 2022 to 2025, Uganda's refugee response continued to emphasise emergency assistance, access to public services, peaceful coexistence, self-reliance and durable solutions. The Inter-Agency Uganda Country Refugee Response Plan 2022–2025 provided a framework for addressing humanitarian needs while strengthening public services and socioeconomic opportunities for refugees and host communities (OPM & UNHCR, 2022).

These priorities were relevant to Palabek because refugee households continued to require essential resources while seeking more sustainable ways to meet their needs. Access to cultivation land, agricultural inputs, vocational skills, markets and employment could support household livelihoods and supplement humanitarian assistance. However, the continuing need for food, water, education, healthcare and protection meant that the emphasis on self-reliance did not eliminate humanitarian requirements.

Land remained central to this process. Refugees needed suitable land and productive resources for agriculture, while host-community households depended on land for their own cultivation and other livelihoods. Land rental and related arrangements could create opportunities for cooperation and income, but affordability, clear agreements and secure access influenced whether households could benefit.

Livelihood programmes also provided opportunities for sharing knowledge, skills and productive activities. Joint agricultural activities could connect refugees and host-community members through cultivation, marketing and other economic exchanges. Nevertheless, these opportunities depended on access to land, farming inputs, technical support and viable markets.

Natural-resource management became increasingly important because both populations depended on land, vegetation, water and other environmental resources. Increasing demand could place pressure on resources used for domestic fuel, construction and agriculture. UNDP (2018) highlights the relationship between land use, livelihoods and environmental outcomes in northern Uganda's refugee-hosting districts.

By 2025, resource access in Palabek involved overlapping systems of humanitarian assistance, public services, household cultivation, land rental, casual labour, local markets and livelihood programmes. The benefits of these arrangements were uneven, depending on household circumstances, available assets, distance to services and the terms governing resource use.

The historical development during this period therefore involved stronger emphasis on self-reliance and integration alongside continuing humanitarian needs. It also highlighted the importance of resource-sharing arrangements that recognised the needs of both refugees and the host community.

1.1.1.g Historical Synthesis and Relevance to the Study

The history of Palabek Refugee Settlement between 2017 and 2025 demonstrates that resource access was a changing process shaped by displacement, humanitarian assistance, land arrangements, service provision, livelihood opportunities and relationships between refugees and the host community.

The establishment of the settlement in 2017 created immediate demands for food, shelter, water,

healthcare, education and land. During the early years, emergency assistance and residential land allocation were central to accommodating refugees. However, the 2018 multi-sector needs assessment showed that access to land did not necessarily provide adequate food and that barriers to market access and livelihoods remained significant (UNHCR, 2018).

Between 2018 and 2020, cultivation, land rental, market participation, casual labour and shared public services became increasingly important. These arrangements created opportunities for mutual benefit but also exposed differences in access to productive resources. During 2020–2022, the COVID-19 pandemic and reductions in food assistance further demonstrated the vulnerability of households that depended on humanitarian support and had limited alternatives (Mylan, 2025; WFP, 2020).

From 2022 to 2025, the emphasis on livelihoods, self-reliance and integration became increasingly prominent in Uganda's refugee-response framework (OPM & UNHCR, 2022). Nevertheless, basic assistance remained important, and opportunities for self-reliance depended on access to productive land, income, public services and other resources.

This historical background provides the foundation for the four objectives of the present study. First, it establishes the developments associated with the establishment and growth of Palabek Refugee Settlement. Secondly, it explains why resource needs must be examined as changing over time. Thirdly, it establishes the importance of investigating how refugees and the host community shared land, public services, markets and natural resources. Finally, it provides a basis for examining the experiences of both communities in accessing resources and the social, economic and institutional factors that influenced those experiences.

The central historical issue is therefore not simply that the refugee population increased or that additional services were provided. It is how the settlement's development changed the ways in which

people obtained, shared and managed resources. The historical discussion thus establishes the context for the study's analysis of settlement development, changing resource needs, resource-sharing dynamics and lived experiences between 2017 and 2025.

1.1.2 Conceptual Background

This section explains the main concepts used in the study, including refugee, resource, resource access and resource sharing. Clarifying these concepts establishes how they are understood and applied in the context of Palabek Refugee Settlement.

1.1.2.a The Concept of a Refugee

The term *refugee* has historical, legal, humanitarian and social meanings. In everyday usage, it generally refers to a person who has been forced to leave their home and seek safety elsewhere. However, its formal meaning is defined by international and national legal frameworks.

The 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, as extended by the 1967 Protocol, defines a refugee in relation to a well-founded fear of persecution on grounds including race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion. A person within this definition is outside their country of nationality and is unable or, owing to that fear, unwilling to seek that country's protection or return to it (United Nations, 1951/1967).

UNHCR's mandate extends beyond the formal definition to include refugee protection, assistance and support for solutions that enable refugees to rebuild their lives. These responsibilities may involve access to shelter, food, healthcare, education, protection and livelihood opportunities (UNHCR, 2023).

In Uganda, refugee protection is governed by the Refugees Act, 2006, which provides the domestic legal framework for refugee status and protection. Uganda's approach has also emphasised

opportunities for refugees to move, work and engage in livelihood activities, subject to the applicable legal and administrative arrangements.

In this study, a refugee refers to a person who fled South Sudan and was accommodated in Palabek Refugee Settlement during the study period. The concept is used to examine the circumstances of displacement and the experiences of accessing essential resources, rather than treating refugees solely as recipients of humanitarian assistance.

1.1.2.b The Concept of a Resource

A resource refers broadly to something that people can use to meet needs, sustain livelihoods or improve well-being. In economics, resources commonly include land, labour and capital, while livelihood and development studies also consider human capabilities, social relationships and institutions that shape people's ability to obtain and use resources (Department for International Development [DFID], 1999).

In humanitarian settings, resources extend beyond financial and productive assets to include essential necessities and services such as food, water, shelter, healthcare, education, sanitation and protection. These resources are particularly important to refugees because displacement can disrupt access to land, employment, household assets and social-support networks.

For the purposes of this study, resources refer to the material, economic, social and institutional assets or services that refugees and the host community require to sustain life and livelihoods. They include the following categories:

Natural resources: Land, water, vegetation, firewood and other environmental resources used for cultivation, household consumption, shelter and livelihoods.

Food resources: Humanitarian food assistance, household agricultural production, purchased food

and other means through which people meet their nutritional needs.

Economic resources: Income, employment, cash assistance, savings, productive assets, market opportunities and livelihood skills.

Social services: Healthcare, education, sanitation, protection and other services that support health, learning, safety and well-being.

Physical resources and infrastructure: Housing, roads, classrooms, health facilities, water points, markets and other structures that support household and community activities.

Social resources: Family relationships, social networks, community institutions, cultural connections and informal support that may help people obtain information, assistance and livelihood opportunities.

These categories are interconnected. For example, access to land may support food production, but its value depends on soil quality, water, agricultural inputs and household labour. Similarly, access to education can improve future livelihood prospects, but attendance may be affected by household food insecurity, transport and the availability of learning facilities.

1.1.2.c The Concept of Resource Access

Resource access refers to the practical ability of individuals or households to obtain, use and benefit from resources. It is not limited to whether a resource exists or is formally allocated. Access also depends on its adequacy, quality, affordability, physical accessibility, eligibility criteria and the arrangements governing its use.

In a refugee settlement, for example, a household may have a residential plot but insufficient land to grow food. A health facility may be available, but long distances, medicine shortages or waiting times may limit its usefulness. Similarly, a household may qualify for food assistance but experience

difficulties reaching the distribution point.

In this study, resource access is understood as the ability of refugees and host-community members to obtain and benefit from land, food, water, shelter, healthcare, education, livelihood opportunities and related services between 2017 and 2025. The concept includes both formal access, through government and humanitarian programmes, and informal access, through household production, land rental, employment, market exchange and social networks.

1.1.2.d The Concept of Resource Sharing

Resource sharing refers to the arrangements through which two or more individuals or groups use, exchange, provide or benefit from the same resources. Sharing can occur through formal systems, including public services and humanitarian programmes, or informal arrangements, such as land rental, agricultural labour, market exchange and social support.

In refugee-hosting areas, resource sharing may create mutual benefits when refugees and host-community members use common facilities, cooperate in livelihood activities or exchange goods and services. However, shared use can also create pressure where resources are inadequate, access arrangements are unclear or some groups perceive distribution as unfair.

In Palabek, resource sharing includes refugees and host-community members using common schools, health facilities, water sources and markets; arrangements through which refugees access land owned or controlled by host-community members; and interactions through agricultural activities, labour, trade and social networks.

This study therefore treats resource sharing as a dynamic relationship that may involve cooperation, mutual benefit, unequal access, competition and conflict. Its nature depends on the type of resource, its availability, the conditions governing access and the relationships between the people who use it.

1.1.2.e Types and Importance of Resources in Refugee-Host Communities

Resources relevant to this study include land, food, water, shelter, financial means, social services and vegetation. These resources contribute to survival, livelihood development, social relations and the long-term well-being of both refugees and host-community members.

Water is essential for drinking, cooking, hygiene and agriculture. Food supports health and household welfare, while land is important for shelter, cultivation and livelihoods. Financial resources, including income and cash assistance, allow households to purchase goods and obtain services. Education, healthcare and protection support individual capabilities and well-being, while vegetation provides firewood, construction materials and other environmental resources.

In Palabek, these resources are important because refugees and host-community households often depend on an overlapping resource base. Limited availability or unequal access can intensify vulnerability and competition, while fair access and effective management can support cooperation and local development.

The study examines these resources not as isolated items but as interconnected elements of household and community welfare. It considers how access to one resource influences the ability to obtain another, and how changes in resource availability affect relationships between refugees and the host community.

1.1.2.f Resource Access and Sustainable Development

Sustainable development requires that people's immediate needs be addressed while preserving opportunities for long-term social and economic well-being. The Sustainable Development Goals provide a framework for addressing inequality, improving public services and strengthening institutions.

Sustainable Development Goal 10 emphasises reducing inequality within and among countries, including promoting the social, economic and political inclusion of all people (United Nations, 2015). This is relevant to Palabek because refugees and host-community members require fair opportunities to access essential resources and participate in local development.

Sustainable Development Goal 16 promotes peaceful and inclusive societies, access to justice and effective, accountable institutions (United Nations, 2015). In the context of resource access, these objectives are relevant to transparent assistance arrangements, fair land-use agreements, accessible dispute-resolution mechanisms and meaningful participation in decisions affecting communities.

The resource needs of refugees cannot be met sustainably without considering the circumstances of host communities that share the same local environment. Similarly, the development of host communities can be influenced by the availability of services, livelihood opportunities and humanitarian or development interventions associated with settlement operations.

This study therefore examines resource access as a historical and social process through which material needs, institutions, policies and community relationships interact. It seeks to establish how these interactions shaped resource access and sharing in Palabek between 2017 and 2025.

1.1.3 Theoretical Background

This study was informed by Human Security Theory, which provides a framework for examining the relationship between resource access, human well-being and security.

1.1.3.a Human Security Theory

Human Security Theory emerged prominently during the 1990s as a shift from state-centred security towards approaches focused on the safety and well-being of individuals. The United Nations Development Programme's Human Development Report of 1994 emphasised protecting people from

chronic threats, including hunger, disease and repression, as well as sudden disruptions to everyday life (United Nations Development Programme [UNDP], 1994).

The framework identifies seven interconnected dimensions of human security: economic, food, health, environmental, personal, community and political security. These dimensions recognise that insecurity can arise from material deprivation, environmental pressures, personal threats, social exclusion and institutional weaknesses. Human security therefore extends beyond protection from physical violence to include the resources and conditions required for people to live with dignity (Alkire, 2003; Tadjbakhsh & Chenoy, 2007).

Human Security Theory is relevant to refugee studies because displacement can affect several dimensions of well-being simultaneously. Refugees may require physical protection while also experiencing food insecurity, limited livelihoods, inadequate healthcare, disrupted education and weakened social networks. The theory provides a basis for examining these interconnected challenges and the institutions and relationships that influence access to resources.

1.1.3.b Strengths of Human Security Theory

A major strength of Human Security Theory is its multidimensional approach to vulnerability. It recognises that security involves more than physical protection and includes access to food, healthcare, education, livelihoods and a safe environment. This makes it relevant to refugee settings, where displacement affects different aspects of people's lives simultaneously.

A second strength is its attention to differences in vulnerability. Age, gender, socioeconomic circumstances and social position can influence how people experience resource shortages and access services. The framework therefore enables the study to consider why refugees and host-community members, and individuals within each group, may experience resource access differently

(Alkire, 2003).

A further strength is its emphasis on human dignity and well-being. Instead of concentrating only on the provision of immediate humanitarian assistance, the theory encourages attention to the conditions required for people to sustain their livelihoods and improve their circumstances. This is relevant to Palabek because food assistance, access to land, healthcare, education and livelihood opportunities are interconnected elements of human security.

The theory also supports the examination of community security. In refugee-hosting settings, the availability and distribution of resources can influence cooperation, social cohesion, competition and conflict. Human security therefore provides a basis for investigating how resource-sharing arrangements affect both individuals and the wider community.

1.1.3.c Limitations of Human Security Theory

Despite its strengths, Human Security Theory has several limitations. First, its broad scope can make it difficult to examine all dimensions of security in equal detail within a single study. The dimensions may overlap, making it challenging to determine the relative importance of particular threats.

Secondly, the theory does not always provide precise indicators for measuring human security or assessing changes over time. Its application therefore requires clearly defined analytical categories and evidence appropriate to the research context.

Thirdly, although the framework recognises vulnerability, it may not fully explain the political, institutional and economic power relationships that determine who controls resources and who benefits from their distribution. In refugee settings, the theory may identify food insecurity or inadequate healthcare without independently explaining the historical circumstances or institutional

decisions that produced these conditions.

These limitations mean that Human Security Theory should be applied critically and supported by empirical evidence. It should provide an analytical framework rather than a complete explanation of every resource-access challenge.

1.1.3.d Application of Human Security Theory to Palabek Refugee Settlement

Human Security Theory provides a framework for examining resource access among refugees and the host community in Palabek Refugee Settlement between 2017 and 2025. The theory is relevant because resource access involves interconnected economic, food, health, environmental, personal and community-security concerns.

Economic and food security are relevant to understanding dependence on humanitarian assistance, access to productive land and opportunities for income generation. Health security provides a basis for examining access to healthcare, medicines, water and sanitation. Environmental security helps frame concerns about land use, deforestation and access to natural resources. Community security is particularly important for understanding cooperation, resource sharing, social cohesion and competition between refugees and the indigenous Acholi host community.

The theory also provides a way to examine how changes over time affected human well-being. During the early years of the settlement, emergency food, shelter and protection were central to survival. As the settlement developed, the importance of livelihoods, education quality, healthcare capacity and environmental sustainability increased, although basic needs remained important.

Human Security Theory therefore enables this study to examine resource access as a multidimensional historical and social process rather than simply as the distribution of humanitarian assistance.

1.1.3.e Justification for Choosing Human Security Theory

Human Security Theory was selected because it corresponds with the study's central concern: the historical evolution of resource access and sharing between refugees and host-community members. Its multidimensional perspective enables the study to examine changing resource needs, the arrangements through which resources were shared and the experiences of both communities between 2017 and 2025.

The theory is also appropriate because it emphasises human well-being and vulnerability. These concerns are relevant to food security, access to healthcare and education, livelihood opportunities, personal safety and the management of shared environmental resources.

Its limitations were addressed by applying only the dimensions relevant to the research questions rather than attempting to measure every dimension equally. The historical approach and qualitative evidence from interviews, focus group discussions, observation and documentary sources helped situate resource-access experiences within their local and temporal contexts. This approach also enabled the examination of institutional decisions and community relationships that influence access. Human Security Theory was therefore considered appropriate because it provided a broad but relevant framework for analysing the connections between resource access, household well-being and refugee-host community relations.

1.1.4 Contextual Background

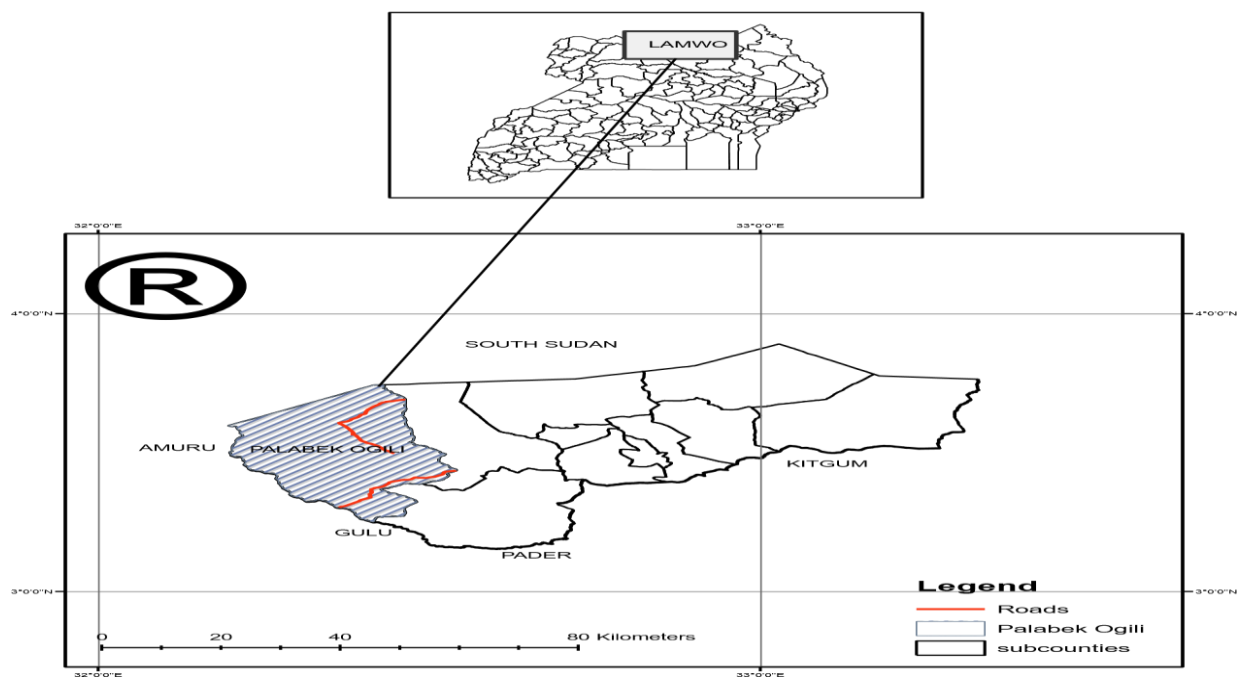
This section provides the geographical, demographic, historical and socioeconomic context of Lamwo District and Palabek Refugee Settlement. It describes the location of the study area, the population, local livelihoods, land arrangements and environmental characteristics that influence the availability and use of resources.

1.1.4. a Geographical Location of Lamwo District

Lamwo District is located in northern Uganda in the Acholi sub-region. It borders South Sudan to the north, Amuru District to the north-west, Gulu District to the south-west, Kitgum District to the east and south-east, and Pader District to the south. The district headquarters are located in Lamwo Town Council.

The district's proximity to South Sudan makes it an important location for understanding refugee movements and cross-border social relationships. Its agricultural land, settlement patterns and local service infrastructure are also important to the livelihoods of the host community and the development of Palabek Refugee Settlement.

Figure 1: Map of Uganda Showing Palabek Ogili Sub-County Hosting Palabek Refugee Settlements in Lamwo District.



1.1.4.b Palabek Refugee Settlement and Population Context

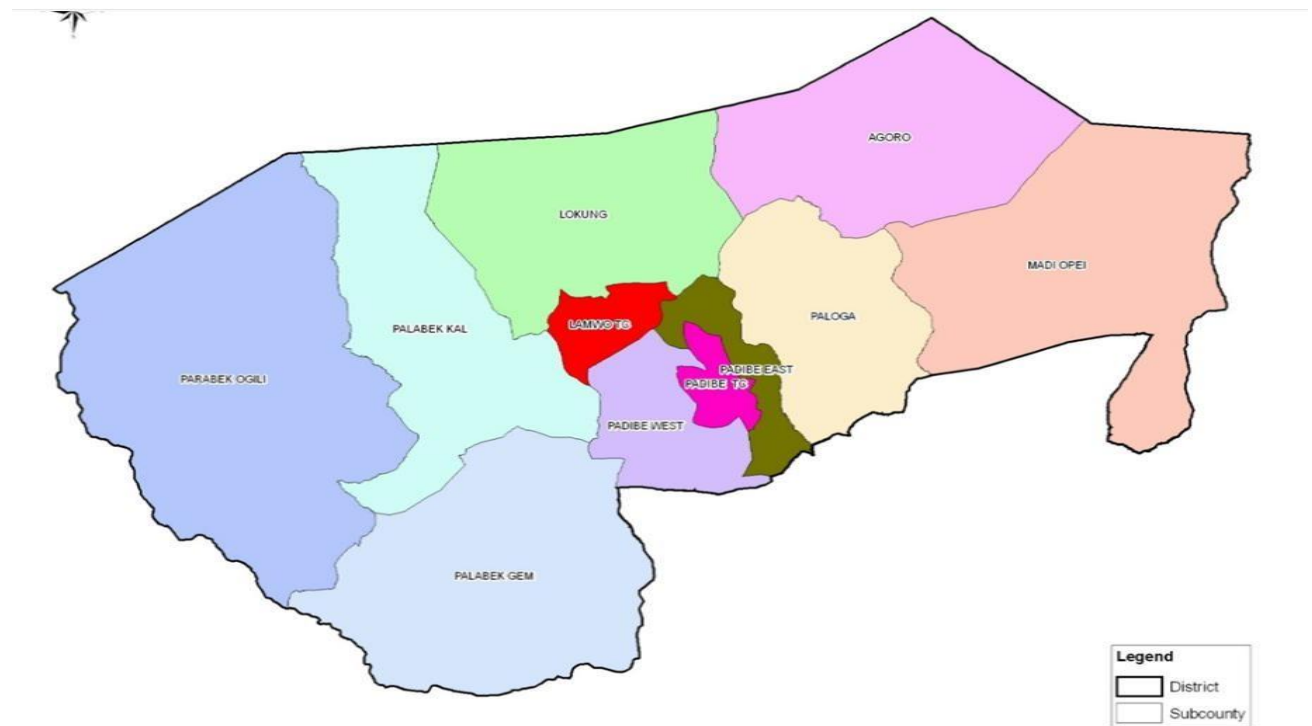
Palabek Refugee Settlement is situated in Lamwo District and occupies land made available largely by members of the host community in the wider Palabek area, including areas associated with Palabek Ogili and Palabek Gem. The settlement was established in April 2017 to accommodate refugees fleeing conflict in South Sudan.

According to the UNHCR population figure cited for July 2025, Palabek hosted 93,377 refugees. The 2024 Uganda National Population and Housing Census reported a total population of 213,156 for Lamwo District, comprising 103,290 males and 109,866 females (Uganda Bureau of Statistics [UBOS], 2024). These figures provide demographic context for understanding the scale of resource demand within the district and the settlement.

The district's socioeconomic conditions are also relevant. Census information indicates that many households depend on subsistence livelihoods and agriculture. The original census figures supplied for this study report 25,159 households engaged in a subsistence economy, representing 54.2% of households, alongside a high level of agricultural engagement.

The study focuses on the relationship between settlement growth, resource access and community livelihoods. Population figures alone do not demonstrate that competition occurred, but they provide context for examining the capacity of schools, health facilities, water sources and livelihood opportunities to meet the needs of the population.

Figure 2: Map of Lamwo District Showing Different Sub-Counties



Source: Extracted by the cartographer (Kiigwe Beatrice)

1.1.4.c Migration and Settlement of the Acholi

Lamwo District is predominantly inhabited by the Acholi, a Luo-speaking community whose history is connected to wider Luo migrations into northern Uganda. Historical accounts describe the gradual movement and settlement of Luo-speaking groups in northern Uganda and the development of local chiefdoms and clan territories (Atkinson, 1994; Girling, 1960; Ogot, 1967).

Acholi settlement and social organisation historically developed through family and clan relationships. Extended family units established homesteads, while local chiefs and elders played roles in customary governance, dispute resolution and social affairs. This system influenced access to land, livelihoods and other resources.

The socioeconomic organisation of the Acholi was closely associated with agriculture and livestock

keeping. Families cultivated crops for household consumption and occasionally sold surpluses in local markets. Livestock provided food and income and played a role in social and cultural practices. Access to farmland, grazing areas and natural resources was therefore central to household welfare.

The Acholi communities in northern Uganda are culturally and linguistically connected to Acholi-speaking populations across the present-day Uganda–South Sudan border, including communities in the Magwi area of Eastern Equatoria. These connections have supported cross-border interaction, trade, family relationships and cultural exchange. During periods of conflict in South Sudan, the same connections helped shape movement into Uganda, including the displacement that contributed to the establishment of Palabek Refugee Settlement in 2017.

The historical and cultural relationships between the communities provide important context for the study, but they do not imply that refugees and the host community occupied identical legal or socioeconomic positions. Their access to land, humanitarian assistance, public services and livelihood opportunities continued to be shaped by household circumstances and local arrangements.

1.1.4. d Land Ownership, Inheritance and Use in Lamwo District

Land is an important productive and social resource in Lamwo District. Traditionally, landholding in many Acholi communities has involved clan, lineage and family relationships, with customary arrangements influencing access to land for cultivation, residence and grazing. Local leaders and elders have played roles in resolving land disputes and maintaining community relationships, although actual land arrangements may vary between households and locations.

Land inheritance has historically been influenced by patrilineal family arrangements. Land may be allocated among family members for cultivation and settlement, while customary practices have influenced women's access to land. These arrangements should be understood as historical and social

practices that can vary between families and change over time.

Land use in Lamwo has primarily been associated with cultivation, livestock keeping and household settlement. Crops such as sorghum, millet, cassava, maize, beans and groundnuts have contributed to local food security, while livestock has provided food, income and a form of household security.

The establishment and growth of Palabek Refugee Settlement introduced additional demands on land. Refugees required residential plots and, where possible, access to farmland. Host-community households continued to depend on land for cultivation, grazing and other livelihoods. These overlapping demands made land allocation, rental, boundaries and the conditions of use important to the relationship between refugees and the host community.

The UNDP (2018) study of land dynamics in refugee-hosting districts in northern Uganda demonstrates that land decisions affect household livelihoods and the environment. In Palabek, understanding land access therefore requires attention to customary arrangements, the terms of agreements, plot size and quality, and the ability of households to use land productively.

1.1.4.e Vegetation and Natural Resources

Lamwo District contains savannah grasslands and woody vegetation that support livelihoods and domestic activities. Vegetation provides firewood, construction materials, grass for thatching and grazing, and other resources used by households.

The vegetation of the Palabek area is important to both refugees and host-community members. Trees and shrubs may be used for fuel and building materials, while grasslands support livestock keeping. These resources therefore have both economic and environmental significance.

The arrival of refugees increased demand for firewood, poles and other materials needed to establish households. Host-community members also continued to depend on the same natural-resource base.

Consequently, increased use of vegetation became relevant to resource-sharing relationships and environmental management.

The availability of natural resources is influenced by climate, land use and human activity. Where demand grows faster than resources can regenerate, households may experience difficulty obtaining firewood and building materials. Resource management is therefore relevant to the long-term sustainability of refugee and host-community livelihoods.

1.1.4.f Climate and Drainage

Lamwo District experiences seasonal rainfall that influences farming, grazing and water availability. The timing and reliability of rainfall affect agricultural production and the availability of water for domestic use and livestock. Dry periods may increase pressure on water sources, while heavy rainfall may affect roads, pathways and access to services.

The district is drained by rivers, streams and seasonal wetlands that support household activities, livestock and agriculture. The availability of water varies across locations and seasons, and smaller streams may become unreliable during dry periods.

These environmental conditions are relevant to Palabek because refugees and host-community members depend on water for drinking, cooking, hygiene and agriculture. The seasonal nature of water sources can influence the distance people travel, the time they spend collecting water and the demand placed on water infrastructure.

Climate and drainage conditions also affect resource-sharing arrangements. Where a water source becomes insufficient or inaccessible, competition may arise among users. Similarly, heavy rainfall can make roads impassable and restrict access to schools, health facilities and markets. These environmental factors therefore influence the accessibility and reliability of resources across the

settlement.

1.1.4.g Topography and Soils

Lamwo District contains relatively low-lying areas as well as elevated landforms, including the Agoro, Latolim, Lamwo and Lalak hills. Differences in topography influence drainage, settlement patterns, agricultural suitability and access to some areas.

The district's soils also vary. Some areas contain highly weathered soils that require appropriate management to sustain agricultural production, while shallow soils in elevated locations may be more vulnerable to erosion. Poorly drained areas can present different constraints for cultivation and settlement.

These variations matter because land access is not only a question of the amount of land available but also its suitability for particular uses. Refugees who obtain small or poor-quality plots may struggle to produce enough food, while host-community households can also experience reduced productivity where soils are degraded or rainfall is unreliable.

The study therefore considers soil and topographic conditions as contextual factors that may influence the value of land for cultivation and the ability of households to achieve agricultural self-reliance.

1.1.4.h Agriculture and Household Livelihoods

The economy of Lamwo District is predominantly rural, with agriculture and livestock keeping forming important livelihood activities. Households cultivate crops including millet, sorghum, cassava, maize, beans and groundnuts, primarily for household consumption and, where possible, sale in local markets. Livestock provides food, income and other household benefits.

Agricultural production is influenced by rainfall, soil conditions, labour, access to land and the

availability of farming inputs. Households with adequate land and productive resources may produce enough food for consumption and sometimes sell a surplus. Others may depend on casual labour, small businesses or social support when agricultural production is insufficient.

For refugees in Palabek, access to agriculture is influenced by settlement arrangements and the resources available to each household. A residential plot may provide space for shelter but may not be large enough for sufficient food production. Some households may need additional land, tools, seeds, water or access to markets to make farming viable.

The host community also faces agricultural opportunities and constraints. While customary access to land may provide some households with productive assets, land pressure, environmental changes and unreliable rainfall can affect farming and grazing. The differences and connections between refugee and host-community livelihoods are therefore important to understanding resource sharing in Palabek.

These contextual characteristics demonstrate that land, water, vegetation, farming opportunities and public services form an interconnected resource base. Understanding their availability and accessibility is essential to explaining changing resource needs and sharing arrangements between refugees and the host community.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Access to essential resources, including food, land, water, healthcare, education and livelihood opportunities, is fundamental to the survival, dignity and well-being of refugees and host communities (World Bank, 2016). In Uganda, the Refugees Act of 2006 and the Refugee and Host Population Empowerment (ReHoPE) framework provide a basis for refugee protection, self-reliance and improved relations between refugees and host communities. However, the existence of policy frameworks does not necessarily guarantee equitable access to resources, particularly in areas where

refugees and host populations depend on the same limited resources.

In Palabek Refugee Settlement, Lamwo District, the establishment and growth of the settlement since 2017 have increased the importance of understanding how refugees and the indigenous Acholi host community access and share essential resources. Despite humanitarian interventions and efforts to promote self-reliance, challenges associated with food security, land access, inadequate social infrastructure and limited livelihood opportunities continue to raise concerns about resource distribution. These challenges have implications for household well-being, community relationships and peaceful coexistence.

Although existing studies have examined refugee protection, humanitarian assistance and self-reliance in Uganda, there remains a gap in the historical understanding of how resource access and sharing between refugees and host communities in Palabek evolved from 2017 to 2025. In particular, insufficient attention has been given to the changing resource needs of refugees, the dynamics through which refugees and host communities share available resources, and the experiences of both groups in accessing essential services and livelihood opportunities over time. Furthermore, the ways in which resource scarcity, socioeconomic circumstances and interactions between the two communities influence access, cooperation and competition require further contextual investigation. Consequently, this study examined the historical development of Palabek Refugee Settlement, the changing resource needs of refugees, resource-sharing dynamics between refugees and host communities, and their experiences in accessing resources from 2017 to 2025. By addressing these gaps, the study sought to provide a historically grounded understanding of resource access and sharing in Palabek.

1.3 Objectives of the Study

1.3.3 General Objective

The general objective of the study was to investigate resource access among the refugee-host communities in Palabek Refugee Settlement, Lamwo District, Northern Uganda, from 2017 to 2025.

1.3.4 Specific Objectives

1. To explore the historical development of Palabek Refugee Settlement from 2017 to 2025.
2. To establish the changing resource needs of refugees in Palabek Refugee Settlement from 2017 to 2025.
3. To investigate resource-sharing dynamics between refugees and the host community in Palabek Refugee Settlement from 2017 to 2025.
4. To examine the experiences of refugees and the host community in accessing resources in Palabek Refugee Settlement from 2017 to 2025.

1.3.5 Research Questions

1. What historical developments shaped the development of Palabek Refugee Settlement between 2017 and 2025?
2. What have been the changing resource needs of refugees in Palabek Refugee Settlement change between 2017 and 2025?
3. What are the resource-sharing dynamics between refugees and the host community in Palabek Refugee Settlement between 2017 and 2025?
4. What were are the experiences of refugees and host-community members in accessing resources in Palabek Refugee Settlement between 2017 and 2025?

1.4 Scope of the Study

1.4.1 Content Scope

The study examined the historical evolution of resource access and sharing between refugees and the host community in Palabek Refugee Settlement, Lamwo District, Northern Uganda, from 2017 to 2025. It focused on the historical development of the settlement, changing refugee resource needs, resource-sharing dynamics, and the experiences of both communities in accessing essential resources, including land, food, water, shelter, education, healthcare and livelihood opportunities. It also examined government and humanitarian interventions and their socioeconomic and environmental implications.

These areas were selected to establish how resource needs, access and sharing arrangements changed over time, and how they influenced household welfare, community relations, cooperation and competition between refugees and the host community. The historical perspective provided a basis for understanding these changes throughout the study period.

1.4.2 Geographical Scope

The study was conducted in selected blocks across Zones 1, 2, 3, 4, 5A, 5B, 7 and 8 of Palabek Refugee Settlement, Lamwo District, Northern Uganda. These included Zone 1 (Blocks 3 and 5), Zone 2 (Block 5), Zone 3 (Block 5), Zone 4 (Block 4), Zone 5A (Block 5C), Zone 5B (Blocks 3 and 9), Zone 7 (Blocks 3, 4 and 7), and Zone 8 (Block 2). The study focused on refugee communities established in the settlement since 2017 and their interactions with the indigenous Acholi host community.

The area was selected because the establishment and growth of Palabek Refugee Settlement created a relevant setting for examining resource access and sharing between refugees and the host

community. The selected zones and blocks provided opportunities to explore differences in access to land, food, water, healthcare, education and livelihood opportunities. The study area was therefore suitable for investigating changing resource needs, sharing arrangements and the experiences of both communities between 2017 and 2025.

1.4.3 Time Scope

The study covered the period from 2017 to 2025 to examine the historical development of Palabek Refugee Settlement and changes in resource access following the arrival of South Sudanese refugees. This period was selected to trace evolving resource needs, resource-sharing arrangements and the experiences of refugees and the host community over time. Data were collected between June and July 2025 through interviews and documentary review to capture participants' experiences and historical changes in resource access during the study period.

1.5 Justification of the Study

Conflict and forced displacement continue to affect communities worldwide, including Uganda, where refugees and host communities face persistent challenges in accessing essential resources. Climate change, declining humanitarian funding and competition for limited resources further complicate these challenges. In Palabek Refugee Settlement, Lamwo District, understanding resource access is essential for improving the well-being of refugees and promoting peaceful coexistence with the host community (Omata & Takahashi, 2018).

The study was justified by the need to understand historical changes in resource access and sharing between refugees and the host community from 2017 to 2025. Its findings provide insights into the factors influencing access to land, food, water, healthcare, education and livelihood opportunities, thereby informing policies and interventions that promote equitable resource distribution and

sustainable livelihoods.

The study also aligns with Sustainable Development Goal 10, particularly Target 10.2, which calls for the social, economic and political inclusion of all people regardless of their origin or socioeconomic status (United Nations, 2015). Furthermore, the findings are relevant to Uganda's Fourth National Development Plan (NDP IV), covering financial years 2025/26–2029/30, which emphasises improved household incomes, employment, inclusive growth and social well-being (National Planning Authority, 2025). By providing historical evidence on resource access and sharing, the study can inform government institutions and humanitarian organisations in designing interventions that improve resource allocation, strengthen self-reliance and promote peaceful coexistence between refugees and host communities.

1.6 Significance of the Study

Central and Local Government

The study provides central, district and sub-county governments with empirical evidence on refugee needs, resource access and the socioeconomic and environmental impacts of refugee settlements. The findings can inform refugee policies, guide infrastructure planning and resource allocation, improve service delivery, and support effective management of resource-sharing challenges and conflicts between refugees and host communities.

Host Communities

The research highlights the experiences and challenges faced by host communities living alongside refugees. Understanding these dynamics can promote social cohesion, guide interventions that benefit both populations, and ensure that host communities receive adequate support to cope with resource pressures and potential socioeconomic tensions.

Policymakers

Policymakers at national and regional levels can use the study to design evidence-based strategies for refugee integration, sustainable resource management and livelihood support. The findings can contribute to refining frameworks such as ReHoPE, ensuring that policies are responsive to the actual needs of both refugees and host populations.

Humanitarian Organisations

The research provides humanitarian actors with detailed information on gaps in service provision, barriers to resource access and community coping strategies. This can help non-governmental organisations and international agencies design targeted programmes, improve aid delivery, strengthen self-reliance initiatives and implement sustainable interventions that reduce dependence on external assistance.

CHAPTER TWO:

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

2.0 Introduction

This chapter critically reviews literature relevant to the historical development of Palabek Refugee Settlement and resource access among refugees and the host community in Lamwo District, Northern Uganda, between 2017 and 2025. It draws on government and humanitarian reports, settlement profiles, policy documents, scholarly books and journal articles, and research conducted in Palabek and other refugee-hosting settings in Uganda. These sources are considered in terms of their geographical focus, methods, theoretical perspectives, findings and limitations.

The chapter does not treat the literature as a collection of descriptions. Instead, it compares what different sources establish, considers the limits of their explanations and identifies where further historical and locally grounded evidence is needed. Government and humanitarian reports are particularly useful for documenting settlement populations, assistance programmes and sectoral needs at particular times. However, such reports do not always explain how needs and access arrangements change over several years or how refugees and host-community members experience those changes. Scholarly studies provide deeper interpretations of social relations, livelihood strategies and institutional practices, but their findings must be assessed against their research questions, methods and period of coverage.

The review is organised around the four specific objectives of the study: to examine the historical development of Palabek Refugee Settlement; to establish how refugee resource needs changed between 2017 and 2025; to investigate resource-sharing dynamics between refugees and the host community; and to examine their experiences in accessing resources. Each section discusses the main arguments in the literature, presents the researcher's assessment and identifies the gap

addressed by the study. In evaluating the sources, the chapter distinguishes between evidence about policy intentions, evidence about service provision, and evidence about people's lived experiences. This distinction is important because a policy may promise inclusion without showing whether services are adequate, while a service report may record the number of facilities without explaining whether households can access them in practice. The review therefore gives particular attention to the relationship between what institutions intend, what they deliver, and what communities experience.

2.1 Historical Development of Palabek Refugee Settlement, 2017–2025

Palabek Refugee Settlement was officially opened on 12 April 2017 following renewed violence in South Sudan, including attacks around Pajok in Eastern Equatoria that displaced large numbers of civilians into Uganda. The Office of the Prime Minister (OPM) and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) established the settlement in Lamwo District to accommodate the new arrivals (UNHCR, 2017). The opening of the settlement marked a defined administrative and humanitarian response, although cross-border movement and social connections between communities in northern Uganda and South Sudan predated its establishment.

Early UNHCR and partner assessments describe a settlement whose infrastructure and basic services were still developing. The June 2018 Palabek Gap Analysis factsheet reported that Palabek Refugee Settlement hosted almost 38,000 South Sudanese refugees and that infrastructure development was still ongoing. It also observed that many refugees and members of the nearby host community shared ethnic connections that could facilitate social interaction (UGA Factsheet Palabek Gap Analysis, 2018). These reports provide an important baseline for understanding the settlement's early development. Nevertheless, population figures and service inventories alone cannot explain how the establishment of the settlement altered household access to land, food, water and other resources, or

how these effects were experienced by refugees and host-community members. These reports provide an important baseline for understanding the settlement's early development. Nevertheless, population figures and service inventories alone cannot explain how the establishment of the settlement altered household access to land, food, water and other resources, or how these effects were experienced by refugees and hosts. Quantitative records can establish the scale and timing of change, but they usually require interpretation alongside qualitative accounts and historical evidence to explain why particular groups benefited or faced barriers. Conversely, individual interviews can reveal how people experienced change but may not, by themselves, establish how representative an experience was across the settlement. Reading these forms of evidence together provides a stronger basis for historical interpretation.

2.1.1 Palabek as an emergency humanitarian response, 2017–2018

During the initial phase, humanitarian action centred on protection and the provision of immediate necessities, including shelter, food, water, sanitation and healthcare. The settlement's rapid establishment required government institutions and humanitarian agencies to respond while infrastructure and service systems were still being developed. Refugees received plots on which to establish households, and assistance was organised to address urgent needs. This response was necessary for survival, but it also created reliance on the availability and continuity of external assistance.

The emergency-relief perspective helps explain why immediate needs received priority during the settlement's early months. However, it provides only a partial account of resource access. The allocation of a plot did not necessarily provide enough productive land to meet a household's food requirements, while the existence of a service did not guarantee that every household could reach or use it. The key distinction is between the formal provision of a resource and the practical ability to

access it. This distinction becomes important when assessing whether emergency interventions met immediate needs and whether they established a sufficient basis for longer-term self-reliance.

2.1.2 From relief to a humanitarian–development response, 2018–2021

From 2018, Uganda’s Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (CRRF) strengthened the policy emphasis on coordinating humanitarian and development interventions and addressing the needs of refugees and host communities. The framework, launched in March 2017, includes emergency response, resilience and self-reliance, expanded solutions, and voluntary repatriation as mutually reinforcing areas of action (Office of the Prime Minister, n.d.). The Education Response Plan for Refugees and Host Communities, launched in 2018, similarly sought to improve access to and quality of education for refugee and host-community learners (Ministry of Education and Sports [MoES], 2018).

These policies indicate a shift beyond short-term relief towards longer-term service delivery, livelihood development and inclusion. In Palabek, this orientation meant that access to resources needed to be considered in relation to agricultural production, markets, education, healthcare and other services used by refugees and nearby Ugandan communities. The policy ambition, however, should not be confused with evidence that equitable access was achieved. National frameworks describe intended approaches and priorities; they do not by themselves establish the adequacy of services or show how people experienced implementation at settlement level.

The COVID-19 period further complicated this transition. Mylan’s (2025) ethnographic study of Palabek examines how pandemic containment policies interacted with mobility, food insecurity and refugees’ strategies of self-protection. Her analysis shows that people’s responses to restrictions were shaped not only by formal rules but also by the legitimacy of those rules and the economic realities of daily life. This is an important corrective to policy accounts that treat refugees mainly as

recipients of protection. It demonstrates that resource access, mobility and agency are connected. At the same time, because Mylan's study focuses particularly on COVID-19 and protection, it does not provide a comprehensive historical account of all resource needs and sharing arrangements throughout 2017–2025.

2.1.3 Self-reliance, resource constraints and adaptation, 2022–2025

In the later study period, livelihood development and self-reliance remained important policy objectives, while households continued to depend on a combination of humanitarian assistance, farming, informal work, petty trade and social networks. UNHCR's settlement statistics and profiles provide a means of tracking the scale and composition of the refugee population, while response plans identify ongoing needs in areas such as education, health, water, sanitation, energy and protection (UNHCR, 2024, 2025). These sources are useful for documenting the continuing importance of service provision and resource planning.

However, national or settlement-level statistics do not fully explain differences in access between households or between refugees and host-community members. Nor do they necessarily show how households adapt when support changes or when land, labour, market access and service availability differ. Wainman, Whyte and Meinert (2022), in their study of material repurposing in a Ugandan refugee settlement, challenge portrayals of refugees as passive aid recipients by showing how people creatively adapt relief materials for practical and social purposes. Mylan (2025) similarly emphasises refugee agency in responding to containment measures and food insecurity in Palabek. These studies make an important contribution by centring refugees' actions and interpretations. Nevertheless, resource adaptation should not be taken as proof that underlying shortages have been resolved; coping strategies can demonstrate agency while also revealing limits in formal assistance.

2.1.4 Palabek as a socially embedded settlement

Palabek is situated within the Acholi sub-region, and many South Sudanese refugees share linguistic, cultural or kinship connections with the Ugandan Acholi host community. Such connections may support communication, exchange, social networks and forms of mutual assistance. Akello (2019), for example, examines land tensions between refugees and the host community in Palabek, highlighting the importance of understanding the terms under which land is accessed and shared. Wainman et al. (2022) also demonstrate that refugee households actively adapt their material environment rather than simply receiving aid in predetermined ways.

These insights caution against describing the relationship between refugees and hosts as either naturally harmonious or inherently conflictual. Shared cultural connections can create opportunities for cooperation, but they do not remove differences in land ownership, income, household assets or access to services. Likewise, evidence of conflict over a resource does not mean that all interactions are hostile. The researcher's position is that Palabek should be understood as a socially embedded settlement in which cooperation and competition can coexist and vary according to the resource, the terms of access and the circumstances of the people involved.

Gap relating to Objective One. Existing official reports provide useful dates, population profiles and information on the development of services, while specific studies examine issues such as land tension or COVID-19 protection. However, these sources address different aspects of Palabek and do not, individually, provide a sustained historical explanation of how settlement development between 2017 and 2025 shaped access to resources and relationships between refugees and the host community. This study addresses that gap by tracing the settlement's development alongside changes in resource needs, sharing arrangements and lived experiences over the full study period.

2.2 Evolving Resource Needs of Refugees in Palabek, 2017–2025

Refugee resource needs are not static. They change as displacement becomes prolonged, households develop new priorities, humanitarian assistance changes and people seek ways to support themselves. Human Security Theory, introduced prominently in the UNDP Human Development Report (UNDP, 1994), provides a useful framework for understanding these needs because it connects food, health, economic, environmental, personal and community security. Its value for this study lies in showing that shortages in one area may affect others: limited access to farmland may reduce food production and income, while poor health can restrict the ability to work or attend school.

The literature nevertheless requires critical interpretation. Sectoral assessments are valuable for identifying specific needs at a given time, but snapshots of food, health, education or water conditions may not capture how people's priorities changed over several years. Similarly, a general claim that needs shift from survival to self-reliance can obscure the fact that emergency needs often persist alongside longer-term aspirations. The study therefore treats changes in resource needs as overlapping rather than as a simple linear transition from aid dependence to self-sufficiency. This position is important because households may simultaneously need emergency food assistance, reliable healthcare and long-term opportunities for income generation. A reduction in one form of assistance does not necessarily indicate that households have become more self-reliant; it may instead mean that they must use savings, reduce consumption, borrow, or depend more heavily on informal support. The analytical task is consequently to examine how the available options changed and whether they enabled households to meet their needs with greater security.

2.2.1 Food, land and household livelihoods

Food assistance was central to the initial response in Palabek. Early assistance helped households meet immediate needs while the settlement and its services were being established. As displacement continued, however, access to food increasingly depended on several sources, including humanitarian support, household cultivation, casual labour, informal trade and purchases from local markets. Changes in assistance can therefore affect more than food consumption: they can increase pressure on households to find income, obtain additional land or rely on social networks.

Land is closely related to these needs. The land allocated to a refugee household may provide space for shelter and some cultivation, but its adequacy depends on size, soil conditions, rainfall, access to tools and seeds, household labour and the availability of additional land. The REACH Initiative and Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC, 2019) identify housing, land and property access as a significant issue in Uganda's refugee response, noting that refugees face challenges within a broader context of complicated land-tenure arrangements and dispute-resolution systems. This analysis is valuable because it links livelihoods to the conditions under which land can be used, rather than treating land allocation as equivalent to secure or productive access.

Wainman et al. (2022) also show how refugee households reuse and adapt relief materials as part of their daily lives. This perspective reinforces the importance of household agency, but it does not replace the need to examine the material constraints within which such agency is exercised. The present study therefore considers how food and livelihood needs changed over time and how households' options were shaped by land access, assistance, markets and locally available opportunities. It also recognises that land access involves more than the physical presence of a plot: the security of an arrangement, the quality and size of the land, and the household's ability to obtain inputs all affect its productive value. This distinction helps explain why households living in the

same settlement may experience different levels of food security even when they are formally covered by the same assistance framework.

2.2.2 Health, water and sanitation

Health-related needs include emergency treatment and disease prevention, as well as maternal and child health, chronic illness, disability support and psychosocial care. Mylan (2025) demonstrates how COVID-19 policies and broader socioeconomic conditions affected protection and everyday life in Palabek. Her analysis shows that health interventions cannot be considered in isolation from food security, movement, livelihoods and the legitimacy of institutions. This is a significant insight because restrictions designed to reduce one risk may create new difficulties if they impede access to food or income.

Water and sanitation are similarly connected to health and household welfare. Access depends not simply on the existence of water points or sanitation facilities but on distance, reliability, quality, waiting time and maintenance. National response plans recognise water, sanitation and health as key sectors of refugee response, but policy priorities do not provide a complete account of how users experienced access in each part of Palabek (UNHCR, 2024). The literature therefore establishes the importance of these services, while leaving room for a more locally grounded analysis of how availability and practical access changed over the study period.

2.2.3 Education and protection needs

Education is both a basic service and a means of improving longer-term opportunities. Uganda's Education Response Plan for Refugees and Host Communities sought to improve access and learning outcomes for refugee and host-community children and adolescents (MoES, 2018). However, the existence of a national plan does not establish that sufficient classrooms, teachers, learning materials or inclusive facilities were available in every settlement locality. Access can also

be affected by household responsibilities, costs, language, disability and the need for children or young people to contribute to household livelihoods.

Protection needs also change during protracted displacement. People may require support related to trauma, family separation, gender-based violence, child protection, legal documentation and social inclusion. The extent and form of these needs differ across age, gender, disability and household circumstances. A critical review must therefore avoid treating refugees as a uniform group with identical priorities. Instead, needs should be understood in relation to personal circumstances and changing opportunities to obtain support.

2.2.4 Economic and environmental needs.

As the settlement developed, economic needs extended beyond emergency relief to include agricultural inputs, vocational skills, capital, market information, employment and opportunities to establish businesses. Evidence on refugee-owned businesses in Uganda identifies barriers such as the cost and complexity of formal registration and limited access to information about official business processes (UNHCR, 2023). Although such evidence covers more than Palabek, it helps explain why formal rights to work or trade may not automatically translate into practical economic access.

Environmental conditions also influence resource needs.

Access to land, fuel, water and productive natural resources affects household welfare and community relations. However, claims that population growth necessarily produces conflict should be treated cautiously. Scarcity can increase pressure, but outcomes also depend on access arrangements, local governance, livelihood alternatives and the effectiveness of shared management. The relevant question is not simply whether resources are limited, but who can access them, on what terms and with what consequences for household security.

2.2.5 Gap relating to Objective Two.

Existing studies and sectoral reports identify important needs in food, land, health, education, water, protection and livelihoods. Their main limitation for this study is that many focus on particular sectors or periods rather than tracing how refugees' priorities and practical options changed across 2017–2025. There is also a risk of treating the shift towards self-reliance as a replacement for emergency assistance, although both may remain necessary. This study addresses the gap by examining the changing resource needs of refugees historically and in relation to the evolving conditions of the settlement.

2.3 Resource-Sharing Dynamics between Refugees and the Host Community

Resource-sharing dynamics in Palabek are shaped by the interaction of land tenure, livelihood opportunities, public services, social relationships and institutional arrangements. Uganda's CRRF provides a policy framework for addressing the needs of both refugees and host communities and coordinating humanitarian and development responses (Office of the Prime Minister, n.d.). Such policy commitments are important, but their existence alone cannot demonstrate how resources are shared in practice. The relevant issue is how formal policies interact with customary land arrangements, household resources and everyday relationships.

The study takes the position that resource sharing should not be understood as automatically equitable simply because refugees and hosts use the same facilities or participate in the same markets. Nor should competition be assumed wherever resources are scarce. Sharing can create mutual benefit, but it can also reproduce differences in power and access. The literature is therefore assessed according to what it reveals about the terms, institutions and experiences through which resource access is negotiated. This approach avoids treating refugees and host-community members as two uniform groups: landowners, land-poor households, wage workers, traders, women, young

people and people with disabilities may encounter different costs and benefits. Resource-sharing arrangements must consequently be analysed in relation to who participates, whose needs are prioritised, how access is negotiated and how disagreements are resolved.

2.3.1 Land access and land-use arrangements

Land is central to the relationship between refugees and hosts because it supports shelter, cultivation and other livelihood activities. Refugees' access to settlement plots is shaped by humanitarian arrangements, while access to additional land may depend on agreements with host-community landowners and local norms. REACH and NRC (2019) show that housing, land and property issues in Uganda are affected by multiple tenure systems and limitations in dispute resolution. Their work is valuable because it situates refugee access within the wider challenges experienced by Ugandan citizens as well as refugees.

Akello (2019) focuses more directly on land tensions involving refugees and host communities in Palabek. This work draws attention to the fact that access arrangements can be contested and that a resource provided for humanitarian purposes may also be connected to existing rights, expectations and local livelihoods. However, a study centred on land cannot fully explain sharing dynamics around food, water, schools, healthcare, markets and other livelihood resources. The present research therefore treats land as a central resource while examining it alongside other forms of access and the historical changes that occurred during the study period.

2.3.2 Livelihoods, markets and economic exchange

Refugees and host-community members interact through farming, casual labour, petty trade, small businesses and other economic activities. Such exchanges may allow refugees to obtain income, access additional resources or purchase food, while creating markets and labour opportunities for host-community members. Wainman et al. (2022) emphasise refugee agency through the creative

adaptation of relief materials, while research on refugee-owned businesses in Uganda identifies practical barriers affecting formal business participation (UNHCR, 2023). Together, these studies show that economic life is not limited to humanitarian transfers; refugees also actively seek to use available resources and participate in local economies.

Nevertheless, access to markets and livelihoods may be unequal. Capital, skills, information, household responsibilities, documentation and social networks influence who can take advantage of available opportunities. A refugee-owned business may provide services and employment while also competing with existing businesses. These possibilities should be examined empirically rather than assuming that economic interaction always produces integration or invariably causes resentment. The analytical issue is how the terms of participation shape benefits and costs for both communities. For example, a market can provide refugees with customers and hosts with goods or services, but the distribution of benefits may vary according to capital, location, purchasing power and access to information. Similarly, shared infrastructure may extend services to both populations, yet unequal travel distances or differences in waiting time may result in unequal practical access. These examples reinforce the need to evaluate sharing at the level of everyday access rather than treating participation alone as evidence of inclusion.

2.3.3 Shared services and natural resources

Water points, schools, health facilities and other public services may serve refugees and host-community members. Uganda's CRRF and the Education Response Plan explicitly emphasise inclusive approaches to refugee-hosting areas (Office of the Prime Minister, n.d.; MoES, 2018). These policies recognise that refugee needs are connected to the capacities of local institutions and that host populations should be considered in service planning. However, shared access may produce different experiences depending on facility location, staffing, quality, availability of supplies and

demand.

Natural resources, including land, water and fuel, are also important to everyday survival and livelihoods. Access to these resources is influenced by environmental conditions and the arrangements through which use is authorised or negotiated. Yet environmental stress should not be treated as a sufficient explanation of conflict. Resource pressure may contribute to disagreement, but its effects are mediated by local institutions, access rights, household alternatives and processes for resolving disputes. This more qualified position helps avoid reducing complex social relationships to a simple competition-for-resources explanation.

2.3.4 Cooperation, competition and social relations

Cultural, linguistic and kinship connections between some South Sudanese refugees and the Ugandan Acholi host community can provide a basis for trust, communication and mutual support. Social networks may facilitate information sharing, labour exchange, temporary assistance and access to economic opportunities. At the same time, these connections do not eliminate differences in citizenship, land rights, wealth, household composition or eligibility for assistance. Social proximity should therefore be treated as a potential resource rather than proof that the two populations experience equal access.

Studies of Palabek also show that resource-sharing relationships operate within wider institutional and political conditions. Mylan (2025), for example, demonstrates that refugee mobility and self-protection during COVID-19 were shaped by changing relationships between policies, food insecurity and local legitimacy. This finding broadens the analysis beyond formal relief distribution: people's choices are influenced by trust in institutions and by whether policy arrangements permit them to meet basic needs.

Conflict and cooperation should consequently be understood as potentially coexisting features of

refugee-host relations. Disagreements over land or access to facilities may occur within communities that also maintain trade, family, cultural and livelihood relationships. A persuasive literature review must therefore consider the conditions under which cooperation is sustained and the circumstances in which competition becomes more likely, rather than characterising the relationship in only positive or negative terms.

Gap relating to Objective Three. Existing research provides useful evidence on land-related tensions, refugee agency, local economic activity and the policy ambition of inclusive services. However, these areas are often examined separately. Less is established about how the different resource-sharing arrangements interacted and changed over the full period from 2017 to 2025. The present study addresses this gap by examining land, essential services and livelihood resources together and by considering the experiences and perspectives of both refugees and host-community members.

2.4 Experiences of Refugees and Host-Community Members in Accessing Resources

The experience of accessing a resource differs from the formal availability of that resource. A household may be eligible for a service or allocated a plot but still face barriers relating to distance, quality, affordability, information, timing, social relations or institutional procedures. This distinction is important when reviewing literature on Palabek because policy descriptions and service inventories often focus on what is provided, whereas users' experiences reveal whether and how provision meets their needs.

Mylan (2025) offers a particularly useful example through its ethnographic analysis of COVID-19 protection and containment in Palabek. The study shows how official measures interacted with food insecurity and refugees' own strategies for survival. This approach demonstrates the value of examining the meanings people attach to policies and the practical consequences of implementation. Nevertheless, a study focused on pandemic containment cannot, by itself, establish the full range of

experiences concerning land, education, healthcare and other resources across the entire 2017–2025 period.

2.4.1 Land, cultivation and food access

Land access influences housing, food production and the ability to develop livelihoods. Where plots are small or agricultural conditions are unfavourable, households may be unable to produce sufficient food and may need to seek additional land, work for others or purchase food. REACH and NRC (2019) show that access to housing, land and property in Uganda is shaped by complex tenure arrangements and dispute-resolution challenges. Akello (2019) further identifies land tension in Palabek as an issue requiring attention to the relationship between refugees and host-community landholders.

Food access is similarly affected by several factors, including humanitarian assistance, household income, productive land, market prices and the ability to move or work. A household's food situation cannot therefore be explained solely by whether it receives a ration. Mylan (2025) demonstrates that food insecurity shaped mobility and self-protection choices during the COVID-19 period. The implication is that access to land and food should be examined together with households' wider options and the choices they make when resources are inadequate.

2.4.2 Water, healthcare and education

Practical access to water depends on more than the existence of infrastructure. Distance, reliability, waiting time, quality and maintenance influence whether households can obtain enough safe water for domestic use. Similar distinctions apply to healthcare: the presence of a facility does not ensure timely care if staff, medicine, transport or specialised services are unavailable. These constraints can affect both refugees and host-community members, although their experiences may differ according to location, income and household needs.

Education plans in Uganda recognise the importance of improving access and learning outcomes for children from refugee and host communities (MoES, 2018). However, school access must be considered alongside the availability of places, teachers, learning materials, sanitation and inclusive support. Household responsibilities, language, disability and the need to earn income may also affect attendance. The literature thus supports treating education as a resource whose practical accessibility and quality matter as much as formal enrolment opportunities.

2.4.3 Institutional, economic and informational barriers

Institutional procedures and access to information can influence whether people know about and can use available services. Documentation, registration processes, programme eligibility, coordination among agencies and the accessibility of communication channels may affect resource access. Research on refugee-owned businesses in Uganda, for example, identifies difficulties related to business-registration information and costs (UNHCR, 2023). This illustrates a broader point: having a legal right or an economic aspiration does not automatically provide the information, finance or institutional support required to act on it.

Economic access is also shaped by the availability of work, capital, skills and market opportunities. When households rely on informal trade or casual labour, income can be irregular and access to essential goods uncertain. Those with limited mobility, caregiving responsibilities or disabilities may experience additional constraints. It is therefore necessary to examine not only the resources households use, but also the institutional and economic conditions that make those resources accessible or inaccessible.

2.4.4 Gender, age and unequal experiences

Refugees should not be treated as a homogeneous population. Women, men, children, older people and persons with disabilities may experience different barriers in accessing land, food, health

services, education and livelihood programmes. Household composition and caregiving responsibilities can also affect how resources are distributed and used. Although general policy frameworks increasingly recognise vulnerability and inclusion, local experiences need to be examined to establish how such differences operate in practice.

The same principle applies to the host community. Host-community households may experience resource access differently according to landholding, income, livelihood activities, location and their ability to use public services. A study that examines refugees alone would therefore risk overlooking the relational nature of resource sharing. Considering both populations makes it possible to examine whether access arrangements create mutual benefits, unequal burdens or different understandings of fairness. Perceptions of fairness are also relevant because the same arrangement may be viewed differently by groups with different histories of land use, expectations of assistance or access to decision-making. Such perceptions should not be taken as proof of actual discrimination or equal treatment; rather, they form part of the evidence to be interpreted alongside documented arrangements and other participants' accounts. This is particularly important in a historical study, where changes in relationships and expectations may help explain why cooperation is sustained in some circumstances but becomes strained in others.

2.4.5 Coping, agency and humanitarian interventions

Refugees develop strategies to cope with resource constraints, including relying on social networks, engaging in informal work, adapting available materials and diversifying livelihood activities. Wainman et al. (2022) show how repurposing relief materials can provide practical benefits and express agency. Mylan (2025) also demonstrates that refugees respond actively to policies and changing conditions rather than simply complying with official arrangements. These studies challenge portrayals of refugees as passive recipients and highlight the importance of incorporating

their perspectives into the analysis of resource access.

However, coping should not be romanticised. A household's ability to adapt may demonstrate initiative, but it may also reveal gaps in formal provision or place additional burdens on already vulnerable people. Likewise, programmes intended to strengthen self-reliance may have limited effects if households lack land, capital, adequate infrastructure or access to viable markets. Government and humanitarian interventions must therefore be examined in terms of their actual accessibility and perceived usefulness, not only their stated objectives.

Gap relating to Objective Four. Existing literature provides important evidence on land-related difficulties, refugee agency, livelihood barriers and the effects of COVID-19 policies in Palabek. However, the available studies tend to focus on particular resources, groups or periods. Further evidence is needed on how refugees and host-community members experienced access across several resource categories and how these experiences changed between 2017 and 2025. The present study addresses this gap by examining participants' experiences of access to essential resources and relating them to the wider historical development of the settlement.

2.5 Synthesis of Research Gaps and Contribution of the Study

The literature demonstrates that resource access in Palabek is shaped by the development of the settlement, changing humanitarian and livelihood needs, the terms under which resources are shared, and people's practical experiences of accessing them. Government and humanitarian reports establish important policy and service-delivery contexts; REACH and NRC (2019) provide evidence on land and property access; Akello (2019) examines land tension in Palabek; Wainman et al. (2022) highlight refugee agency through material adaptation; and Mylan (2025) analyses the relationship between protection, mobility and food insecurity during COVID-19. These sources make distinct contributions, but they address different questions and periods. It would therefore be inaccurate to

assume that any one of them provides a comprehensive account of resource access in Palabek from 2017 to 2025.

The gaps identified below should not be interpreted as meaning that Palabek has received no scholarly attention. Rather, the existing literature addresses important parts of the settlement's experience, but often examines different resources, populations or periods separately. The contribution of this study lies in bringing these strands together within a consistent historical period and a common focus on access and sharing between refugees and the host community. The present study identifies four linked gaps corresponding to its objectives:

2.5.1 Gap relating to the historical development of the settlement

Official reports document the establishment, population and service development of Palabek, while individual studies focus on particular issues such as land tension or pandemic containment. The gap is the limited integration of these strands into a single historical account explaining how developments between 2017 and 2025 shaped access to resources and refugee-host relations. This study contributes by tracing those developments chronologically and linking them to changes in resource access.

2.5.2 Gap relating to changing refugee resource needs

Existing assessments identify needs in food, land, water, healthcare, education and livelihoods, but many provide sectoral or time-specific evidence. The gap is the limited historical explanation of how these needs changed, which needs persisted, and how households' options were affected by shifts in assistance and self-reliance opportunities. This study contributes by examining the evolution of needs over the full study period rather than treating them as static or assuming that long-term development priorities replaced emergency needs.

2.5.3 Gap relating to refugee-host resource-sharing dynamics

Previous studies discuss land access, local economic interaction, refugee agency and inclusive policy frameworks, but these subjects are often considered separately. The gap is the need to understand how resource-sharing arrangements across land, services and livelihoods interacted, and how cooperation and competition were shaped by historical, social and institutional conditions. This study contributes by examining several resource categories and considering refugee and host-community perspectives together.

2.5.4 Gap relating to experiences of accessing resources

Existing literature identifies structural barriers and describes selected experiences, particularly in relation to land, livelihoods and COVID-19. However, there remains scope for a broader, historically grounded account of how both refugees and host-community members experienced access to essential resources across 2017–2025. This study contributes by distinguishing formal resource provision from practical access and examining how availability, location, quality, household circumstances and social relations influenced participants' experiences.

2.6 Conclusion

This chapter has critically reviewed literature concerning the historical development of Palabek Refugee Settlement, the changing resource needs of refugees, resource-sharing dynamics and the experiences of refugees and the host community in accessing resources. The literature confirms the importance of government and humanitarian policy, land arrangements, service provision, household livelihood strategies and social relationships. It also shows that resource access cannot be understood simply in terms of whether assistance or infrastructure exists; the conditions under which resources are accessed and used are equally important.

The key contribution of the present study is its historical focus on Palabek between 2017 and 2025

and its integrated examination of the four objectives. By bringing together the historical development of the settlement, changing resource needs, resource-sharing arrangements and participants' experiences, the study seeks to provide a more locally grounded account of how resource access evolved over time and how these changes influenced relations between refugees and the host community.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction

This chapter describes the methodology used in the study. It presents the research approach and design, study area, target and study populations, sampling frame and sampling procedures, sources of data, data-collection methods and instruments, data-analysis techniques, measures taken to establish the credibility of the findings, challenges encountered during the study, and ethical considerations. These methods were used to investigate the historical development of Palabek Refugee Settlement and changes in resource needs, resource-sharing arrangements and experiences of resource access among refugees and the host community between 2017 and 2025.

3.1 Research Approach

The study adopted a qualitative approach to examine the experiences, perceptions and practices relating to resource access and sharing among refugees and the host community in Palabek Refugee Settlement, Lamwo District. This approach was selected because the study sought to understand how participants experienced resource access, the factors influencing their experiences, and how resource-sharing arrangements changed between 2017 and 2025. It enabled the researcher to obtain detailed accounts and interpret them within their historical and social contexts.

The approach guided participant selection, data collection, analysis and presentation of findings. Interviews, focus group discussions, non-participant observation and documentary review were used to gather information on resource needs, access barriers, sharing arrangements and relationships between refugees and host-community members. The qualitative approach was appropriate because these issues involve personal experiences, perceptions and social interactions that require detailed explanation rather than numerical measurement. It also enabled the researcher to compare

participants' experiences and understand how resource access evolved over the study period. Therefore, the approach provided the depth and contextual understanding necessary to address the study's four objectives.

3.2 Research Design

Orodho (2003) defines research design as the scheme, outline or plan that is used to generate answers to research problems. The Historical and ethnographical research design was used in this study. The ethnographic component enabled the study to observe how the refugees and host community access resources such as land, building materials, water, health and education services as observed by Orodho & Kombo (2005), this approach can be used when collecting information about people's experience, attitudes, opinions, habits or any of the variety of education or social issues. It involved collecting information by living with the participants for a period of two months (June and July 2025). This approach involved recognizing social and historical phenomena as beyond any single or simple identifying cause and attempting to make sense from the social actors' viewpoint' (Armstrong 1993: pp. 5–6). Through the historical methods, the study used sources such as documents and archival materials, oral tradition, oral history and ethnography.

Archive materials which included digital statistics collected by local government, government and non-governmental organizations, as supported by Bryman (2016, p. 326), were used to collect archival data. Similarly, oral history testimonies were used to allow the voices to come through of groups that are typically marginalized in historical research (a point that also applies to life history interviews), either because of their lack of power or because they are typically regarded as unexceptional (Bryman, 2016, p. 491). Oral tradition on the other hand was used to trace the migrations, settlements and ethnic relations between the refugees and the people of Palabek who are thought to share a common history right from Bahr El Ghazel.

3.3 Study Area

The study was conducted in Palabek Refugee Settlement, located in Palabek Ogili Sub-County, Palabek County, Lamwo District, Northern Uganda, focusing on refugees and host communities that have settled in the district since 2017. This is because, this area faces a significant refugee and resource access challenge.

3.4 Study and Target Population

3.4.1 Target Population

The target population comprised all categories of people relevant to understanding resource access and sharing in Palabek Refugee Settlement, Lamwo District, between 2017 and 2025. These included refugees, host-community members and leaders, humanitarian workers, NGO staff, service providers and government officials. This population was selected because each group had relevant experiences, responsibilities or knowledge concerning resource needs, resource allocation, service delivery and resource-sharing relationships. Including these different groups enabled the study to consider resource access from both refugee and host-community perspectives, as well as the institutional perspective.

3.4.2 Study Population

The study population comprised refugees, host-community members and leaders, humanitarian workers, non-governmental organisation (NGO) staff, service providers and government officials associated with Palabek Refugee Settlement in Lamwo District, Northern Uganda. These categories were selected because they possessed relevant experiences, responsibilities or knowledge concerning resource access and sharing between refugees and the host community from 2017 to 2025.

Refugees were included because they experienced changes in access to food, land, water, shelter, healthcare, education and livelihood opportunities. Host-community members and leaders were

included to provide perspectives on resource sharing, local livelihoods, community relations and the effects of settlement growth. Humanitarian workers and NGO staff provided information on assistance programmes, resource allocation and livelihood interventions. Service providers like saloon, barbers and restaurants contributed information on the availability and accessibility of essential services, while government officials provided perspectives on refugee management, policy implementation and coordination.

The study population was drawn from the selected zones and blocks of Palabek Refugee Settlement, together with relevant host-community and institutional representatives. These groups were considered appropriate because understanding resource access required evidence from individuals directly affected by resource needs, those involved in providing services, and those responsible for managing or coordinating interventions.

From this study population, a sample of 118 participants was selected. It comprised 20 key informants, 74 participants interviewed individually and 24 participants involved in two focus group discussions, each consisting of 12 participants. The study population and the sample were therefore distinct: the study population comprised the relevant categories of people from whom participants could be selected, while the sample consisted of those who actually participated in the research.

3.4.3 Sampling Frame

The sampling frame comprised identifiable individuals from the selected zones and blocks of Palabek Refugee Settlement, the surrounding host community, and relevant institutions involved in refugee affairs and resource management. It covered people with direct experience or knowledge of resource access and sharing between refugees and the host community from 2017 to 2025.

The frame included refugees residing in the selected zones and blocks; host-community members who interacted with refugees through land use, markets, employment and shared services; and

recognised refugee and host-community leaders knowledgeable about local affairs, resource allocation and dispute resolution. It also included humanitarian and NGO personnel involved in assistance and livelihood programmes, government officials responsible for refugee affairs or public services, relevant service providers, and local business operators such as salon and barber operators and restaurant owners.

Purposive sampling was used to identify people whose experience or responsibilities were relevant to the research objectives. Snowball sampling complemented this process by allowing initial participants or contacts to refer the researcher to other potentially eligible individuals. Each referral was assessed for relevance before selection. Thus, the frame served as a category-based guide for identifying information-rich participants, rather than as a complete statistical register with known selection probabilities.

The final sample comprised 118 participants: 20 key informants, 74 individual interview participants and 24 focus group discussion participants in two groups of 12. These figures represent the realised sample, not the total size of the sampling frame. This strategy suited the qualitative historical study because it enabled the researcher to gather detailed accounts and compare perspectives on changing resource needs, sharing arrangements and access experiences between 2017 and 2025.

3.5 Historical Sources of Data

a. Documents: The study utilised both primary and secondary documents as important sources of historical evidence. These included government reports, non-governmental organisation records, academic articles, archival materials, and policy documents that provided insights into refugee management and resource access in Lamwo District.

b. Oral History: Oral history was employed to capture the lived experiences, perceptions, and feelings of both refugees and host community members. Through interviews and personal

testimonies, the study was able to reconstruct how different actors and witnesses understood and responded to refugee settlement and the dynamics of resource management over time. This method was particularly useful for accessing memories and perspectives that may not be available in written sources.

c. Oral Traditions: Oral traditions were used to trace the historical background of refugee movements dating as far back as the 1950s, particularly during the Anyanya Movement. Narratives passed down through generations who have been integrated in the host communities provided valuable information on the patterns of migration, settlement, and interaction between refugees and the host community. These traditions helped to contextualise contemporary refugee experiences within a longer historical framework.

d. Linguistics: Linguistic evidence was also considered, especially to explore the cultural and social connections between the South Sudanese refugees of Pajok and Acoli ethnicity from Magwi County, Eastern Equatorial state and the Acholi of Palabek host communities. Language served as a marker of shared heritage, with some South Sudanese refugees speaking dialects of Luo that closely resembled those spoken by the local Acholi population in Northern Uganda. This linguistic similarity not only reflected cultural ties but also played a role in shaping integration and social relations between the two groups. The study used primary sources, secondary sources and archival materials to examine the historical development of Palabek Refugee Settlement and resource access and sharing between refugees and the host community from 2017 to 2025. These sources complemented one another by providing first-hand experiences, scholarly interpretations and documentary evidence of historical developments.

Primary Sources

Primary sources consisted of first-hand information obtained from 118 participants, including refugees, host-community members and leaders, humanitarian workers, NGO staff, service providers and government officials. Data were collected through 20 key informant interviews, 74 individual interviews, two focus group discussions involving 24 participants, and non-participant observation. These sources provided information on changing resource needs, access to land, food, water, healthcare, education and livelihood opportunities, as well as resource-sharing arrangements and community relations.

Secondary Sources

Secondary sources included scholarly books, peer-reviewed journal articles, theses, dissertations and published research on refugee movements, resource access, humanitarian interventions and refugee-host community relations. These sources were reviewed to understand existing arguments, compare previous findings and identify gaps that the study addressed. They also provided theoretical and historical perspectives for interpreting the experiences of refugees and host-community members in Palabek.

Archival Materials

Archival and documentary materials comprised relevant official records and reports produced by government institutions, UNHCR and humanitarian organisations. These included settlement population statistics, administrative records, policy documents and published settlement reports, such as the *Uganda Refugee Response Monitoring Settlement Fact Sheet: Palabek* (June 2018) and *Refugee Settlement Statistics: Palabek* (April 2021). These materials provided documentary evidence on the establishment and growth of the settlement, population changes, resource provision and humanitarian interventions during the study period.

The three categories complemented one another. Primary sources provided participants' experiences, secondary sources offered scholarly interpretations, and archival materials supplied documentary evidence of historical developments and institutional interventions. Information from these sources was compared to identify consistencies, differences and changes in resource access between 2017 and 2025. This enabled a more comprehensive historical understanding of resource access and sharing in Palabek Refugee Settlement.

3.6 Data Collection Methods and Instruments

3.6.1 Written documents

The library research phase involved a thorough review of existing literature, including academic articles, UNHCR and OPM reports, UNHCR and Government of Uganda policy documents, and historical records related to refugee livelihoods, resource access, and humanitarian interventions. Secondary data on the evolution of resource needs of the refugees was collected from sources such as OPM at Palabek field office.

3.6.2 Key Informant Interviews (KIIs)

A total of 20 Key Informant Interviews were held. The Key informants interviewed included OPM staff and implementing partners, Refugee welfare committee, Host community leaders, cultural leaders and Lamwo District Technocrats. These are participants who are key actors in implementing the Ugandan refugee hosting model. The key informant interviews explored the evolution of refugee needs and supplemented data on the experiences of refugees and challenges to resource access.

3.6.3 Interviews

One-on-one oral interviews (involving 74 participants) were conducted with teachers, local leaders, representatives from humanitarian organizations, government officials, youth and host

community members. The oral interviews explored the experiences, opinions and feelings of refugees and challenges to resource access.

3.6.4 Focus Group Discussions

The study used two focus group discussions (FGDs), one with 12 refugee participants and another with 12 host-community members, giving a total of 24 participants. Each group included men, women, youth and elderly persons to capture diverse experiences and perspectives on resource access and sharing in Palabek Refugee Settlement.

During the discussions, the researcher guided participants through questions relating to changes in resource needs between 2017 and 2025, access to land, food, water, healthcare, education and livelihood opportunities, and the challenges encountered in sharing resources. Participants were encouraged to describe their experiences, discuss common challenges, compare their perspectives and suggest possible solutions. The refugee discussion provided insights into refugees' experiences of accessing essential resources, while the host-community discussion explored local experiences of resource sharing and the effects of the settlement on available resources and community relations.

The discussions enabled the researcher to identify recurring concerns, differing opinions and community-proposed solutions. Information obtained was compared with individual interviews, key informant interviews, observations and documentary sources to establish areas of agreement and differences. The FGDs therefore helped explain the social dimensions of resource access and provided complementary evidence for examining resource-sharing dynamics and the experiences of refugees and host-community members.

3.6.5 Observation

Observation involved non-participant observation of the resources and how they were accessed. The observation was done in zone 1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 8 and 9. These resources included: water sources, health

services, schools, food distribution areas, communal lands or farming plots. This was used to understand how resources are distributed and utilized, highlight any disparities in access among different groups (for example, women, children, elderly), and provide context to the social dynamics within refugee communities. Additionally, observing interactions between refugees and service providers can help identify potential barriers to resource access, such as language difficulties or discrimination.

3.7 Data Analysis

The data collected through individual interviews, key informant interviews, focus group discussions, non-participant observation and documentary review were organised and analysed using qualitative methods. The analysis employed content analysis, narrative analysis and chronological analysis to examine resource access and sharing between refugees and the host community in Palabek Refugee Settlement from 2017 to 2025. These methods were complementary: content analysis helped identify recurring themes, narrative analysis examined participants' accounts and experiences, while chronological analysis traced historical developments and changes over time.

The analysis focused on the four objectives of the study: the historical development of Palabek Refugee Settlement, changes in refugee resource needs, resource-sharing dynamics between refugees and the host community, and their experiences of accessing resources. Information from interviews and focus group discussions was compared with observations and documentary evidence to identify areas of agreement, differences and changes over time. This process of triangulation helped place participants' accounts within the wider historical and institutional context of the settlement.

3.7.1 Content Analysis

Content analysis was used to examine interview transcripts, focus group discussion records, observational notes and relevant documentary materials systematically. The researcher reviewed the

information to identify recurring ideas, issues and experiences related to resource access and sharing. Relevant information was organised into themes corresponding to the study objectives and the resource categories discussed by participants.

The main themes included access to food, land, water, shelter, healthcare, education and livelihood opportunities. Other themes included humanitarian assistance, resource allocation, barriers to access, cooperation, competition and refugee-host community relations. Information relating to each theme was compared across participant groups and documentary sources to identify common experiences, differing perspectives and issues requiring further interpretation.

For example, accounts concerning access to farmland were examined alongside information about land-use arrangements and livelihood activities. Similarly, participants' experiences of accessing healthcare and education were considered alongside observations and available documentary evidence about service provision. This enabled the researcher to distinguish between the availability of a resource and the practical conditions under which refugees and host-community members accessed it.

Content analysis therefore provided a systematic means of organizing the qualitative evidence and identifying patterns relevant to the research objectives. It also helped establish the main themes presented in the finding's chapters.

3.7.2 Narrative Analysis

Narrative analysis was used to examine the personal accounts and experiences shared by refugees, host-community members, local leaders, humanitarian workers and other participants. The analysis focused on how participants described changes in resource access, the challenges they encountered, the strategies they used to respond to those challenges, and their perceptions of relationships between refugees and the host community.

Participants' accounts were interpreted in relation to their circumstances and the historical periods they described. Attention was given to the sequence of events, the meaning participants attached to their experiences, and the ways their accounts explained changes in access to resources. Where participants described similar events differently, their accounts were considered alongside those of other participants and relevant documentary evidence rather than assuming that one account represented the experience of the entire community.

Narrative analysis was particularly relevant to understanding experiences that might not be adequately explained by official records alone. For example, documentary sources could provide information about the establishment of services or assistance programmes, while participants' narratives could explain how they experienced these interventions and the barriers they encountered in accessing them.

The accounts of refugees and host-community members were considered alongside the perspectives of local leaders, humanitarian workers and service providers. This enabled the researcher to examine resource access from different viewpoints and to understand how individual experiences related to wider social, economic and institutional conditions. Narrative analysis therefore helped preserve participants' perspectives while placing their experiences within the historical context of Palabek Refugee Settlement.

3.7.3 Chronological Analysis

Chronological analysis was used to trace the historical development of refugee movements into Uganda and the changing conditions of resource access and sharing between refugees and host communities. Although the broader historical background extended from 1955 to 2025, the principal

period of analysis was 2017–2025, corresponding to the establishment and development of Palabek Refugee Settlement.

The analysis organised relevant events and evidence according to their sequence and historical period. It considered the history of Sudanese displacement into Uganda, the renewed conflict in South Sudan, the establishment of Palabek Refugee Settlement in April 2017, and subsequent changes in humanitarian assistance, service provision, livelihood opportunities and refugee-host community relations. Documentary evidence and participants’ recollections were examined to identify significant changes and continuities during the study period.

Particular attention was given to how resource needs and access arrangements changed between 2017 and 2025. The analysis considered the initial emphasis on emergency assistance, subsequent efforts to strengthen services and livelihoods, and the continuing challenges associated with access to food, land, water, healthcare, education and other resources. These developments were not treated as a uniform progression from emergency assistance to self-reliance; instead, the analysis examined how immediate needs and longer-term livelihood concerns could coexist.

Chronological analysis also helped distinguish the broader history of refugee movements into northern Uganda from the history of Palabek Refugee Settlement itself. Earlier developments were used to contextualise the settlement’s establishment, while evidence concerning resource access in Palabek was examined primarily within the 2017–2025 study period.

By arranging the evidence historically and comparing accounts from different periods, the researcher identified changes in resource needs, humanitarian interventions, resource-sharing arrangements and the experiences of refugees and host-community members. This method provided the historical framework for interpreting the findings in relation to the study’s four objectives.

3.8 Validity and Reliability of Data Collection Instruments

3.8.1 Validity

Validity of research instrument refers to the extent to which a test or instrument measures what it was intended to measure (Mbweza, 2008). The instruments constructed were pre tested to check for clarity of questions, language and wording. For this study, content validity of the research instruments was established, by having the instruments appraised by the supervisors and experts in refugee studies and during the pilot study which was conducted in at Palabek refugee settlements in Palabek Sub- County, Palabek County. Validity was ensured by aligning the instruments with the theory, specific objectives and research questions, and primary sources such as official records, photographs, which provided direct evidence from the time period being studied. These sources were further analysed in their historical context to ensure their interpretation remains accurate.

3.8.2 Reliability

The reliability was ensured through source and content reliability and consistency of information. Where biases and inconsistency existed, the study explained factors influencing the emergence. Corroboration and triangulation of sources and methods was used to ensure reliability of the instruments and data. The researcher also ensured working with primary sources, verify the authenticity and origin of the documents to ensure they have not been tampered with or misinterpreted.

3.9 Problems faced during the Study

The study faced several problems, including movement challenges in reaching the remote zones at the refugee settlement, especially Zone 3, 4, 6 and 7, due to the bad terrain of the area. However, the researcher countered this through seeking help from the local area leaders on the clear and safer

paths within the settlement.

The study's reliance on retrospective accounts was subject to bias and Sub-nationalism which was evidenced by nostalgia. However, triangulation was done to avoid occurrences of contradiction and to strengthen the credibility and dependability of the study results.

Memory loss affected chronological narrative of the participants especially the elderly persons who were above 70 years. This was overcome through triangulation and group interviews.

3.10 Ethical Considerations

Ethical approval was sought from Gulu University Research Ethics Committee (GUREC 2025-1219). The study adhered to strict ethical guidelines to protect the rights and well-being of all participants, ensuring strict adherence to Covid-19 and M-Pox standard operating procedures.

Informed consent was obtained from all respondents, ensuring that they understand the purpose of the study, their role in it, and their right to withdraw at any time without penalty.

To safeguard the privacy of participants, the research upheld strict standards of confidentiality and anonymity by eliminating any personal identifiers from the collected data at all stages of the study by using pseudo names.

CHAPTER FOUR

HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENTS SHAPING THE DEVELOPMENT OF PALABEK REFUGEE SETTLEMENT, 2017–2025

4.0 Introduction

This chapter examines the key historical developments that shaped Palabek Refugee Settlement in Palabek Ogili Sub-County, Lamwo District, Northern Uganda, between 2017 and 2025. It traces the establishment of the settlement, the allocation and use of land, the organisation of humanitarian assistance, the development of essential services, changes in livelihood needs and the evolution of relations between refugees and the host community.

The chapter draws primarily on evidence obtained through key informant interviews, individual interviews, focus group discussions and field observation. These sources provide information about the experiences of refugees, members of the host community and people involved in the administration of the settlement. Relevant secondary sources are used to interpret the findings and place them within the wider context of refugee settlement and humanitarian assistance.

The chapter is organised chronologically and thematically. It begins with the establishment of the settlement in 2017, followed by the arrangements for land allocation and settlement organisation. It then examines the development of humanitarian assistance and essential services, the growing importance of livelihood opportunities, and changes in relations between refugees and the host community. This approach addresses the research question: *What key historical developments shaped the development of Palabek Refugee Settlement between 2017 and 2025?*

4.1 Establishment of Palabek Refugee Settlement in 2017

The establishment of Palabek Refugee Settlement in April 2017 was the principal historical development that shaped the area during the period under study. The settlement was established following the arrival of large numbers of South Sudanese refugees fleeing conflict in South Sudan. A key informant from the Office of the Prime Minister (OPM), who was involved in refugee registration, explained that the continuing influx of refugees prompted the establishment of the settlement to accommodate the displaced population.

Before 2017, Palabek was predominantly inhabited by the Acholi, whose livelihoods and social organisation were closely connected to customary land arrangements, local institutions and established patterns of resource use. The arrival of refugees consequently introduced a new dimension to the area's demographic and social history. Land and other resources that had traditionally supported the host community also became important to the accommodation and survival of the incoming population.

The establishment of the settlement therefore represented more than the arrival of a new population. It marked the beginning of an organised process of refugee accommodation, humanitarian intervention and adjustment in local resource use. The settlement required land for residential purposes and the development of facilities, while the refugee population required food, shelter, water, healthcare, education and protection. Government institutions and humanitarian organisations consequently became important in coordinating the response to these needs.

During a key informant interview, a representative from Apyetta Parish explained that shared language and cultural similarities between many members of the host community and South Sudanese refugees facilitated initial communication and interaction. These similarities provided a foundation for contact between the communities. However, cultural familiarity did not eliminate the

practical challenges associated with accommodating a new population whose needs overlapped with those of the existing community.

The OPM informant further explained that the majority of refugees in the settlement came from South Sudan, while a small number of Congolese refugees were later relocated from Adjumani to Zone 8. This indicates that the settlement's population composition was not entirely static during the period under study. The arrival and relocation of refugees influenced the population to be accommodated and the demand for essential services.

The establishment of Palabek in 2017 should therefore be understood as the starting point of a broader historical process. Subsequent developments in land allocation, service provision, humanitarian assistance and local relationships were connected to the initial decision to accommodate refugees in the area.

4.2 Land Allocation and Organisation of the Settlement

The allocation of land was one of the most important developments following the establishment of Palabek Refugee Settlement. Land was necessary to accommodate refugee households and organise settlement activities. However, this process took place in an area where land already had historical, cultural and economic significance for the host community.

During a key informant interview, a landlord from Zone 1 explained that the land occupied by the settlement traditionally belonged to the Palabek Chiefdom in East Acholi, Lamwo District. This account demonstrates the importance of understanding the settlement within the existing history of local landholding. Refugee accommodation involved land that local households and communities had previously used and valued for their livelihoods.

A landlord from Zone 2 reported that his family provided approximately ten acres of land in 2017 for refugee settlement. This account illustrates how local landowners contributed to the

accommodation of refugees. It also demonstrates that the establishment of the settlement depended partly on land arrangements involving the host community and the authorities responsible for refugee settlement.

A refugee focus group discussion indicated that some households received residential plots measuring approximately 30 by 30 metres. Such plots enabled households to establish shelters and organise their domestic activities. Nevertheless, access to a residential plot did not necessarily mean that a household had sufficient land for cultivation or other productive activities. The distinction is important because residential land provided a place to live, while productive land could contribute to food production and household income.

Figure 3: Residential plot allocated to a refugee household in Zone 3, Block 1, Palabek Refugee Settlement.



Source: Researcher's field photograph, [Okwir Allan Daniel 13/7/2025].

The photograph illustrates the physical use of land for refugee accommodation. When considered alongside the interview evidence, it helps demonstrate the way in which the settlement was organised around residential plots. The historical significance of land allocation, however, lies not only in the physical arrangement of the settlement but also in the process of making land available

for a population with urgent housing needs.

Land allocation also had implications for relations between refugees and the host community. The landlord from Zone 2 recalled challenges associated with access to firewood and water during the early period of settlement. These experiences illustrate how the arrival of refugees affected the use of resources beyond the land allocated for residential purposes.

The same informant described the development of interaction between the communities, including children playing together and residents sharing water sources. Such experiences indicate that settlement organisation was accompanied by changes in everyday social relationships. Although the available evidence does not establish that all resource-related difficulties were resolved, it demonstrates that cooperation and adjustment formed part of the settlement's development.

Overall, land allocation was a foundational development between 2017 and 2025. It enabled refugee accommodation while raising questions about customary land use, access to productive resources and the relationship between the settlement's needs and the livelihoods of the host community.

4.3 Development of Humanitarian Assistance and Food Distribution

The organisation of humanitarian assistance was another major development that shaped Palabek Refugee Settlement. Following the arrival of refugees, assistance became important in meeting immediate needs, particularly food and other essential supplies. The OPM focal person interviewed identified food assistance as a major component of the humanitarian response, with the World Food Programme (WFP) among the organisations involved in food provision.

The findings suggest that humanitarian assistance became an important feature of everyday life for households that depended on it. Food assistance helped address immediate consumption needs, especially for families that had lost access to their previous homes, livelihoods and sources of food. At the same time, the adequacy of assistance influenced the extent to which households could meet

their needs without resorting to other coping strategies.

The OPM focal person reported that food rations were reduced periodically because of funding shortfalls, with the informant describing reductions occurring at three-month intervals following settlement or registration. These reductions represented an important change in the assistance experienced by households. Participants reported that difficulties obtaining sufficient food could lead to coping strategies such as skipping meals, selling non-food items and begging.

Such experiences suggest that the development of humanitarian assistance was not a straightforward progression towards stable food security. Although food distribution was organised, the continuity and adequacy of assistance remained important concerns. Changes in the amount of assistance available could affect household welfare and increase the need for alternative livelihood opportunities.

Field observation identified a food store and distribution centre in Zone 1, Block 2. The facility provides physical evidence of the infrastructure used in organising food assistance within the settlement.

Figure 4: Food store (A) and distribution centre (B) in Zone 1, Block 2, Palabek Refugee Settlement.



A



B

Source: Researcher's field photograph, [Okwir Allan Daniel 13/7/2025].

The photograph illustrates the existence of a facility for food storage and distribution. However, the presence of the facility alone cannot establish how much food was distributed, whether all eligible households received assistance or whether the assistance adequately met their needs. These questions are better addressed through the interview evidence and relevant records.

The experiences reported by participants can be considered alongside wider discussions of food insecurity and humanitarian assistance (FAO, 2020). In the case of Palabek, the findings indicate that food distribution was central to the settlement's development but that changes in food assistance also shaped the daily experiences of refugees.

The historical importance of this development lies in the relationship between emergency assistance and household dependence on external support. Humanitarian assistance remained necessary for meeting immediate needs, while the difficulties associated with reduced rations strengthened the

relevance of longer-term livelihood activities. The evidence therefore points to a settlement whose development involved both the provision of emergency assistance and continuing efforts by households to secure their own livelihoods.

4.4 Development of Education, Healthcare, Water and Shelter Services

The development of essential services was another important feature of Palabek Refugee Settlement between 2017 and 2025. As refugee households established themselves in the settlement, access to education, healthcare, safe water and shelter became central to their welfare. These services were also important to the host community, whose members shared the wider local environment and, in some cases, the same service infrastructure.

The development of these services should be understood as part of the process of organising everyday life within the settlement. Refugee accommodation required more than the provision of land and immediate relief supplies. Children needed opportunities to continue their education, households required access to health services, and communities needed water and suitable shelter. The field observations made during this study identified facilities associated with some of these needs.

4.4.1 Education

Education was an important concern for refugee families, particularly children and young people whose schooling had been interrupted by conflict and displacement. Access to education provided an opportunity to resume learning, acquire knowledge and develop skills that could support future livelihoods.

During field observation, the researcher identified Aywee Primary School in Zone 2, Block 5, as one of the educational facilities serving the area.

Figure 5: Aywee Primary School in Zone 2, Block 5, Palabek Refugee Settlement.



Source: Researcher's field photograph, [Okwir Allan Daniel 13/7/2025].

The presence of the school illustrates the place of educational facilities in the settlement's service environment. Education formed part of the wider process through which families sought to restore some normality to their lives following displacement.

Nevertheless, the presence of a school does not necessarily mean that all children had equal access to education or that learning conditions were adequate. Access may also be affected by factors such as distance, household resources, the availability of teachers and the capacity of schools to serve the population. These matters should be discussed using any relevant interview findings and school records available to the researcher.

The development of education services was therefore significant not merely because school facilities existed, but because education formed part of the longer-term prospects of refugee children and the wider settlement community.

4.4.2 Healthcare

Healthcare was another essential component of the settlement's development. Refugees and members of the host community required access to treatment, preventive services and other forms of medical support. The arrival of refugees increased the importance of organising health services within the wider settlement environment.

Field observation identified Akworo Health Centre III in Zone 2, Block 8.

Figure .6: Akworo Health Centre III in Zone 2, Block 8, Palabek Refugee Settlement.



Source: Researcher's field photograph, [Okwir Allan Daniel 21/6/2025].

The health centre illustrates the presence of medical infrastructure within the study area. Its identification during fieldwork helps locate healthcare provision within the settlement's geographical and social environment.

However, the existence of a health facility does not, by itself, establish the quality, availability or adequacy of healthcare. Participants' accounts are necessary to explain whether people could access treatment when required and what challenges they experienced. The World Health Organization (2019) provides wider context for understanding the significance of healthcare in humanitarian settings.

The development of healthcare services formed part of the settlement's broader adjustment to the needs of the displaced population. It also illustrates the importance of distinguishing between the physical presence of a service and the actual experiences of those who depend on it.

4.4.3 Water and Shelter

Safe water and shelter were equally important to the development of the settlement. Water was required for drinking, cooking, washing and household hygiene. Shelter provided protection from weather and a place where households could organise their daily activities. These resources were particularly important during the early period of settlement, when families were establishing themselves in a new environment.

Field observation identified water storage tanks across different zones of the settlement, demonstrating the presence of infrastructure intended to support water provision.

Figure 7: Water storage tank serving the settlement community.



Source: Researcher's field photograph, [Okwir Allan Daniel 21/6/2025].

The photograph illustrates the physical infrastructure associated with water provision. Nevertheless, the availability of a water tank does not necessarily mean that all households had sufficient access to safe water. Access could also depend on the reliability of supply, distance to the source, waiting time

and the number of people relying on a particular facility. These issues need to be assessed using the study's interview and observation data.

Shelter was similarly important because it enabled households to establish a place of residence and offered some stability following displacement. However, participants' accounts of the desire for more permanent homes suggest that the provision of initial accommodation did not necessarily remove longer-term housing concerns.

The evidence from education, healthcare, water and shelter shows that settlement development involved the provision of services and infrastructure to support everyday life. It also indicates that the significance of these developments cannot be judged solely by the presence of physical facilities. Their contribution to settlement life depended partly on whether refugees and host-community members could access and benefit from them.

4.5 Changing Livelihood Needs and the Search for Self-Reliance

As the settlement developed, the needs of refugees extended beyond immediate humanitarian assistance to include opportunities for longer-term livelihoods. Participants identified farming implements, business skills, financial literacy, access to funds and participation in savings groups as important resources for improving household welfare.

These needs reflected the challenges of establishing livelihoods after displacement. Households could not rely indefinitely on the availability of humanitarian assistance, particularly where reductions in food rations created difficulties. Opportunities to cultivate land, undertake business activities or participate in savings groups could potentially help households strengthen their ability to meet every day needs.

However, the findings also indicate that livelihood activities depended on access to several resources at the same time. Farming, for example, required more than farming knowledge; households also

needed access to land, tools and water. Similarly, business training could help people develop skills, but households needed realistic opportunities and resources to apply those skills.

The study also identified the relevance of farming to the previous experience of some refugees. The reported OPM statistics for April 2021 indicated that 4,791 refugees had farming backgrounds.

The growing importance of livelihoods also demonstrated the connection between immediate relief and longer-term development. Food assistance could help households meet immediate needs, while productive resources and income-generating activities could provide additional means of securing food and supporting families. The two were not mutually exclusive: continued humanitarian assistance could remain necessary even as households pursued self-reliance.

Participants also identified the need for improved roads, more durable housing and better security. A refugee youth who was a Senior Five student at Paluda Secondary School described the difficulties caused by poor roads during the rainy season, particularly when travelling to school, markets and health centres. The participant also expressed a desire for more permanent homes.

This account demonstrates that infrastructure influenced access to other resources. Poor roads could make it more difficult for learners to reach school, for households to access markets and for people to obtain healthcare. Better roads could improve connections between the settlement and neighbouring communities and support access to services and economic opportunities.

Psychosocial support was another issue raised during the study. A male Senior Five student described emotional and social challenges and expressed the need for someone who could listen. Participants also reported that mental health sessions involving organisations such as Thrive Gulu and Windle International had taken place for approximately one year in 2024, although concerns were raised about continuity and follow-up.

These findings show that the historical development of Palabek involved changing and

interconnected needs. Although food, water, shelter and healthcare remained essential, the ability to establish livelihoods, access infrastructure and obtain psychosocial support also influenced household well-being. The search for self-reliance therefore became part of the wider experience of living in the settlement, even though the available evidence does not demonstrate that all households achieved it by 2025.

4.6 Evolution of Relations Between Refugees and the Host Community

Relations between refugees and the host community were an important factor shaping the development of Palabek Refugee Settlement. The arrival of refugees introduced additional demands on land and other resources, but it also created opportunities for interaction, cooperation and the development of shared practices.

The key informant from Apyetta Parish explained that shared language and cultural similarities helped facilitate communication between many host-community members and South Sudanese refugees. This suggests that cultural familiarity provided a useful foundation for initial interaction. The account from the landlord in Zone 2 further indicated that everyday activities, including children playing together and residents sharing water sources, contributed to contact between the communities.

The host community's contribution of land also formed part of this relationship. The provision of land by local households helped accommodate refugees, demonstrating the role of local landowners in the establishment of the settlement. These contributions show that the development of Palabek was influenced not only by government and humanitarian interventions but also by decisions and actions taken within the host community.

At the same time, participants' accounts indicated challenges associated with the use of shared resources, including firewood, water and land. Food shortages and other household difficulties could

also create pressure where people sought assistance beyond their own households. Such experiences suggest that cooperation did not eliminate all resource-related challenges.

The historical significance of these relationships lies in how the communities adapted to a changing environment. The settlement brought refugees and host-community members into closer contact and created circumstances in which resources were shared, negotiated and sometimes contested. Understanding the development of the settlement therefore requires attention to both the practical arrangements for providing resources and the social relationships through which people accessed them.

The evidence supports a balanced conclusion: interaction and cooperation were important features of settlement life, but resource-related challenges also remained. These relationships formed part of the historical process through which Palabek Refugee Settlement developed between 2017 and 2025.

4.7 Conclusion

This chapter examined the principal historical developments that shaped Palabek Refugee Settlement between 2017 and 2025. The findings identify the establishment of the settlement in April 2017 following the influx of South Sudanese refugees as the central starting point. This development introduced new demands on land, food, shelter, water, education, healthcare and other essential resources.

Land allocation was fundamental to the accommodation of refugees and the organisation of the settlement. The accounts of host-community landowners demonstrate that local land arrangements contributed to refugee settlement, while also highlighting the continued significance of customary land use and access to productive resources. The organisation of humanitarian assistance, particularly food distribution, was another key development. However, reported reductions in food rations demonstrate that the presence of assistance did not necessarily guarantee reliable or adequate

food access.

The development of education, healthcare, water and shelter infrastructure was also important in supporting everyday life. At the same time, participants' accounts of livelihood challenges, the need for durable housing, poor roads and psychosocial support show that settlement needs extended beyond immediate relief. The relationship between emergency assistance and longer-term self-reliance remained important throughout the period.

Finally, the settlement's development was shaped by evolving relations between refugees and the host community. Shared language and cultural familiarity supported interaction, while the contribution of local landowners helped accommodate refugees. Nevertheless, pressures on land and other shared resources presented challenges that cannot be separated from the settlement's wider history.

Overall, Palabek Refugee Settlement developed through the interaction of displacement, land allocation, humanitarian assistance, service provision, livelihood adaptation and refugee-host relations. These developments shaped the settlement's organisation and the experiences of people living in and around it between 2017 and 2025. The chapter therefore answers Research Question One by showing that the settlement's history was not defined by a single event, but by a sequence of connected changes that influenced its physical organisation, service environment and social relationships.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE CHANGING RESOURCE NEEDS OF REFUGEES IN PALEBEK REFUGEE SETTLEMENT, 2017–2025

5.0 Introduction

This chapter presents the chronological analysis and discussion of findings on how the resource needs of refugees in Palabek Refugee Settlement changed between 2017 and 2025. It draws on key informant interviews, individual interviews, focus group discussions and archival records to examine the changing priorities of refugees during four broad periods: the emergency phase (2017–2018), the stabilisation phase (2019–2020), the resilience and development integration phase (2021–2022), and the sustainability and local integration phase (2023–2025).

The findings indicate that refugees' resource needs were not static. At the beginning of the settlement, the priority was to secure the essentials of survival, including food, shelter, safe water, healthcare and protection. As refugees established themselves, their concerns extended to education, better-quality services, livelihood opportunities, youth empowerment and improved living conditions. Between 2021 and 2022, there was greater emphasis on self-reliance through farming, vocational training and cash-based assistance. During 2023–2025, the need for sustainable livelihoods, access to productive land, improved infrastructure, psychosocial support and stronger integration with the host community became increasingly prominent.

However, this progression did not mean that earlier needs disappeared. Interviews and focus group discussions show that food insecurity, inadequate shelter, shortages of medicines, limited access to education and water-related challenges persisted. The findings also associate some of these challenges with funding constraints, the effects of COVID-19 and limited infrastructure. Consequently, the changing resource needs of refugees are best understood as an expansion from

immediate survival requirements to a broader combination of humanitarian, developmental and psychosocial needs, while basic survival needs continued to demand attention.

The chapter gives priority to evidence from participants and uses secondary sources to contextualise the findings. The central argument is that the resource needs of refugees in Palabek changed in nature and complexity between 2017 and 2025, but the transition towards self-reliance remained constrained by continuing resource shortages and vulnerabilities.

5.1 Emergency Phase, 2017–2018: Immediate Survival and Humanitarian Assistance

The establishment of Palabek Refugee Settlement in April 2017 marked the beginning of a period in which meeting immediate survival needs was the overriding concern. Findings from a key informant interview with an OPM registration officer indicate that the settlement was opened in response to a large influx of South Sudanese refugees fleeing renewed conflict in their country.

The officer explained:

The political situation in South Sudan has been characterised by insecurity due to the collapse of a peace agreement; a new wave of intense fighting broke out in South Sudan in 2016 and continued into 2017. That is why you later you see that there was a massive displacement of people, with hundreds of thousands fleeing across the border into Uganda, including our relatives who had gone there to work and do business. Palabek settlement, which was only established in April 2017 as a new reception centre, became a key destination for these new arrivals due to its proximity to the border. Ngomoromo which is a porous border is about 60 km from Lokung, where we now have the reception centre.

This account links the establishment of the settlement to the conflict-related movement of people from South Sudan. The arrival of refugees created immediate demands for basic supplies, accommodation and essential services. The OPM informant also described the difficulties associated

with mobilising resources and establishing services for large numbers of people simultaneously in a relatively remote area.

Participants in the refugee focus group discussion at Paluda Trading Centre similarly described the vulnerability of new arrivals, many of whom had experienced displacement, loss of property and separation from familiar support networks. Their accounts indicate that refugees arrived with varying levels of material resources and consequently depended on humanitarian assistance to meet their immediate needs.

The findings show that, during this phase, the central concern was not yet long-term development but the provision of resources necessary to sustain life and protect vulnerable households. The main priorities were food, temporary shelter, safe water, basic healthcare and protection.

5.1.1 Food as an Immediate Survival Need

Food was one of the most urgent resource needs during the first two years of the settlement. A key informant from the OPM Palabek field office explained that food assistance was essential because many refugees had arrived without sufficient provisions to support themselves. The World Food Programme (WFP) was identified by participants as a major provider of food assistance.

A 33-year-old female refugee interviewed in Zone 2 recalled the food items she received upon arrival in December 2017:

When we just arrived here in December 2017, I received maize (posho) – 10 kgs, cooking oil – 1.5 litres, salt – 1 sachet and beans – 5 kgs per individual. I saw other people too got the above food items.

This testimony provides direct evidence of the type of food assistance received by at least some refugees during the early period of settlement. The OPM participant similarly explained that these were among the food items commonly provided to refugees upon arrival, although the quantities

subsequently reduced because of funding constraints.

The accounts suggest that food assistance was central to the initial humanitarian response. For households that had lost access to their farms, businesses or other sources of income, food distribution provided an immediate means of meeting daily consumption needs. It reduced the pressure on newly arrived households to find food before establishing alternative livelihoods.

Secondary evidence supports the wider significance of this challenge. WFP reported in December 2020 that funding shortfalls had led to food ration reductions affecting refugees across Uganda, with further reductions scheduled from February 2021 (WFP, 2020). Although this national report does not establish the exact ration received by every household in Palabek, it provides broader context for the funding challenges also described by study participants.

The findings therefore demonstrate that food was initially understood primarily as an emergency survival requirement. The subsequent reduction of rations would later make food security a continuing concern, while also increasing the importance of livelihood opportunities and household self-reliance.

5.1.2 Temporary Shelter

Temporary shelter was another major need during the emergency phase. Refugees required immediate protection from the weather and a place to establish their households. The findings from the refugee focus group discussions at Paluda Trading Centre indicate that the shelter provided during the early period addressed the urgent need for accommodation but did not necessarily provide durable housing.

Participants described the limitations of temporary structures, particularly their vulnerability to weather, limited privacy and inadequate security. Such conditions meant that the provision of a shelter did not automatically translate into stable or comfortable living arrangements.

The findings reveal an important distinction between emergency accommodation and long-term housing. During the first phase, speed of provision was necessary because households needed somewhere to live immediately. However, as displacement continued, the durability, security and suitability of housing became increasingly important. Shelter therefore illustrates how a resource need could change from an urgent survival concern into a longer-term demand for improved living conditions.

5.1.3 Safe Water and Sanitation

Access to clean water was another immediate concern during the establishment of the settlement. Water was essential for drinking, cooking and personal hygiene, and inadequate access exposed households to health risks.

A key informant from the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) reported that, during the early period, refugees relied heavily on available streams before pumped-water provision was introduced in 2017. The informant associated inadequate access to safe water with concerns about waterborne diseases. Participants also identified LWF as an important organisation involved in water, sanitation and hygiene interventions, including the provision of water facilities.

These findings show that access to water evolved alongside the development of water infrastructure. Initially, the main concern was obtaining water for immediate household use. As the settlement developed, attention increasingly extended to the reliability, safety and adequacy of water sources for the growing population.

Water needs were also interconnected with other aspects of daily life. Long distances to water sources could increase the time required for domestic activities, while an inadequate supply could affect hygiene and household welfare. Consequently, improving access to safe water was important not only for survival but also for public health and the longer-term organisation of settlement life.

5.1.4 Basic Healthcare

Basic healthcare was a further priority during the emergency phase. The findings indicate that health services concentrated on essential treatment, vaccination and responses to common illnesses. Participants identified the provision of services at the Lokung Reception Centre and Paluda Health Centre III, located in Zone 3, Block 6, as part of the early response.

The involvement of humanitarian organisations, including the International Rescue Committee (IRC), was associated with efforts to meet immediate health needs. However, the findings also indicate that healthcare provision faced limitations because the available facilities and personnel had to serve a large and vulnerable population.

A male health worker interviewed at Apyetta Health Centre II later recalled that, during the early period, Paluda Health Centre III was an important point for essential health services. The distance between some settlement areas and available services created challenges for refugees who were already physically exhausted or had limited means of transport.

These accounts indicate that the initial need was for basic medical attention and the prevention of illness. Over time, the need would extend beyond emergency treatment to more accessible, adequately equipped and comprehensive healthcare services.

5.1.5 Protection of Vulnerable Groups

Protection was also a fundamental need during the emergency phase. A key informant from the UNHCR protection office at Palabek explained that special attention was required to protect women, children, older persons and persons with disabilities from violence, exploitation and abuse.

The informant stated:

We are talking about more than just a place to sleep; we are talking about safe spaces free from exploitation and violence. From day one, our work focused on preventing gender-based violence

(GBV) and setting up clear systems so that if someone was in danger, they had a trusted place to report it.

This testimony shows that refugee needs extended beyond material resources. Physical safety, dignity and access to protection mechanisms were also important components of the emergency response. The account further indicates that protection interventions sought to establish safe spaces and reporting arrangements for people facing risks.

As settlement life continued, protection concerns remained relevant but became connected with other issues, including household stress, inadequate shelter, resource shortages and the effects of prolonged displacement. The findings therefore indicate continuity as well as change: protection was a priority from the beginning, even as the circumstances affecting vulnerability evolved.

5.1.6 Limited-Service Coverage and Overstretched Capacity

Although humanitarian assistance was mobilized, the findings indicate that service coverage during the emergency phase was limited. The OPM registration officer described the difficulties of coordinating assistance and establishing services for large numbers of refugees in a relatively remote location.

The male health worker from Apyetta Health Centre II explained that distribution points were limited during the early period, with two food distribution points identified in Zones One and Four. For healthcare, Paluda Health Centre III was reported as an important facility serving refugees. These arrangements meant that some households had to travel substantial distances to obtain essential resources.

Poor roads further affected access. Refugee and host-community focus group participants reported that movement within the settlement was difficult, particularly during rainy seasons. The problem affected the transportation of supplies and people's ability to reach schools, health facilities and other

services.

The findings also indicate that temporary solutions were often insufficient as the population and its needs continued to grow. Emergency shelters, water points and basic health services helped address immediate requirements, but they did not necessarily offer the durability or capacity needed for prolonged displacement.

The historical significance of the emergency phase is therefore twofold. First, it established the humanitarian systems through which refugees accessed essential resources. Secondly, the limitations of the initial response shaped later needs by making improvements in service coverage, infrastructure, housing and livelihood opportunities increasingly important.

Overall, between 2017 and 2018, refugees' needs were dominated by immediate survival. Food, temporary shelter, water, healthcare and protection took priority because households were establishing themselves after displacement. However, limited-service coverage and reliance on emergency assistance laid the foundation for continuing concerns about service quality, access and sustainability.

5.2 Stabilisation Phase, 2019–2020: Expansion of Services and Emerging Developmental Needs

The findings indicate that the period between 2019 and 2020 marked a shift towards more organised service provision in Palabek Refugee Settlement. Interviews with OPM and UNHCR personnel identified improved coordination between government institutions and humanitarian organisations as an important feature of this period.

The change did not mean that emergency needs disappeared. Rather, the emphasis broadened as refugees established households and required more consistent access to basic services. Concerns increasingly extended to the quality of education and healthcare, opportunities for livelihoods, youth empowerment and the protection of vulnerable groups.

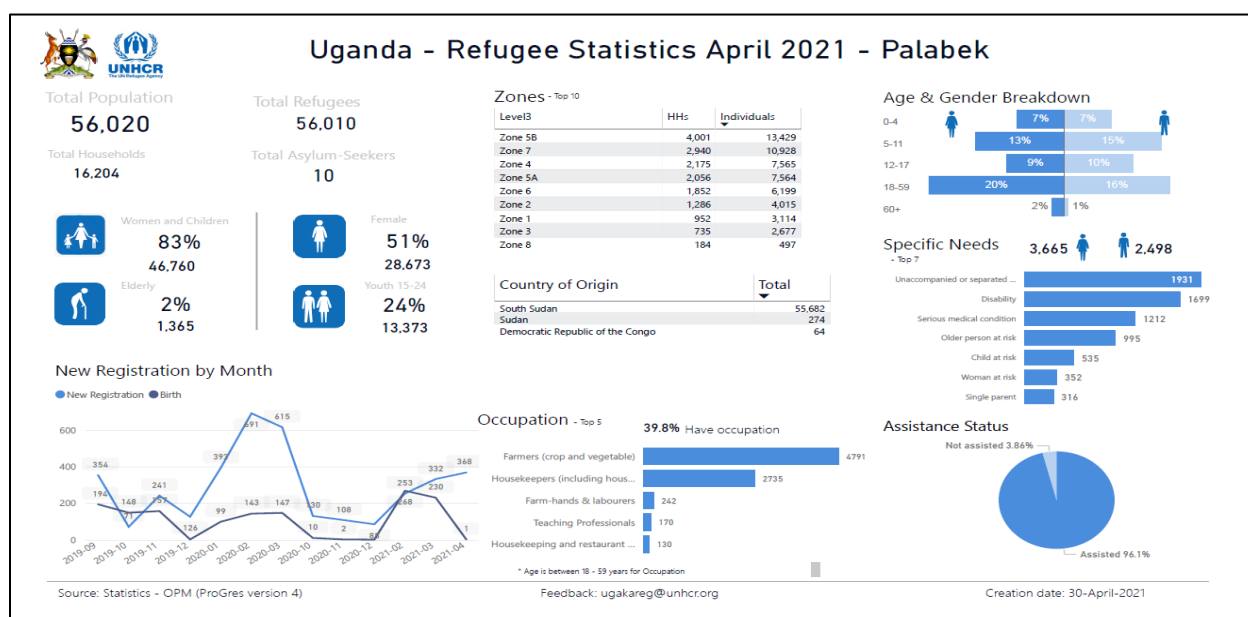
5.2.1 Improved Coordination and Wider Service Provision

Refugee Welfare Coordinators from Zones 1 and 6 reported that coordination between humanitarian agencies and OPM improved during this phase. According to the participants, organisations became better placed to coordinate activities involving shelter, water, health, education and other services.

This coordination was important because the resource needs of refugees were interconnected. Shelter provision, for example, required attention to water access and sanitation, while the expansion of education increased the need for teachers and learning materials. Better coordination could therefore help agencies identify related needs and reduce gaps in service delivery.

The archival records cited in the study indicate that 96.1% of refugees were assisted, particularly in accessing basic social needs and vocational skills. This figure is presented in the study as an indication of the reach of assistance during the relevant reporting period.

Figure .8: Reported proportion of refugees assisted in accessing basic social needs and vocational skills.



Source: Office of the Prime Minister (OPM) archival records.

The findings suggest that improved coordination and wider service provision helped move the

response beyond its initial emergency orientation. Nevertheless, assistance and service availability did not necessarily mean that the quality or quantity of resources was adequate for every household.

5.2.2 Expansion of Housing, Healthcare, Education and Water Services

Participants identified the development of more durable shelter arrangements as one change during the stabilisation period. Semi-permanent shelter represented an improvement on makeshift accommodation because more durable structures could provide better protection from weather and greater privacy. However, the findings do not suggest that all refugee households had obtained permanent housing by the end of this phase.

Healthcare provision also expanded. Field observations identified four health facilities serving the settlement: Apyetta Health Centre II at Paluda Trading Centre, Akworo Health Centre III in Zone 2, Block 8, Awich Health Centre II in Zone 5A, Block 5C, and Paluda Health Centre III in Zone 3, Block 6. Ogili Health Centre III, situated outside the settlement at Ogili Trading Centre, was also reported to serve the surrounding host community.

The presence of these facilities indicates a broader health-service environment than the limited provision described for the initial emergency phase. However, the number of facilities alone does not establish whether they had adequate staff, equipment, medicines or capacity to meet the needs of the population.

Education also became a more visible component of the settlement's development. The study identifies 15 primary schools, Paluda Secondary School and Don Bosco vocational institution among the educational facilities serving the settlement and its surrounding area. The availability of these institutions created opportunities for children and young people to continue their education and acquire practical skills.

The findings, however, distinguish the availability of educational facilities from the quality and

accessibility of education. As more children enrolled, concerns arose regarding teacher availability, learning materials and classroom conditions. Participants also emphasised the importance of secondary and vocational education for young people seeking opportunities beyond primary schooling.

Water provision similarly became more organised. In an interview, an LWF water engineer described the development of additional water sources and a distribution arrangement involving four raised tanks, each reportedly serving two zones.

The findings indicate that the resource needs of refugees were becoming broader. Access to a school, health centre or water source remained important, but attention increasingly extended to the capacity, reliability and quality of these services.

5.2.3 Emerging Needs: Livelihoods, Youth Empowerment and Education Quality

As basic services became more established, participants increasingly discussed opportunities to improve household welfare and reduce dependence on food assistance. Refugees sought access to land for cultivation, farming inputs, skills training and other opportunities to earn a living.

These findings are consistent with the wider direction of refugee assistance described by WFP (2023), which linked funding shortfalls and needs-based food assistance in Uganda with a stronger emphasis on resilience and livelihood strengthening. The WFP discussion provides national context; the experiences of participants in Palabek show how the search for self-reliance was reflected at settlement level.

Youth empowerment was another emerging need. Refugee participants and key informants identified education, vocational training and constructive economic activities as important to young people's future prospects. The findings suggest that young people wanted opportunities to acquire practical skills and contribute to household welfare rather than remain indefinitely dependent on assistance.

The relevance of youth livelihood opportunities is also discussed by Betts et al. (2017). In the context of Palabek, participants' accounts show that access to education and skills training mattered because it could expand the range of livelihood opportunities available to young refugees.

Education quality also became increasingly important. Participants' concerns extended beyond whether schools existed to whether learners had sufficient teachers, appropriate materials and adequate learning conditions. Paluda Secondary School was identified as particularly important because it served learners progressing beyond primary education.

These findings illustrate a change in the nature of educational needs. During the emergency phase, the immediate concern was for children to access education at all. As the settlement developed, attention increasingly turned to the quality and continuity of learning and whether education could support future livelihoods. This distinction is consistent with Dryden-Peterson's (2016) wider discussion of the challenges of refugee education.

Participants also raised gender-based violence and protection concerns during the stabilisation period. The findings suggest that continued displacement, crowded living conditions and pressure on household resources could leave some people vulnerable. These concerns reinforced the importance of protection and psychosocial support alongside the provision of material resources.

5.2.4 COVID-19 and the Disruption of Emerging Needs

The emergence of COVID-19 disrupted progress during the stabilisation phase. Interviews with OPM education and health personnel indicated that pandemic-related restrictions affected education, health services and livelihood activities.

The OPM education informant explained that school closures disrupted learning for children and young people, including candidates preparing for examinations. Participants indicated that remote learning was difficult for many refugees because of limited access to the necessary devices, internet

connectivity and other learning resources.

The findings show that COVID-19 did not merely create a new health need; it also affected access to existing resources. Disrupted schooling increased concerns about learning continuity, while restrictions on movement and gatherings affected activities that supported household livelihoods and social interaction.

In healthcare, participants reported that the pandemic placed additional pressure on already limited services. Difficulties relating to staffing, medical supplies and access to routine treatment compounded the challenge of maintaining essential healthcare during the outbreak.

The economic effects were also evident in refugee women's accounts of interrupted collective gardening activities. Women participating in the refugee focus group discussion reported that restrictions disrupted their plans to work together, learn from one another and support their households through vegetable production. The Refugee Welfare Chairperson also described disruptions to humanitarian supply chains arising from movement restrictions.

Protection concerns emerged alongside these difficulties. Interviews with child-protection personnel from Windle International Uganda and Thrive Gulu, together with the account from the LC II of Apyetta Parish, indicated that restrictions and increased pressure on household resources contributed to concerns about domestic tensions and disputes over resources such as firewood and land boundaries.

The findings demonstrate that COVID-19 affected both immediate and emerging resource needs. It intensified health concerns while disrupting education, income-generating activities and social-support arrangements. Consequently, the stabilisation phase was characterised by improved service structures and expanding developmental aspirations, but progress was interrupted by a public health emergency.

Overall, between 2019 and 2020, refugees' resource needs broadened from immediate survival to include the quality and continuity of services, livelihoods, youth empowerment and protection. COVID-19 demonstrated, however, that these emerging priorities remained vulnerable to external shocks.

5.3 Resilience and Development Integration, 2021–2022: Self-Reliance and Persistent Resource Gaps

The period between 2021 and 2022 was characterised by a stronger emphasis on self-reliance and the integration of humanitarian support with longer-term development activities. The findings from interviews with OPM and humanitarian personnel suggest that service provision alone was not sufficient to meet refugees' needs in a situation of prolonged displacement.

Instead, attention increasingly turned to the ability of households to produce food, generate income, acquire practical skills and participate in economic activities. However, the findings also show that these aspirations were constrained by funding shortfalls, the continuing effects of COVID-19 and gaps in education and healthcare.

5.3.1 The Shift Towards Self-Reliance

A key informant from Windle International Uganda explained that humanitarian programmes were increasingly expected to demonstrate longer-term impact and improve refugees' ability to provide for themselves. A landlord from Zone One similarly emphasised the importance of economic independence, particularly for young refugees seeking opportunities to undertake productive activities.

The landlord reported that some refugee youths engaged in casual construction work, boda-boda riding and hiring land for brickmaking. These activities indicate that refugees were seeking ways to generate income beyond food assistance. They also suggest that the need for economic resources

was becoming increasingly important as households attempted to manage reduced or uncertain assistance.

The OPM registration officer linked this direction to Uganda's refugee-response policies and the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework, which emphasise self-reliance and cooperation between refugees and host communities. The policy environment provided a basis for livelihood programmes and initiatives intended to strengthen economic participation.

The findings nevertheless show that self-reliance depended on the availability of resources and opportunities. Refugees could possess farming experience or practical skills but still face difficulties where land, tools, capital and market opportunities were limited. The change in needs was therefore not simply a movement away from food and shelter; it was an increasing demand for the means to meet these needs more independently.

5.3.2 Kitchen Gardening and Agricultural Livelihoods

Kitchen gardening was one of the interventions identified by participants as supporting household food security.

The Refugee Women Representative from Zone Three explained that she had supported efforts by ZOA and Food for the Hungry to encourage women to undertake kitchen gardening. Such activities were intended to help households obtain vegetables and improve their ability to supplement food assistance.

This account provides direct evidence of how a livelihood intervention was experienced within the settlement. It also demonstrates a shift in resource needs: access to food remained essential, but households increasingly sought land, seeds, tools and agricultural knowledge that could help them produce some of their own food.

Kitchen gardening could potentially improve household access to vegetables and reduce some

dependence on purchased food. Its effectiveness, however, depended on the availability of usable plots, water, inputs and sufficient time for cultivation. The findings therefore suggest that agricultural interventions needed to be accompanied by access to the resources necessary to sustain production.

5.3.3 Vocational Training and Cash-Based Assistance

Vocational training was another intervention associated with the movement towards self-reliance. The study identified training opportunities in skills such as tailoring, carpentry, mechanics and hairdressing. Such training was intended to strengthen the ability of refugees to engage in livelihood activities and participate in local economic life.

The growing importance of vocational training reflects a change in the way resource needs were expressed. Beyond access to basic assistance, refugees increasingly required the knowledge and practical skills necessary to earn an income. Nevertheless, the possession of a skill did not automatically ensure employment or income because opportunities depended on access to tools, capital, customers and markets.

Participants in the refugee focus group discussions also identified cash-based interventions as an important development in assistance. They reported that cash gave households greater choice in deciding which goods and services to prioritise. Participants further suggested that cash could benefit traders and other economic actors in the host community when refugees purchased locally available goods.

These accounts indicate that cash-based assistance was valued not only as a way of meeting consumption needs but also for the flexibility it provided households. However, the benefits depended on the availability of goods, functioning markets and sufficient purchasing power. Cash assistance therefore complemented, rather than automatically resolved, other resource needs.

Taken together, kitchen gardening, vocational training and cash-based interventions reflected a growing emphasis on household agency and economic activity. The findings suggest that refugees were increasingly interested in resources that could help them maintain livelihoods, supplement food assistance and improve their living conditions.

5.3.4 Funding Shortfalls, Mental Health and Continuing Service Gaps

Despite the emphasis on self-reliance, participants identified persistent constraints during 2021–2022. The continuing effects of COVID-19 affected some economic and educational activities, while funding difficulties limited the ability of humanitarian actors to maintain or expand programmes.

A UNHCR informant associated funding difficulties with competition among global humanitarian emergencies, including the war in Ukraine, which began in February 2022. The informant explained that changes in global funding priorities affected the resources available to humanitarian operations. This account represents the informant's explanation of the challenges facing the operation; the precise contribution of individual global events to funding reductions in Palabek would require supporting agency records.

WFP's reporting on Uganda's refugee response also identifies funding shortfalls as a major factor behind food-assistance changes. In January 2023, WFP described a needs-based approach to assistance developed in response to funding constraints and linked it to the need for resilience and livelihood strengthening (WFP, 2023). This provides broader evidence for the funding context within which the experiences reported by Palabek participants occurred.

Mental health and psychosocial support were also important concerns. Refugee youth participating in focus group discussions described the stress associated with displacement, uncertainty about the future and economic hardship. Their accounts suggest that the continuing experience of displacement affected emotional well-being alongside material living conditions.

The need for psychosocial support was connected to other resource challenges. Food insecurity, limited livelihood opportunities and uncertainty about education or employment could compound the stress already experienced by people who had fled conflict. The findings therefore indicate that well-being could not be understood solely in terms of material assistance.

The study also identified shortages in secondary education and healthcare. Paluda Secondary School was reported to be the only secondary school serving the settlement, creating concerns about access, congestion and the availability of qualified teachers. Participants additionally reported limitations in access to specialised healthcare, shortages of medicines and inadequate equipment at existing facilities.

These findings demonstrate that progress in establishing services did not remove the need for further investment. Education needs had shifted from simply accessing a school to requiring sufficient teachers, learning materials and opportunities for progression. Healthcare needs had similarly expanded from emergency treatment towards reliable access to medicines, adequately equipped facilities and referral services.

Consequently, the 2021–2022 period combined a stronger emphasis on self-reliance with persistent humanitarian vulnerabilities. Refugees increasingly required productive resources and economic opportunities, but continuing shortages in food assistance, education, healthcare and psychosocial support limited their capacity to become self-reliant.

5.4 Sustainability and Local Integration, 2023–2025: Longer-Term Needs and Continuing Vulnerability

The period between 2023 and 2025 was characterised by a stronger emphasis on sustainability, self-reliance and local integration. Interviews with OPM and humanitarian personnel indicated that refugees needed opportunities to participate more fully in economic and social life, while

maintaining access to essential services.

However, the findings also demonstrate a continuing gap between these aspirations and the conditions experienced by many households. Land shortages, limited employment opportunities, inadequate infrastructure, food insecurity and psychosocial challenges remained important concerns. Participants further associated programme difficulties with funding reductions and changes in donor priorities.

This phase therefore did not represent a complete transition away from humanitarian assistance. Rather, it reflected the coexistence of longer-term developmental aspirations and continuing immediate needs.

5.4.1 Sustainability, Self-Reliance and Integration

The OPM registration officer explained that integration involved more than the physical coexistence of refugees and the host community. It also required opportunities for shared access to services, stronger relationships and participation in development activities.

The findings identified peacebuilding programmes as one means of addressing tensions that could arise when communities competed for limited resources. Such activities were intended to encourage dialogue, cooperation and the peaceful resolution of disputes.

Participants also emphasised the importance of natural-resource management. Refugees and host-community members relied on land, water, firewood and other resources for their livelihoods. Where these resources were limited, increasing demand could contribute to competition and environmental pressure. The findings therefore indicate that sustainable access required attention to both household needs and the management of shared resources.

Climate resilience was another concern raised in the refugee and host-community focus group discussions. Participants reported that unpredictable weather, drought and flooding affected

agricultural production and access to resources. These experiences suggest that livelihood support needed to account for environmental conditions rather than focus exclusively on farming skills or inputs.

The findings indicate that the meaning of self-reliance had consequently broadened. It involved not only reducing dependence on food assistance but also obtaining more secure livelihoods, accessing essential services, participating in community life and managing the resources needed to sustain household welfare.

5.4.2 Funding Reductions and Their Implications for Resource Needs

Funding constraints remained a major concern during this phase. The Palabek settlement commandant described the government's emphasis on self-reliance and the involvement of UNHCR in promoting more sustainable refugee responses. However, the findings suggest that funding reductions created difficulties in maintaining some programmes and providing the resources required to support this transition.

A key informant from UNHCR linked these challenges to changes in global humanitarian priorities. Participants also identified the effects of changes in United States foreign assistance policy in 2025. Executive Order 14169, issued on 20 January 2025, established a 90-day pause on specified United States foreign development assistance pending review, with provision for waivers and decisions on individual programmes (U.S. Government, 2025). The existence of the order provides relevant international context, but its specific effect on individual organisations and services in Palabek must be demonstrated using programme records or direct evidence from affected agencies.

The study's interviews associated funding difficulties with delays or reductions in activities carried out by humanitarian organisations operating in the settlement.

The findings indicate that reduced funding could affect the scale, duration and continuity of

assistance. This was particularly important because refugees continued to require food, health services, education and protection even as humanitarian programmes increasingly emphasised self-reliance.

The resulting situation illustrates a central tension in the period under study: the expectation that refugees should become more independent existed alongside continuing shortages in some of the resources needed to achieve that independence. Where households lacked productive land, tools, capital or stable employment opportunities, reductions in assistance could increase rather than reduce vulnerability.

5.4.3 Persistent Food and Land Needs

Food remained a major concern during 2023–2025 despite the increased emphasis on livelihoods and integration. The earlier experiences of reduced food assistance continued to be relevant because many households depended on external support while attempting to establish alternative sources of income.

Land was also an important concern. Participants identified limited access to land for cultivation as a constraint on agricultural self-reliance. This was particularly significant because farming and kitchen gardening had been promoted as means of improving household food security.

The findings suggest that residential accommodation did not necessarily provide sufficient land for productive activities. Refugees seeking to cultivate crops could encounter limitations arising from the availability of suitable land and the competing demands of other users. These constraints also affected the potential benefits of agricultural training and input distribution.

Resource access consequently became an increasingly interconnected challenge. A household could receive farming training but still be unable to produce sufficient food if it lacked land or water. Similarly, a household could obtain cash assistance but remain vulnerable if food prices, limited

employment opportunities or other expenses exceeded its resources.

Participants' accounts therefore demonstrate that the need for self-reliance could not be addressed simply by reducing dependence on assistance. Sustainable improvements required access to the productive resources and opportunities needed to generate reliable livelihoods.

5.4.4 Employment and Economic Opportunities

Access to employment and income-generating opportunities was another important need during this period. Refugee youth participants described difficulties finding stable opportunities, while the wider findings identified participation in informal activities as one means through which some refugees attempted to earn an income.

The findings suggest a distinction between having the formal right to work and being able to obtain suitable employment in practice. Participants described barriers associated with formal employment and the limited availability of stable opportunities. As a result, some refugees depended on casual work, small-scale trade and other informal activities.

These experiences show why vocational training alone could not guarantee self-reliance. Skills were important, but their practical value depended on opportunities to use them, access to tools or capital and the availability of customers and markets. The findings therefore point to the need for livelihood interventions that connect training with realistic economic opportunities.

The importance of employment also extended beyond income. More secure livelihoods could help households meet food, housing and educational costs, while reducing pressure to rely entirely on humanitarian support. Employment opportunities were thus closely linked to the broader goal of improved welfare and local integration.

5.4.5 Infrastructure, Education and Healthcare

Inadequate infrastructure continued to limit access to resources during 2023–2025. Participants identified poor roads, limited electricity and unreliable internet access as challenges affecting daily life and longer-term opportunities.

Poor roads continued to influence access to schools, health facilities and markets. Participants' earlier accounts of travelling long distances and experiencing difficulty during rainy seasons indicate that these infrastructure constraints were not limited to a single phase of settlement development. Limited access to electricity and internet services introduced additional difficulties for education and economic activities. These resources were increasingly important for communication, information access, digital learning and business development. The findings therefore indicate that the resource needs of refugees had expanded to include infrastructure supporting participation in wider social and economic life.

Education remained important, particularly for secondary-school learners. Paluda Secondary School continued to serve an important role, but participants' concerns about overcrowding and staffing indicate that the presence of a school did not necessarily meet the educational needs of all learners adequately.

Healthcare also remained a concern. Participants reported shortages of medicines and equipment, as well as difficulties accessing specialised treatment. These accounts demonstrate continuity with earlier phases: although health facilities had become part of the settlement's service environment, households continued to require more reliable and comprehensive care.

The findings reveal that by 2025 the challenge was not simply the absence of services. It also involved their capacity, quality, accessibility and reliability. Sustainable development therefore required continued attention to the infrastructure and resources necessary for essential services to function effectively.

5.4.6 Psychosocial Support and Protection

The cumulative effects of displacement, economic hardship and uncertainty also shaped the resource needs of refugees during the final phase. Participants in focus group discussions at Paluda Secondary School described the importance of emotional support for people experiencing stress and the effects of displacement.

The findings suggest that psychosocial needs were connected with other difficulties. Inadequate food, limited income, uncertainty about education and restricted livelihood opportunities could intensify emotional distress. This demonstrated that material assistance alone could not address all the challenges facing refugees.

Participants also raised concerns about harmful coping practices and protection risks linked to severe household difficulties. These reports require careful interpretation and, where possible, corroboration through protection records. They nevertheless indicate that protection and psychosocial support remained important components of refugee welfare.

The need for support was therefore not confined to the emergency phase. Instead, it continued as part of the broader experience of prolonged displacement. The findings suggest that sustainable refugee support needed to include accessible psychosocial services, protection mechanisms and appropriate referral arrangements alongside food, shelter, healthcare and livelihood programmes.

5.4.7 The Relationship Between Sustainability and Continuing Humanitarian Needs

The most important finding from 2023–2025 is that the growing emphasis on sustainability and integration did not eliminate basic humanitarian needs. Food, land, shelter, healthcare, education and protection remained important even as refugees sought more secure livelihoods and greater independence.

The findings also show that these needs were mutually reinforcing. Lack of land could undermine

agricultural production; inadequate roads could restrict access to markets and health facilities; limited employment could weaken household purchasing power; and food insecurity could make it difficult for families to invest in long-term activities.

This interconnectedness helps explain why self-reliance remained difficult for some households.

Economic independence required access to productive resources and opportunities, while continuing humanitarian needs required assistance and functioning services. Where either side was inadequate, households could remain vulnerable.

The evidence therefore suggests that the change between 2017 and 2025 was not a straightforward movement from dependence to independence. Rather, refugee needs expanded and became more complex, while some immediate needs persisted. The sustainability and integration agenda was important, but its effectiveness depended on whether refugees had access to the resources necessary to put it into practice.

5.5 Conclusion

This chapter has examined how the resource needs of refugees in Palabek Refugee Settlement changed between 2017 and 2025. The findings demonstrate a broad progression from immediate survival needs towards a more complex combination of essential services, livelihood opportunities, self-reliance, infrastructure and psychosocial support. However, this progression was neither uniform nor complete, because basic resource shortages continued throughout the study period.

During the emergency phase (2017–2018), food, temporary shelter, safe water, basic healthcare and protection were the most urgent needs. The large influx of refugees required a rapid humanitarian response, but limited-service coverage and overstretched capacity affected access to essential resources.

During the stabilisation phase (2019–2020), improved coordination and the development of

education, healthcare and water services broadened the opportunities available to refugees. At the same time, concerns increasingly extended to service quality, livelihoods, youth empowerment and protection. COVID-19 disrupted this progress by affecting schooling, health services, economic activities and household support networks.

Between 2021 and 2022, the emphasis shifted further towards resilience and self-reliance. Kitchen gardening, vocational training and cash-based interventions were identified as efforts to strengthen household agency and reduce dependence on food assistance. Nevertheless, funding shortfalls, continuing mental health needs and gaps in education and healthcare constrained this transition.

During 2023–2025, sustainability and local integration became increasingly important, with participants identifying needs relating to productive land, employment, infrastructure, climate resilience and psychosocial support. Yet these developmental priorities coexisted with persistent needs for food, healthcare, education and protection. Funding difficulties and limited economic opportunities further complicated efforts towards self-reliance.

Overall, the findings answer Research Question Two by demonstrating that refugees' resource needs changed from an initial emphasis on survival to a broader concern with stable livelihoods, service quality, self-reliance and integration. Nevertheless, the need for basic humanitarian assistance did not disappear. The principal challenge by 2025 was therefore not merely to introduce new livelihood opportunities, but to ensure that refugees could meet immediate needs while gaining reliable access to the resources required for longer-term well-being.

CHAPTER SIX

RESOURCE-SHARING DYNAMICS BETWEEN REFUGEES AND THE HOST COMMUNITY IN PALEBEK REFUGEE SETTLEMENT, 2017–2025

6.0 Introduction

This chapter examines the resource-sharing dynamics between refugees and the host community in Palabek Refugee Settlement, Palabek Ogili Sub-County, Lamwo District, Northern Uganda, between 2017 and 2025. It analyses how the two communities shared social services, economic and livelihood resources, social and cultural spaces, and natural resources during the study period. Particular attention is given to the benefits of resource sharing, the challenges arising from pressure on limited resources, and the strategies through which refugees and host-community members adapted to their changing circumstances.

The chapter draws primarily on key informant interviews, individual interviews, focus group discussions and field observations. The views of refugee participants, host-community members, local leaders, refugee welfare representatives, teachers and humanitarian personnel provide evidence of how resource sharing was experienced in practice. Secondary sources are used to contextualize these findings and compare them with broader discussions of refugee-host relations in Uganda.

The findings indicate that resource sharing in Palabek was characterised by both cooperation and competition. Refugees and host-community members used some of the same health facilities, schools, water sources, markets and social spaces. Joint livelihood activities and everyday social interaction also created opportunities for economic cooperation and social cohesion. However, sharing did not always mean equal access. Participants reported overcrowded facilities, long distances to services, food insecurity, pressure on land, and the depletion of trees and other natural resources.

The chapter therefore argues that resource sharing between 2017 and 2025 was a dynamic process shaped by population growth, humanitarian assistance, access to services, livelihood opportunities, customary resource-use arrangements and environmental change. The analysis is organised around four main areas: shared social services; economic and livelihood resources; social and cultural resources; and changing patterns of inclusion, competition and natural-resource management.

6.1 Sharing of Social Services

Social services were among the most important resources shared by refugees and members of the host community. The findings identify healthcare, sanitation, education, water and transportation infrastructure as areas in which both populations depended on existing or developing facilities. Shared access created opportunities for interaction and collective benefit, but it also placed pressure on facilities whose capacity was limited.

The experiences reported by participants reflect the broader policy approach in Uganda, which seeks to strengthen public services and promote benefits for both refugees and host populations. The Uganda Country Refugee Response Plan 2022–2025 identifies access to services, peaceful coexistence and self-reliance as important components of the refugee response (Office of the Prime Minister [OPM] & United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees [UNHCR], 2022). However, the findings from Palabek demonstrate that the practical benefits of sharing depended on the availability and capacity of the services concerned.

6.1.1 Healthcare

Healthcare was one of the major services shared by refugees and the host community. Participants explained that both populations depended on health facilities within and around the settlement for treatment, vaccination, antiretroviral therapy (ART) and other essential medical services.

A refugee focus group discussion participant observed:

“We are many, and the health centre (Paluda HC III) is too small for all of us and the host community. Even the lines for ART and vaccinations are very long.”

This account illustrates the pressure that shared use placed on healthcare services. The participant's concern was not simply that refugees and host-community members used the same facility, but that the available capacity was insufficient for the number of people seeking treatment. Long queues and overcrowding could delay access to services and place additional pressure on healthcare workers.

The findings indicate that the consequences of limited health-service capacity were experienced by both communities. Refugees required healthcare after displacement, while host-community members also depended on local facilities for their routine medical needs. Consequently, competition over limited-service capacity was not necessarily a direct conflict between the two groups; it could also arise from the inadequacy of facilities relative to the combined demand.

The findings are consistent with Zhou, Grossman and Ge's (2023) research on inclusive refugee hosting in Uganda, which found that refugee-related assistance could contribute to improvements in public services for neighboring host communities. Their national-level findings show the potential benefits of inclusive refugee assistance, while the Palabek evidence demonstrates that shared facilities can nevertheless remain overstretched where demand exceeds available capacity.

The resource-sharing dynamic in healthcare therefore involved both a common benefit and a common challenge. Refugees and host-community members benefited from access to medical services, but their shared dependence also exposed the limitations of existing facilities. Improving healthcare provision consequently required attention to the needs of the entire service population rather than treating refugee and host-community healthcare as entirely separate concerns.

6.1.2 Sanitation and Water Access

Sanitation was another area in which the two communities experienced common challenges. Field observations and participant accounts indicated that available sanitation facilities were inadequate in some parts of the settlement. A host-community participant explained:

“The latrines are not enough for everyone. With so many people, the risk of disease is high for all of us, not just one group.”

This account shows that inadequate sanitation was understood as a shared public-health concern. Insufficient latrines could affect hygiene and increase the risk of sanitation-related illness for people living in densely populated areas. Participants particularly identified pressure in Zones 1, 3 and 5.

The implication is that sanitation problems could not be addressed effectively by concentrating exclusively on one population. Where refugees and host-community members shared the same environment, inadequate sanitation could affect the health and welfare of both groups. Shared risks created a common interest in improving sanitation infrastructure, promoting hygiene and ensuring that facilities could serve the number of people relying on them.

Water access was similarly important. The Refugee Welfare Committee representative explained that sharing water points and healthcare facilities created opportunities for interaction between the communities. The representative observed that a shared experience, such as waiting in line at a health facility, could encourage empathy and reduce the tendency to view the other population as entirely separate.

The wider refugee-response literature identifies water, sanitation and hygiene as major service areas requiring coordinated attention. The OPM and UNHCR's Uganda Country Refugee Response Plan Detailed Planning 2024–2025 also identifies water and sanitation, health, education, environmental pressures and protection among the key areas of concern (OPM & UNHCR, 2024).

The findings from Palabek suggest that water and sanitation functioned both as essential resources and as points of everyday interaction. People used shared facilities because they needed them, but the experience of sharing could also reveal the common problems facing the wider community. Nevertheless, such interaction did not automatically eliminate pressure or guarantee equal access, particularly where facilities were insufficient.

6.1.3 Education

Education was another important area of shared resource access. Refugee and host-community children attended schools within the settlement and its surrounding areas. This arrangement provided educational opportunities for children from both populations, but participants reported that the combined demand placed significant pressure on classrooms and teachers.

A secondary-school teacher at Paluda Secondary School described the situation:

“It is disheartening to see a classroom overflowing with so many bright young faces, knowing you cannot give each one the attention they need. The children from both our community and the refugee settlement are here to learn, but the sheer numbers are working against us all.”

The teacher's account illustrates how sharing an educational facility could produce both inclusion and difficulty. Children from both communities benefited from access to the same school, but overcrowding limited the ability of teachers to provide individual attention. The reported presence of more than 150 learners in a classroom intended for approximately 40 illustrates the severity of the pressure described by the participant.

The findings show that the effects of inadequate classroom capacity were not confined to refugee learners. Host-community pupils attending the same schools also experienced the consequences of overcrowding and competition for learning resources. Shared access therefore created a common demand for additional classrooms, adequate staffing and appropriate teaching materials.

Research on refugee hosting in Uganda by Zhou et al. (2023) suggests that inclusive assistance can generate positive effects on public services used by host populations. In Palabek, however, the teacher's testimony demonstrates that these potential benefits must be considered alongside the pressure created when existing facilities serve a larger population than they were designed to accommodate.

The findings also highlight an important distinction between access to education and access to quality education. Sharing a school may allow children from both populations to enroll, but effective learning depends on classroom conditions, teacher availability and the provision of learning materials. Consequently, the resource-sharing dynamic in education involved both increased access and a continuing need to improve service capacity.

6.1.4 Transportation and Road Infrastructure

Transportation infrastructure influenced access to education, healthcare, markets and other services. Refugees and host-community members depended on roads to move between their homes, schools, health facilities and trading centres. However, participants reported that poor roads and limited transport options made this movement difficult, particularly for people living in more remote parts of the settlement.

A refugee parent from Zone 9 explained:

“My children have to walk a very long distance to school (Paluda S.S) because there is no good road or transport. It is a problem for our children and the children from the host community as well.”

This account highlights the wider implications of infrastructure for shared resource access. The difficulty was not simply the availability of a school; it was also the ability of children to reach it. Poor roads and limited transport could increase travel time and make access more difficult for learners and other residents.

The participant explicitly identified the problem as affecting children from both communities. This suggests that inadequate infrastructure was a common concern, even though its effects could differ according to where households lived and what transport options they could afford.

The findings indicate that transportation was a connecting resource: it influenced whether people could benefit from schools, health facilities, markets and other services. Improvements in road infrastructure could therefore produce benefits across several areas of community life. The sharing of services created a common interest in advocating for better roads and transport, while the existing limitations demonstrated that resource sharing depended partly on infrastructure beyond the facilities themselves.

Overall, the evidence on social services demonstrates that refugees and host-community members shared both opportunities and constraints. Healthcare, sanitation, education and roads connected the communities through common needs, but limited-service capacity and poor infrastructure affected the benefits they could obtain.

6.2 Economic and Livelihood Resource Sharing

Economic and livelihood activities were another important dimension of resource sharing between refugees and the host community. The findings indicate that livelihood programmes, small businesses, agricultural activities and market interactions created opportunities for both groups to obtain income, exchange goods and develop practical skills.

A host-community focus group participant explained:

“These programs have taught us new skills. We are now working together with refugees in small businesses like kitchen gardening, and it has helped us all earn a living.”

A refugee participant similarly observed:

“Before, we depended on food aid, but with these livelihood programs, we can now grow our own

food and sell the extra. It gives us a sense of dignity.”

These accounts illustrate two related aspects of livelihood sharing. First, joint activities provided opportunities for refugees and host-community members to learn skills and work together. Secondly, agricultural and business activities created possible sources of food and income, contributing to household efforts to meet every day needs.

The findings identify programmes and approaches associated with the Refugee and Host Population Empowerment (ReHoPE) framework and the Development Response to Displacement Impacts Project (DRDIP) as part of the broader effort to address the development needs of refugee-hosting areas. ReHoPE and related policy initiatives emphasize improved livelihoods, public services and socioeconomic integration rather than treating refugee assistance solely as a short-term humanitarian activity (World Bank, 2018; UNHCR, 2017).

In Palabek, the accounts of participants suggest that shared livelihood activities provided a practical means through which refugees and host-community members could pursue common economic interests. Kitchen gardening, small businesses and other productive activities could improve food availability, create income and encourage cooperation. Their benefits therefore extended beyond the direct participants to the wider households that depended on the income or food produced.

The findings also indicate that livelihood sharing could strengthen dignity and agency. The refugee participant's account demonstrates that producing food or earning an income was valued not merely because it supplemented food assistance, but because it enabled the household to contribute more actively to its own survival. For host-community members, the opportunity to participate in common activities could similarly support household livelihoods.

Nevertheless, participation in a livelihood programme did not guarantee equal benefits for everyone. The effectiveness of agricultural and business activities depended on access to land, water, tools,

capital, skills and markets. Refugees with limited productive land or financial resources could face different constraints from host-community households with established access to land and local networks. Consequently, resource-sharing programmes needed to recognize differences in the resources and opportunities available to participants.

The broader Uganda Country Refugee Response Plan similarly identifies self-reliance, livelihoods and peaceful coexistence as important objectives of the refugee response (OPM & UNHCR, 2022). The findings from Palabek show how these objectives could be pursued in practice through joint economic activities. At the same time, they demonstrate that sustainable benefits required continued access to productive resources and opportunities to participate in local markets.

6.2.1 Markets and Everyday Economic Interaction

Markets formed another space in which refugees and host-community members interacted economically. Participants described how people bought and sold goods, sought customers and pursued opportunities to support their households. These exchanges meant that economic relations were not confined to formal development programmes; they also took place through everyday transactions.

An elderly host-community participant explained:

“You see, in the market, it does not matter where you are from. We are all here for the same thing: to feed our families and make a better life for ourselves. We are not just host community and refugee anymore. We're all just people trying to get by. When we buy from each other, when we work together, we build a community that can stand on its own feet. We don't have to just wait for aid to come; we can create our own prosperity.”

This account indicates that markets could create practical relationships based on mutual interest. Refugees could obtain goods and sell products, while host-community traders and producers could

access customers and business opportunities. These interactions encouraged people to engage with one another as economic actors rather than solely as members of different population groups.

However, the existence of economic exchange did not remove differences in income, purchasing power or access to productive resources. Some households could participate more effectively than others depending on the capital and skills available to them. Market interaction should therefore be understood as an important opportunity for cooperation rather than proof that all households enjoyed equal economic outcomes.

The findings indicate that markets strengthened interdependence by connecting household needs and local economic activity. This dynamic complemented formal livelihood interventions, but its contribution to social cohesion depended on whether people could participate in economic activities and obtain reasonable opportunities to earn a living.

6.3 Social and Cultural Resource Sharing

Social and cultural interaction was another important dimension of refugee-host relations in Palabek. The findings indicate that the communities shared some community spaces, participated in social activities and developed relationships through everyday contact. These interactions provided opportunities for cultural exchange, mutual understanding and the strengthening of social ties.

A host-community member interviewed at Paluda Trading Centre explained:

“We share our community halls and places of worship. We have learned a lot from their culture, and they have learned from ours. My brother even married a refugee woman. We are now one family.”

This testimony illustrates the significance of shared social and cultural spaces. Community halls and places of worship provided settings where people from the two populations could meet, participate in activities and develop familiarity with one another. Repeated contact could help reduce social distance and encourage a sense of belonging.

The reference to intermarriage further indicates that relationships sometimes extended beyond participation in shared spaces to personal and family connections. Marriage between members of the two communities could link households through kinship, creating relationships that crossed the distinction between refugee and host-community status.

However, intermarriage should not automatically be taken as evidence that all members of the two communities were fully integrated. Rather, the participant's testimony illustrates one way in which close social relations developed. The wider findings must still account for households and individuals whose experiences of resource sharing involved competition, unequal access or limited interaction.

Sports facilities were also identified by participants as important shared spaces for children and young people. A host-community participant explained:

“When refugee and host community children learn and play together, they build friendships and break down cultural barriers from a young age. Our children share the same sports grounds around the settlement and belong to the same teams. These are things we wish to see in the future because these are our brothers and sisters.”

This testimony suggests that shared sporting activities provided opportunities for interaction beyond the formal provision of education and humanitarian assistance. Through playing and belonging to the same teams, children and young people could establish friendships and develop a sense of common purpose.

The findings therefore indicate that social and cultural resources contributed to the everyday process of coexistence. Community spaces, religious activities, sports and family relationships offered opportunities for people to interact in ways that were not limited to the distribution of aid or access to public services.

These interactions were important because resource sharing was shaped not only by material availability but also by the relationships between the people using resources. Familiarity and trust could support cooperation, while unresolved resource disputes could undermine it. The evidence suggests that social and cultural connections helped strengthen coexistence, although they did not eliminate the structural challenges associated with land, service capacity and resource scarcity.

6.4 Dynamics of Resource Access and Inclusion

The findings show that resource sharing in Palabek was not simply a matter of refugees and host-community members using the same facilities. It involved changing patterns of inclusion, cooperation, competition and adaptation. Some shared resources generated mutual benefits, while others became sources of tension when demand exceeded availability.

The Refugee Welfare Committee representative explained that shared access to water and healthcare had helped reduce the perception that refugees and host-community members were entirely separate groups. The representative observed that the common experience of waiting for services encouraged people to recognize that both populations were affected by similar challenges.

This evidence suggests that shared experiences could shift attention from group identity towards common problems. Nevertheless, the extent of such cooperation depended partly on whether people believed that access was fair and whether the available resources were sufficient to meet their needs.

6.4.1 Shared Services and Host-Community Inclusion

The sharing of water, healthcare, schools, sports facilities and markets created practical points of contact between refugees and host-community members. The findings indicate that the host community did not remain outside the service environment created around the settlement. Instead, members of the host community also used some services and participated in activities associated

with the refugee response.

The significance of inclusion is supported by Zhou et al. (2023), whose research on Uganda found that areas closer to larger refugee settlements experienced improvements in some public services, including access to schools, health clinics and roads. Their study highlights the potential for refugee-related assistance to generate benefits for host populations. However, those broader findings do not establish that every service in Palabek improved or that all host-community members benefited equally.

In Palabek, participants' accounts indicate that inclusion operated through shared access and common participation. Children learned and played together, patients used the same health facilities, and households interacted through markets and livelihood activities. These shared experiences could provide a basis for cooperation and collective advocacy for better services.

At the same time, the evidence shows that sharing a service did not necessarily mean receiving equal benefits. Distance to facilities, household resources, service capacity and the availability of infrastructure could influence the extent to which different people benefited. The analysis therefore distinguishes between access to a shared resource and equitable access to a resource of adequate quality.

The findings suggest that inclusive resource sharing was most beneficial when it supported the needs of both communities while recognising the challenges created by limited capacity. Where shared facilities were insufficient, inclusion alone could not resolve the underlying resource shortage.

6.4.2 Changes in Humanitarian Assistance and Resource Access

A key informant from the OPM described a gradual emphasis on moving from emergency humanitarian assistance towards development-oriented support and self-reliance. The informant explained that refugees initially depended heavily on assistance for food, shelter, education and

healthcare, but that later approaches increasingly emphasised livelihood development.

This transition influenced resource-sharing relationships because the availability of assistance affected household needs and the pressure placed on other resources. A refugee focus group participant reported:

“The food rations have been cut. We are struggling to feed our families now. We are grateful for the support, but it's not enough.”

This testimony indicates that reductions in food assistance affected household food security. Where rations became insufficient, households needed alternative sources of food or income. Some could turn to cultivation, casual employment, small businesses or support from social networks. Others faced difficulties because they lacked the land, capital or opportunities required to pursue these alternatives.

An NGO worker also explained:

“We are doing more with less. The funding is not what it used to be, and this affects the quality and quantity of services we can provide to both communities.”

This account highlights the wider implications of reduced funding. When programmes had fewer resources, the effects could extend beyond refugee households to host-community members who depended on shared health, education, livelihood and other services.

The broader Uganda refugee-response plans identify life-saving assistance, public-service access, peaceful coexistence and self-reliance as interconnected objectives (OPM & UNHCR, 2022; OPM & UNHCR, 2024). The experiences reported in Palabek illustrate the difficulty of achieving these objectives simultaneously where funding is constrained and basic needs remain unmet.

The findings therefore suggest that the movement towards self-reliance did not eliminate resource-sharing challenges. Instead, reductions in assistance could increase the importance of productive

land, employment, markets and social networks. Households with better access to these resources could be better placed to cope, while those with fewer opportunities could become more vulnerable. Consequently, resource access during the study period was shaped by both the design of humanitarian and development programmes and the ability of individual households to benefit from them. Self-reliance could strengthen household agency, but it was difficult to achieve where households lacked the basic resources required to pursue livelihoods.

6.4.3 Land, Forests and Environmental Pressure

Natural resources, particularly land, trees and water, were central to the changing relationship between refugees and the host community. Both populations depended on these resources for settlement, farming, firewood, construction materials and other household needs. The arrival and continued presence of refugees increased the number of people using resources in the surrounding area, while local households continued to depend on them for established livelihoods.

Participants described resource-sharing relations during the early years of settlement as relatively cooperative. One local elder recalled:

“At the beginning, there was no problem, because we thought we had enough for all of us.”

This recollection suggests that some host-community members initially regarded the available resources as sufficient to accommodate the new population. However, the account also reveals that perceptions of availability changed as people encountered growing demand and pressure on shared resources.

A landlord from Zone 1 explained that competition could emerge when shared resources, such as water sources and trees, became insufficient to meet the needs of the population. This account suggests that tensions were associated not simply with shared resource use, but with difficulties in maintaining access when demand exceeded availability.

An elder from Zone 8 described the situation during the later period:

“Before the settlement expanded, our forests were many. Now, everyone, both us and the refugees, needs firewood and tree poles for construction and some people often burn charcoal for home use and sale. I have seen with our own eyes that the trees in Zone 8 and 9 hills are disappearing fast, and the water is getting scarce. It is affecting us all equally.”

This testimony reflects the perception among long-term residents that the availability of trees and water had declined. It also shows that environmental concerns were understood as affecting both refugees and host-community households. Both groups required firewood and construction materials, while changes in the local environment could affect household energy use, farming and access to water.

Secondary evidence provides additional context for these findings. Aciro's (2019) analysis of land use and land-cover change in Palabek Ogili Sub-County identified substantial changes between 2000 and 2018, including a decline in forest cover after 2010 and an expansion of built-up areas and farmland. The study associated land-cover changes with a combination of population growth, increased movement and changes in land use. These findings support the importance of examining environmental change, although they do not establish that refugee settlement alone caused every observed change.

The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO, 2019) similarly reported that increased demand for wood fuel in refugee-affected areas of northern Uganda contributed to pressure on woodland resources and could create competition between refugees and host communities. The report provides wider contextual evidence for understanding why access to firewood and trees could become contentious when many households relied on the same resource base.

The evidence from Palabek therefore suggests a shift from an initial perception of resource

availability towards greater concern about scarcity and environmental sustainability. This should not be interpreted as a simple division between refugees as users and hosts as resource owners. Both populations relied on the same natural environment, and the findings indicate that the consequences of resource depletion could affect the two communities.

6.4.4 Land Access and Competition over Productive Resources

Land was particularly important because it served residential, agricultural and livelihood purposes. Refugees required plots for shelter and, where possible, land for cultivation. Host-community households also depended on land for farming and other forms of livelihood. Consequently, the settlement created circumstances in which traditional land-use arrangements had to accommodate additional demands.

The findings indicate that some refugees used residential plots for small-scale cultivation, while others sought opportunities to hire or access larger plots. However, access to productive land was not necessarily guaranteed by the provision of a residential plot. This distinction affected the ability of households to produce food and engage in agricultural livelihoods.

Research conducted specifically in Palabek reinforces the significance of this issue. Mylan (2025), drawing on ethnographic fieldwork carried out in and around the settlement between April 2021 and June 2022, describes how refugees used their allocated plots for cultivation, while some rented additional land from host-community members or participated in farming arrangements. The study also records difficulties relating to land quality and instances of conflict associated with harvesting produce. This provides an independent perspective on the importance of land access and the complexities involved in translating self-reliance policies into daily practice.

The findings from the present study similarly suggest that land-sharing arrangements could create mutual benefits where refugees obtained opportunities for cultivation and host-community

landowners received income or other benefits. However, the arrangements could also create tension where access conditions were unclear, land was insufficient or people disagreed over boundaries and the use of produce.

The dynamic therefore involved both cooperation and negotiation. Land could support shared livelihoods, but its role as a source of shelter, production and income meant that it remained a resource over which access had to be managed carefully. The findings suggest that clear agreements, communication and respect for customary arrangements were important to reducing disputes and supporting more predictable access.

6.4.5 Environmental Change, Adaptation and Shared Responsibility

Environmental pressure did not only affect access to firewood and trees. It also had implications for water availability, agricultural productivity and the resources used to support household livelihoods. Where trees were depleted or land became degraded, both communities could experience greater difficulty securing the materials needed for domestic use and productive activities.

The findings indicate that resource-sharing challenges could not be addressed solely by determining which group should have access to a resource. They also required attention to how the resource was managed and whether its use could be sustained over time.

Participants' accounts and wider research point to the importance of environmental protection, tree planting, sustainable fuel use and appropriate farming practices. FAO (2019) emphasised the need for coordinated, adequately resourced and longer-term interventions to address resource degradation in refugee-affected areas. In Palabek, such measures would need to recognize the needs and participation of both refugee and host populations.

The development of joint livelihood programmes could also contribute to environmental adaptation. When refugee and host-community farmers work together, there may be opportunities to share

agricultural knowledge, improve production methods and coordinate the use of available resources. However, the benefits depend on adequate support, continued participation and suitable access to land and water.

The findings therefore suggest that environmental sustainability was closely connected to social cohesion. Competition over depleted resources could contribute to tension, while joint management and livelihood activities could create shared interests in protecting the resource base. Environmental measures were consequently relevant not only to conservation but also to the long-term relationship between the refugee settlement and the host community.

6.4.6 Overall Interpretation of Resource-Sharing Dynamics

Taken together, the findings show that resource sharing in Palabek involved several interrelated processes. Shared public services created opportunities for inclusion, but service shortages could affect the quality and timeliness of access. Livelihood activities and market transactions supported economic interaction, but benefits depended on access to productive resources and opportunities. Shared social and cultural spaces helped build relationships, yet these relationships existed alongside challenges involving land, food, water and firewood.

The evidence also demonstrates that cooperation and competition were not mutually exclusive. Refugees and host-community members could work together in markets or farming groups while experiencing pressure on the same land or water sources. Similarly, both populations could benefit from health and education services while facing overcrowding and inadequate infrastructure.

The historical pattern described by participants indicates that resource-sharing relationships evolved as the settlement developed. Early interactions included the sharing of land and community resources; subsequent population and service pressures made the limitations of available resources more visible; and later efforts placed greater emphasis on joint livelihoods, integration and

sustainable resource management.

These developments suggest that resource sharing should not be understood simply as equal access to a common pool of resources. It was a negotiated process shaped by who controlled or provided a resource, who needed it, whether it was sufficient, and how communities managed disputes. The findings therefore identify both the social value of inclusion and the practical importance of addressing scarcity, infrastructure gaps and unequal access.

6.5 Conclusion

This chapter has examined the resource-sharing dynamics between refugees and the host community in Palabek Refugee Settlement between 2017 and 2025. The findings demonstrate that resource sharing was characterised by cooperation, mutual benefit, competition and environmental pressure. These dynamics were evident in shared social services, livelihood activities, social and cultural interaction, and access to natural resources.

Healthcare, sanitation, education, water and roads served as important points of shared access. Refugees and host-community members benefited from the same facilities, but overcrowding, inadequate infrastructure and limited-service capacity affected the quality and accessibility of services. The findings show that shared use could strengthen inclusion while also revealing the need for additional investment in services used by both populations.

Economic and livelihood activities provided further opportunities for cooperation. Participants described working together in small businesses, kitchen gardening and other productive activities. Markets also enabled refugees and host-community members to exchange goods and pursue common economic interests. These interactions could support income generation and dignity, although the benefits depended on access to land, capital, skills and market opportunities.

Social and cultural interaction contributed to coexistence through shared community spaces, places

of worship, sports activities and family relationships. Participants' accounts indicate that such interactions helped build familiarity and a sense of community. However, social cohesion did not eliminate resource-related difficulties.

Land, forests, firewood and water were particularly important sources of both cooperation and tension. The findings suggest that resource-sharing relationships changed as pressures on the local environment became more apparent. Secondary research on Palabek and other refugee-affected areas of Uganda supports the importance of examining land-use change and the environmental effects of increasing demand for natural resources (Aciro, 2019; FAO, 2019; Mylan, 2025).

Overall, the chapter answers Research Question Three by demonstrating that resource sharing between refugees and the host community was neither entirely harmonious nor entirely conflictual. It was an evolving relationship shaped by shared needs, economic interdependence, social interaction and competition over limited resources. Sustainable resource sharing therefore requires inclusive service provision, fair and transparent land-use arrangements, stronger livelihood opportunities, environmental protection and the meaningful participation of both refugees and host-community members in decisions affecting their shared resources.

CHAPTER SEVEN

EXPERIENCES OF REFUGEES AND THE HOST COMMUNITY IN ACCESSING RESOURCES IN PALEBEK REFUGEE SETTLEMENT, 2017–2025

7.0 Introduction

This chapter examines the experiences of refugees and members of the host community in accessing resources in Palabek Refugee Settlement, Palabek Ogili Sub-County, Lamwo District, Northern Uganda, between 2017 and 2025. It analyses access to education, food, shelter, infrastructure, water, sanitation, healthcare, protection, psychosocial support, information, participation, land and farming opportunities.

The discussion draws primarily on key informant interviews, individual interviews, focus group discussions and participant observation. These sources provide evidence of how people experienced resource shortages, service delivery, inequalities and coping strategies. Secondary sources, including humanitarian assessments, academic studies and official reports, are used to contextualise the findings and identify areas of agreement and difference.

The findings reveal that access to resources was shaped not only by the availability of facilities or assistance but also by their quality, accessibility, adequacy and distribution. Refugees frequently reported insufficient food assistance, limited cultivation land, inadequate shelter, long distances to services and difficulties accessing healthcare and education. Members of the host community also described pressure on land, forests, water sources and public services. Although the experiences of the two populations differed in important respects, both faced challenges associated with limited resources and inadequate infrastructure.

The chapter further demonstrates that access was uneven within each community. Age, gender, household vulnerability, location, livelihood opportunities, social networks and familiarity with

service providers influenced people's experiences. The discussion therefore distinguishes between the existence of a resource and the ability of individuals and households to access and benefit from it.

7.1 Experiences with Access to Education Resources

Field observations and a key informant interview with the OPM education focal person identified 15 primary schools, one secondary school and one vocational institution serving the settlement and the surrounding host community. These institutions provided an essential foundation for education, but participants reported challenges involving inadequate infrastructure, teacher shortages, overcrowding, gender disparities and language barriers.

The schools identified during the study are presented in the table below:

Table 1: List of schools at Palabek Refugee Settlement

S/N	NAME OF SCHOOL	LOCATION	
		ZONE	BLOCK
1	Paluda Secondary School	1	5
2	World View P/S	1	3
3	Ogili Hill P/S	5A	5C
4	Bright Future p/s	8	2
5	Akanyo P/S	Host community	
6	Awich P/S	4	4
7	Cannan P/S	5B	9
8	Beyogoya P/S	Host community	
9	Glory Land P/S	3	5
10	Progressive P/S	5B	3

11	Atepi P/S	7	3
12	Wisdom P/S	7	2
13	Unity P/S	7	4
14	Aywee P/S	2	5
15	Palabek P/S	Host community	
16	Light the World P/S	Host community	
17	Don Bosco	Vocational School – Host community	

Source: Key Informant Interview with OPM Education Focal Person

The table indicates that education provision extended across the settlement and nearby host-community areas. However, the existence of schools did not necessarily guarantee adequate or equitable access. The findings show that educational opportunities were affected by the limited capacity of institutions to accommodate learners, the availability of teachers and learning materials, the distance students travelled and the economic circumstances of their households.

The Uganda refugee education response has long recognised the need to improve learning opportunities for both refugee and host-community children (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees [UNHCR], 2018). The findings from Palabek similarly indicate that access should be assessed not only by school availability but also by the conditions under which children learn.

7.1.1 Infrastructure Deficiencies

The study identified inadequate classrooms, limited furniture, insufficient learning materials and poor classroom conditions as major obstacles to effective education. The OPM education focal person, interviewed at the Palabek field office on 30 June 2025, explained:

Some primary schools like Beyogoya and Awich Primary Schools, and Paluda Secondary School are

often overcrowded because of their proximity, and Paluda in particular is the only secondary school within the settlement. Others like Atepi and Akanyo Primary Schools have dilapidated structures, often lacking proper ventilation or lighting, directly impact children's concentration and ability to learn effectively. All these schools at the settlement serve both refugees and the host community. This also poses health and safety risks but as OPM we are also over stretched with so many activities within the settlement. In some scenarios without proper desks, children may sit on the floor, affecting their posture and ability to write, but we are committed to working with our educational partners to rescue the situation.

The testimony illustrates the gap between having educational facilities and providing a suitable learning environment. The informant acknowledged the infrastructure problems while also describing the operational constraints facing OPM and its partners. This suggests that the difficulties were not simply a question of recognising educational needs; the institutions responsible for addressing them also faced limitations in staffing, funding and resources.

Poor classroom conditions could affect concentration, participation and the ability of teachers to organise learning. Where learners lacked desks and textbooks, or studied in poorly ventilated and overcrowded classrooms, their ability to benefit from education was compromised. These conditions affected refugee and host-community learners attending the same schools.

The findings are consistent with the concerns identified in UNHCR's (2018) education response planning, which emphasised the need to improve learning outcomes for increasing numbers of refugee and host-community children. In Palabek, the evidence indicates that access to school facilities needed to be accompanied by investment in classrooms, furniture, teaching materials and other resources required for effective learning.

Figure 1: An A' level classroom at Paluda S.S



Source: Researcher's field photograph, [Okwir Allan Daniel 13/7/2025].

The photograph should be discussed alongside the OPM informant's testimony to illustrate the learning environment observed during the research.

7.1.2 Teacher Shortages

Teacher availability was another factor affecting the quality of education. During an interview, the Director of Students at Paluda Secondary School reported that the school had 34 teachers serving 1,605 students. He explained:

We only have eight teachers under FCA, 12 under WIU, and an overwhelming 14 under PTA payroll.

These figures produce an approximate student-to-teacher ratio of 47:1. Using the 1:45 benchmark cited in the original draft, the ratio indicates a teaching load slightly above that benchmark. The distribution of teachers across different funding arrangements also illustrates the role of humanitarian and community-based support in sustaining education.

However, the number of teachers alone does not fully reveal their subject specialisations, workload

or distribution across classes. The participant's testimony nevertheless indicates that the school depended on different employment and funding arrangements to maintain staffing levels.

High teacher workloads can limit the attention available to individual learners, particularly in large classes. Teachers may find it difficult to identify learning difficulties, provide feedback or support students who need additional assistance. These challenges can affect academic performance and increase pressure on staff.

The resource gap was particularly significant because Paluda Secondary School served learners from different parts of the settlement as well as the surrounding host community. For students living far from the school, the limited availability of alternative secondary schools further restricted educational options.

The findings therefore indicate that educational access depended on more than enrolment. Adequate staffing, appropriate teacher deployment, classroom capacity and learning materials were necessary if school attendance was to translate into meaningful educational progress.

7.1.3 Gender Disparities and School Dropout

The study found that girls from both refugee and host-community households faced barriers to education, although refugee girls could experience additional difficulties associated with displacement and household vulnerability. These barriers included early marriage, pregnancy, household responsibilities, inadequate menstrual hygiene facilities and concerns about personal safety.

During an interview, the Senior Woman Teacher at Paluda Secondary School explained:

I receive about three to five cases of girls, mainly refugees who drop out of school due to early pregnancy and marriage.

This testimony provides evidence of the cases encountered by the teacher. It does not establish the

overall dropout rate among refugee girls, but it identifies pregnancy and early marriage as challenges affecting some learners.

The findings also link educational participation to household economic conditions. Some young people reportedly left school or missed lessons to undertake casual labour, commonly referred to by participants as *leja leja*. The activities described included working at construction sites and quarries, burning and selling charcoal, and other informal work intended to supplement household income.

These accounts reveal the connection between education and livelihood insecurity. Where households struggled to obtain sufficient food or income, children's time and labour could become important to household survival. Continued education could therefore be affected by the immediate need to meet basic household expenses.

Safety and sanitation were also important. Long journeys to school, insufficient WASH facilities and inadequate access to menstrual hygiene products could make regular attendance difficult for some girls. These concerns are consistent with the broader protection and service-access gaps documented in the Palabek Multi-Sector Needs Assessment (UNHCR, 2018).

Figure 2: A group of refugee children selling firewood and charcoal to supplement household needs



Source: Researcher's field photograph, [Okwir Allan Daniel 13/7/2025].

The photograph illustrates the relationship between household economic pressures and children's participation in informal income-generating activities. Its interpretation should be based on the researcher's observation and relevant interview evidence rather than an assumption that all children selling firewood or charcoal had dropped out of school.

The findings demonstrate that barriers to education were closely connected to food insecurity, household poverty, gender-related pressures and child protection. Addressing dropout therefore required more than increasing the number of school places; it also required measures to reduce the economic and social pressures that prevented learners from attending school consistently.

7.1.4 Overcrowding and Language Barriers

Overcrowding was particularly evident in the schools reported to have high enrolment. The researcher recorded approximately 1,900 pupils at Beyogoya Primary School.

Large enrolments can place additional demands on classroom space, teachers and learning materials. Where schools cannot expand capacity in line with enrolment, learners may receive less individual attention, and teachers may struggle to manage classrooms effectively.

Language differences presented another challenge. The findings indicate that some refugee learners experienced difficulty participating in a curriculum delivered primarily in English, particularly where their first language differed from the language used for instruction. A Windle International Uganda education project assistant described language as an issue affecting communication and participation.

The difficulty was not necessarily a lack of ability to learn. Rather, learners who were still developing English proficiency could require additional support to understand instructions, express themselves and participate confidently. Host-community learners familiar with the Ugandan school system could have an advantage in adjusting to the curriculum.

The findings suggest that language-support strategies and appropriate learning assistance could help address these differences. They also indicate that educational inequality can persist even where refugee and host-community children attend the same institution.

Taken together, the evidence reveals that the main challenges in education involved the adequacy and quality of access. Schools provided a shared service, but overcrowding, teacher shortages, gender-related barriers and language differences affected learners' ability to benefit equally.

7.2 Experiences with Access to Food

Food was one of the most pressing resource concerns reported by refugee participants. Unlike most host-community households, which relied on farming, casual labour, small businesses and purchases from local markets, many refugee households depended partly on humanitarian assistance. The findings indicate that food access was affected by ration reductions, delays, household size, vulnerability classification, limited land and the distance to distribution centres.

These experiences correspond with the wider food-assistance difficulties documented by the World Food Programme (WFP, 2020), which reported that funding shortfalls had necessitated reductions in food and cash assistance for refugees in Uganda. In 2023, WFP further announced a needs-based approach under which assistance would prioritise the most vulnerable households while some households assessed as less vulnerable were gradually expected to rely more on their own resources (WFP, 2023).

These national developments provide context for the experiences reported in Palabek, although they do not establish the exact ration or assistance level received by every household in the settlement.

7.2.1 Insufficient and Irregular Food Assistance

Participants described food assistance as inadequate for meeting the needs of some households. Delays and reductions could result in the available food being consumed before the next distribution, forcing families to reduce meals or seek alternative sources of food.

A 21-year-old male Senior Five student at Paluda Secondary School, who reported being responsible for younger siblings, explained:

“I am the household head for my siblings, and since we arrived in 2018, they gave us a small piece of land just enough to build a hut. We tried to grow some vegetables, but the soil is unreliable. There is not enough space to plant what we can eat and sell. Every season we watch the crops fail, and we still depend on food aid through our grandmother, but the aid is nowadays unreliable. Even the little food aid which is distributed caters mainly the most vulnerable like elders, widows, and the disabled. We cannot directly qualify for the food aid because we are now considered less vulnerable since we are youth and fully settled at the settlement”.

This testimony illustrates how household food security was influenced by several factors at once. The participant's household had limited residential land, faced difficulty producing vegetables and relied indirectly on a relative who qualified for assistance. The account also reveals a difficulty associated with vulnerability-based targeting: being classified as less vulnerable did not necessarily mean that a household had sufficient resources to meet its needs.

The WFP's (2023) explanation of needs-based targeting provides useful context for understanding the distinction between prioritizing the most vulnerable households and ensuring that other households can meet basic needs. In Palabek, the participant's experience suggests that the practical consequences of targeting depended on household composition, livelihood opportunities and access to productive resources.

The findings further suggest that food insecurity affected education and health. Learners who lacked sufficient food could struggle to concentrate in class, while households experiencing prolonged shortages faced pressure to pursue other means of obtaining food. These relationships indicate that food access should be understood as a foundation for wider household welfare.

Figure 3: Measurement of food ratios for refugees at Zone 8 distribution centre in Apyetta



Source: Researcher's field photograph, [Okwir Allan Daniel 13/7/2025].

7.2.2 Reported Three-Tier Food-Assistance System

Participants in the refugee focus group discussions described an arrangement in which households were grouped according to perceived vulnerability. In the account given by participants, older persons, widows and persons with disabilities received the largest allocation, while other categories reportedly received reduced assistance or no direct general food assistance.

The participants described the categories as follows:

Tier 1: Households considered most vulnerable, including older persons, widows and persons with disabilities.

Tier 2: Households considered less vulnerable, described by participants as including women and children.

Tier 3: Households considered not vulnerable, often described as including young people thought capable of supporting themselves.

Participants gave examples of allocations involving maize, beans, cooking oil, salt and soap. They should not be presented as verified settlement-wide statistics unless supported by an official document.

The participants' accounts nevertheless identify an important issue concerning the relationship between vulnerability assessment and actual household needs. Young people may be physically able to work, but they may still lack secure employment, sufficient land, tools or capital. The testimony of the student responsible for younger siblings demonstrates how a person regarded as capable of supporting a household could still experience significant food insecurity.

The host community experienced food insecurity differently. A participant in the host-community focus group explained:

We the community members are smallholder farmers who grow crops for both personal consumption and sale.

This account shows that host-community food access depended substantially on agricultural production and related income. Members of the host community generally did not receive the same regular general food assistance as refugee households. Their food security was therefore influenced by land availability, rainfall, soil conditions, market prices and the income obtained from farming and other activities.

The two experiences were interconnected. A reduction in refugee food assistance could increase demand for casual labour, land access and support from local households. Where resources were

already limited, such pressures could contribute to tension. Conversely, agricultural cooperation and market exchange could provide opportunities for mutual benefit.

The findings therefore show that differences in the systems of food access sometimes generated perceptions of unequal treatment. They also demonstrate that the food security of both communities depended on wider economic and environmental conditions.

7.2.3 Access Difficulties at Food-Distribution Centres

Refugee focus group participants described long queues and lengthy journeys to food-distribution points. These challenges were particularly difficult for older persons, persons with disabilities and caregivers responsible for young children.

The accounts indicate that access involved more than being eligible for assistance. People also needed to reach distribution points, wait for their turn and transport the received supplies home. These activities could consume time that might otherwise be devoted to childcare, education or livelihood work.

Figure 4: A food distribution point at Zone 8 in Apyetta



Source: Researcher's field photograph, [Okwir Allan Daniel 13/7/2025].

Figure 5: A congested food distribution point at Zone 4 in Awich



Source: Researcher's field photograph, [Okwir Allan Daniel 13/7/2025].

A male host-community focus group participant expressed concern about the distribution of humanitarian assistance:

“Since the settlement started here, we get nothing directly like the refugees. We share our land, our resources, our water but when it comes to aid, it is all for them.”

This testimony reveals a perception among some host-community members that they bore some of the pressures associated with refugee settlement without receiving equivalent direct assistance. It is important to distinguish the participant's perception from a claim that the host community received no development assistance at all. Refugee-response programmes can include support to shared public services and host-community development, but the benefits may not always be visible to individual households or meet their immediate expectations.

The findings suggest that perceptions of fairness influenced how people interpreted differences in assistance. Refugees were concerned about the adequacy and accessibility of their rations, while some host-community members felt that their contributions and resource pressures were not sufficiently recognised.

The findings consequently point to the importance of transparent communication about assistance criteria and greater attention to the needs of host communities affected by resource pressure.

7.2.4 Limited Land for Cultivation and Food Production

Limited cultivation land was an important barrier to food self-sufficiency among refugee households. Participants described the plots allocated to some households as small, difficult to cultivate or insufficient for producing food for household consumption and sale.

A 19-year-old male refugee student explained:

“We tried to grow some vegetables, but the soil is dry and does not hold water. There’s not enough space to plant what we can eat and sell.”

This account demonstrates the difficulty of using small residential plots to meet wider household food needs. Cultivation depended not only on the availability of land but also on soil quality, water, tools and weather conditions.

A landlord from Zone 1 described the host community's experience:

“We the host community have sacrificed our land for the settlement, and we have lost some of our own cultivation and grazing areas.”

This testimony highlights a difference between the two communities. Refugees described difficulty obtaining sufficient productive land, whereas some host-community members described the loss or reduced availability of land previously used for agriculture and grazing.

The findings suggest that land arrangements could generate benefits for some households while creating constraints for others. Refugees who obtained additional land could potentially cultivate crops, while host-community landowners might earn income from renting out land. However, these arrangements did not necessarily benefit all households equally.

The findings further indicate that limited cultivation opportunities could reinforce dependence on

external food assistance. Where households could not produce enough food, the availability of assistance and income-generating activities became even more important. The relationship between food and land therefore demonstrates how resource access was shaped by the interaction between household needs and the availability of productive resources.

Figure 6: A refugee household with limited cultivation and grazing land at Zone 5A, block 1



Source: Researcher's field photograph, [Okwir Allan Daniel 13/7/2025].

7.3 Experiences with Access to Shelter and Infrastructure

Shelter and infrastructure influenced the safety, comfort and mobility of households in the settlement. The findings show that some refugees continued to live in shelters made from basic materials, while poor roads and pathways limited access to essential services for both refugees and host-community members.

7.3.1 Vulnerability of Semi-Permanent Shelters

Participants described shelters constructed from materials such as poles, tarpaulins, mud and grass thatching. Although these arrangements provided immediate accommodation, they did not always

offer sufficient durability, insulation, privacy or protection from heavy rain.

The findings suggest that the provision of initial shelter did not necessarily ensure stable long-term housing. Households with limited income and access to building materials could find it difficult to repair or improve their homes. Shelter quality was therefore linked to wider livelihood and resource constraints.

The host community also experienced consequences associated with demand for building materials. Participants reported increased use of poles and other natural materials for constructing shelters and households. These pressures were associated in their accounts with the cutting of trees and concerns about environmental degradation.

The experience of refugees was primarily concerned with the adequacy and durability of the shelter available to them, while host-community participants also raised concerns about pressure on local natural resources. Both experiences indicate that the provision of shelter had implications beyond the immediate construction of houses.

Figure 7: A refugee household at Zone 4, block 5



Source: Researcher's field photograph, [Okwir Allan Daniel 13/7/2025].

Figure 8: A host community household at Zone 2, block 1



Source: Researcher's field photograph, [Okwir Allan Daniel 13/7/2025].

The photographs should be discussed as illustrations of the housing conditions observed during the research, while interviews and observation notes should be used to explain the material challenges faced by households. Differences between individual houses should not be taken as proof of uniform conditions across either community.

7.3.2 Poor Roads and Pathways

Poor roads and pathways were reported as common obstacles to accessing services and livelihood opportunities. Participants from both communities described difficulties travelling during rainy seasons, when some routes became difficult or impassable.

These conditions affected the movement of people and goods. Poor roads could complicate food distribution, access to schools and health facilities, transportation of construction materials and movement to markets. They also created difficulties for people who had to walk long distances because transport was unavailable or unaffordable.

The consequences were particularly serious for households requiring urgent healthcare or learners

who travelled regularly to school. The findings show that infrastructure affected access to other resources, meaning that the availability of a school, health centre or market did not guarantee that people could reach it easily.

Figure 9: An almost road at Zone 1, block 2



Source: Researcher's field photograph, [Okwir Allan Daniel 13/7/2025].

The shared character of this problem created a common interest in infrastructure improvement. Refugees and host-community members depended on many of the same routes, although distance, household location and income influenced how severely individuals were affected.

The experience of poor roads therefore demonstrates that resource access was partly determined by the physical environment in which services were located. Improving infrastructure could benefit both communities by making education, healthcare, markets and other resources more accessible.

7.4 Experiences with Access to Water and Sanitation

Water and sanitation were central to household welfare, personal hygiene and public health. Despite the involvement of humanitarian organisations, participants reported problems associated with the

distance to water points, waiting times, concerns about water quality and inadequate sanitation facilities.

The UNHCR and LWF Water, Sanitation and Hygiene Knowledge, Attitudes and Practices survey conducted in Palabek in 2019 included both refugees and host-community households. It provides a useful independent source for examining water and sanitation access across the two populations (UNHCR, 2020).

7.4.1 Distance to Water Points and Water Quality

Both refugee and host-community focus group participants reported that long distances to water sources created difficulties for households, particularly women and children, who often undertook water collection.

A Refugee Welfare Officer from Zone 4 explained that concerns about the taste of treated water could lead some residents to use nearby streams instead. Participants identified Arot water stream in Zone 4 as one such source.

This evidence indicates that the existence of water facilities did not necessarily eliminate difficulties in obtaining water. Distance, queues, supply reliability and perceptions of water quality influenced people's decisions about which sources to use.

Figure 10: Arot water stream at Zone 4, block 3



Source: Researcher's field photograph, [Okwir Allan Daniel 13/7/2025].

Figure 11: Women fetching water from Arot water stream in Zone 4, block 3



Source: Researcher's field photograph, [Okwir Allan Daniel 13/7/2025].

The findings indicate that water access involved a trade-off for some households between the convenience of nearby sources and concerns about safety or quality. This was particularly important

where the time required to reach a formal water point competed with other domestic and livelihood responsibilities.

7.4.2 Congestion at Water Points

Participants reported long queues at water points in Zones 5, 8, 4 and 6. These difficulties were associated with demand that exceeded the capacity of available water infrastructure at particular times.

A woman participating in the host-community focus group discussion at Paluda Trading Centre explained:

“By the time I get home with the water, I am too tired to do anything else”.

This testimony illustrates the effects of water collection on daily household life. Time spent walking to a source and waiting in queues could reduce the time available for childcare, household tasks, education and income-generating activities.

The problem was particularly important for women and girls who carried much of the responsibility for collecting water. The findings therefore show that water shortages had implications beyond physical access: they also affected the distribution of household labour and the time available for other activities.

The shared nature of water infrastructure also meant that congestion could affect the relationship between refugees and host-community members. Where a limited number of facilities served a large population, competition for access could create frustration. Nevertheless, participants' accounts also suggest that common dependence on water created a shared interest in expanding infrastructure and improving supply.

7.4.3 Hygiene, Sanitation and Safety

Participants reported concerns about the availability, maintenance and security of latrines. These concerns were particularly important to women and girls, who described difficulties using facilities with inadequate lighting and privacy.

A young refugee woman from Zone 9 explained:

“I’m afraid to go to the latrine after dark, because we are intermixed in this zone and new people keep on being resettled here since it is a new zone and dark at night. So, I wait until the morning, even if I am uncomfortable”.

This testimony shows how the design and location of sanitation facilities affect personal safety and dignity. For the participant, the issue was not simply the availability of a latrine but whether she could use it safely at the time she needed it.

Participants also expressed concern that insufficient or poorly maintained sanitation facilities could contribute to unsafe practices and increase public-health risks. The study recorded reports of a cholera incident in Zone 9 in February 2025.

The findings indicate that sanitation access was shaped by three connected factors: the number of available facilities, their maintenance and their safety. Improving sanitation therefore required more than constructing latrines; it also required attention to privacy, lighting, accessibility and safe maintenance.

7.5 Experiences with Access to Healthcare Services

Healthcare was a major concern for both refugees and host-community members. Participants reported limited facilities, long waiting times, shortages of medicines and health workers, communication difficulties and unequal experiences of treatment.

The UNHCR Multi-Sector Needs Assessment conducted in Palabek in 2018 found that health and

nutrition were among the principal needs reported by surveyed households. Among households reporting health problems and seeking treatment, some encountered challenges related to medicine availability, staff qualifications and transport (UNHCR, 2018). These findings provide historical context for the concerns raised by participants in the present study.

7.5.1 Limited Facilities and Long Waiting Times

The study identified four principal health facilities serving the settlement: Apyetta Health Centre II at Paluda Trading Centre, Akworo Health Centre III in Zone 2, Block 8, Awich Health Centre II in Zone 5A, Block 5C, and Paluda Health Centre III in Zone 3, Block 6. Participants also referred to health facilities in the wider host-community area.

The findings indicate that the available facilities faced high demand. Long queues could delay treatment, while patients requiring specialized care might have to travel to facilities outside the settlement. These challenges were particularly important for children, older persons, people with chronic illnesses and patients requiring urgent attention.

A host-community elder expressed concern that a relatively minor illness could become more serious when treatment was delayed. This account highlights the importance of timely access as part of healthcare quality.

The findings also demonstrate that the combined needs of refugees and the host community placed pressure on local services. Improving access required attention to facility capacity, staffing, medical supplies and the referral arrangements available to patients.

7.5.2 Service Quality and Medicine Shortages

Participants described concerns about limited medicines and the availability of qualified personnel. Some reported that commonly available medicines, including paracetamol, were prescribed for a

range of complaints, while other medicines were sometimes unavailable.

These statements are participants' experiences and perceptions; they do not establish that all treatment at the facilities was inappropriate. Nevertheless, they reveal the frustration patients experienced when they felt that available treatment did not adequately address their conditions.

The findings also indicate that staff shortages affected the time available for consultation and follow-up. Where a small number of health workers served many patients, the opportunity for detailed assessment and counselling could be limited.

These concerns reflect the broader problem of access identified in the Palabek Multi-Sector Needs Assessment (UNHCR, 2018). In the study area, patients' experiences suggest that meaningful healthcare access depended on the availability of medicines, appropriate diagnosis, adequate staff and the timely provision of treatment, rather than the mere existence of a health facility.

7.5.3 Perceived Neglect and Allegations of Corruption

Some refugee participants expressed dissatisfaction with the conduct of healthcare workers. A 28-year-old female refugee mother stated:

“Most of the health workers at Paluda H/C II do not attend to patients in time... they just remain sitting and busy on their phones”

A 23-year-old male refugee youth similarly alleged:

“Panadol is the only medicine available for almost all diseases every time I go there. They tell us drugs are not there, and it is painful to see people die because of malaria, diarrhea, headache and accident victims. These people steal medicine and take to their clinics at the reception, where they sell expensively. Now which kind of professional workers are these people?”

These testimonies reveal serious dissatisfaction with perceived service quality and medicine availability. The second quotation also contains an allegation of medicine theft. Such an allegation

should be treated as a participant's claim, not as a proven finding of criminal conduct. The study would require documentary evidence, administrative investigations or corroborating accounts before concluding that particular health workers stole or sold medicines.

Analytically, the two testimonies nevertheless demonstrate how perceived neglect and medicine shortages could undermine confidence in the healthcare system. When patients feel that they are not listened to or cannot obtain the treatment they need, they may lose trust in the service providers responsible for their care.

The findings therefore point to the importance of transparent medicine management, professional conduct, adequate staffing and accessible complaint mechanisms. Improving trust requires both adequate resources and accountability in the delivery of services.

7.5.4 Perceived Discrimination and Differences in Access

An 18-year-old male refugee student at Paluda Secondary School described his experience of seeking healthcare:

“Sometimes I wish I was not a refugee. We are discriminated especially at the health centres... Mostly the nationals, working and smart people are always prioritized than us.”

This testimony reveals the participant's perception of unequal treatment. It should be interpreted as evidence of his experience rather than proof that all health workers systematically prioritised host-community members.

The LC II of Apyetta Parish explained that host-community members sometimes benefited from established social networks and familiarity with local service providers. According to the informant, these connections could help people navigate the healthcare system more effectively. The researcher also observed that some host-community members used private facilities and hospitals outside the settlement.

These findings suggest that differences in access were shaped by several factors, including social connections, language, knowledge of services, income and the ability to travel. Host-community members who could afford alternatives might have more options when local facilities were crowded or medicines were unavailable. Refugees with limited income or unfamiliarity with the system could face greater constraints.

The findings demonstrate that equal formal access to a service does not necessarily produce equal experiences. The extent to which people benefited depended partly on the resources and social networks available to them, as well as the responsiveness of service providers.

7.6 Experiences with Protection and Security

Protection and security were important components of access to resources because people needed to obtain food, water, shelter and other essentials without being exposed to violence or exploitation. The findings identified concerns involving gender-based violence (GBV), child protection and disputes between refugees and the host community.

7.6.1 Gender-Based Violence and Safety Risks

Participants expressed concern about the safety of women and girls in areas where shelters were crowded or facilities were poorly lit. Some linked their concerns to the need to collect firewood, travel long distances and use shared sanitation facilities.

These accounts indicate that access to essential resources could involve exposure to risks. For example, a woman or girl who had to walk a long distance to collect firewood or use an unlit latrine could face safety concerns that influenced when and how she accessed the resource.

Overcrowded shelters could also reduce privacy and make it more difficult for people experiencing domestic violence to seek help. However, the presence and scale of GBV should be established

using verified case records and carefully attributed participant evidence rather than assumptions based on settlement conditions alone.

The findings nevertheless show that protection was closely linked to resource access. Facilities and services needed to be not only available but also accessible in ways that preserved safety, privacy and dignity.

7.6.2 Child Protection, Labour and Early Marriage

The study identified concerns about child labour, neglect and early marriage among refugee and host-community households. Student interviews suggested that economic pressure could lead some families to depend on children's labour or that some girls were married before completing their education.

The Senior Woman Teacher's reported experience of cases involving pregnancy and early marriage reinforces the relationship between educational participation, household vulnerability and child protection. The findings also indicate that some students engaged in casual labour to help meet family expenses.

The study recorded 56 female students at Paluda Secondary School studying under the Accelerated Education Programme (AEP). This indicates that alternative education arrangements formed part of the response to interrupted schooling.

These findings suggest that child protection cannot be separated from household food security, education and income. Where families face persistent resource shortages, children may be exposed to pressure to work or leave school. Responses therefore need to combine protection services with support that helps households meet essential needs.

7.6.3 Conflicts over Shared Resources

An LC I from Zone 1 reported cases of disputes between refugees and host-community members over land and water. These disputes show how competition could emerge when both populations depended on resources whose availability or ownership was contested.

Such disputes should not be taken to mean that conflict defined all refugee-host relations. Other parts of the study document cooperation through shared services, markets, social activities and livelihood projects. Instead, the findings suggest that the character of relations depended partly on the resource involved and whether access arrangements were perceived as fair.

The resource conflicts reported by participants reinforce the importance of transparent arrangements for land use, accessible dispute-resolution mechanisms and communication between local leaders, refugees and settlement authorities.

7.7 Experiences with Psychosocial, Cultural and Emotional Challenges

The study found that displacement and prolonged uncertainty influenced the emotional well-being of some refugees. Refugee students and other participants described trauma associated with conflict, separation from familiar communities, economic difficulties and the challenges of living in the settlement.

Torre's (2023) research in Palabek examined the relationship between psychosocial interventions and the policy emphasis on resilience and self-reliance. The study provides relevant context for understanding how mental-health interventions were experienced by refugees and how responsibility for well-being could be shifted towards individuals facing wider structural challenges.

7.7.1 Mental Health and Psychosocial Support

Refugee students interviewed at Paluda Secondary School reported distress associated with displacement and the uncertainty of their circumstances. Their accounts highlighted the importance of emotional support alongside material assistance.

These testimonies should not be treated as clinical diagnoses of post-traumatic stress disorder, depression or anxiety. Rather, they provide evidence of participants reported emotional difficulties and their perceptions of the support available to them.

The findings suggest that psychosocial needs were connected with food insecurity, limited educational opportunities, household pressures and uncertainty about the future. A household struggling to obtain food or income could experience not only material deprivation but also anxiety and stress.

Torre (2023) similarly demonstrates that mental-health intervention in Palabek must be understood within the wider circumstances of displacement and the policies governing self-reliance. The findings from the present study reinforce the importance of accessible, culturally appropriate psychosocial services that recognize the relationship between emotional well-being and material conditions.

7.7.2 Social Isolation and Loss of Identity

Participants described the loss of familiar support networks and a sense of separation from their home communities. For some refugees, displacement meant living away from extended families, traditional institutions and familiar social environments.

These experiences could make it more difficult to obtain emotional support or practical assistance. Social networks often help households exchange information, share food and respond to unexpected needs. Their disruption could therefore affect both social well-being and everyday resource access.

Nevertheless, the study also identified shared activities, relationships and community interactions that offered opportunities to establish new connections. The findings suggest that displacement could weaken existing social support while settlement life created opportunities for new networks to develop.

7.7.3 Experiences of Disrespect at Service Points

Participants in refugee and host-community focus group discussions reported concerns about the treatment of older refugees at service centres, particularly health facilities and food-distribution points. These reports suggest that some participants felt their age or vulnerability was not always met with sufficient consideration.

Such experiences matter because the manner in which services are delivered influences whether people feel respected and whether they are willing to seek assistance. Long queues and shortages can already make access difficult; disrespectful treatment, where it occurs, can further undermine trust.

The findings therefore indicate that the quality of resource access involves both the material service provided and the way people are treated while seeking it. Respectful communication, transparent procedures and accessible complaint mechanisms are important to protecting dignity.

7.8 Experiences with Access to Information and Participation

Access to information and participation influenced refugees' ability to understand available services, communicate concerns and contribute to decisions affecting their lives. The study found that Refugee Welfare Committees provided a formal channel through which refugee concerns could be raised. However, some participants questioned whether their recommendations influenced decision-making.

The Refugee Welfare Committee chairperson explained that committee recommendations were

sometimes ignored by OPM and humanitarian agencies, whose staff could view the requests as excessive. The chairperson identified long-term settlement arrangements as an issue over which refugees felt they had limited influence.

This testimony points to a gap between representation and effective participation. A committee may exist formally, but its value to refugees depends on whether its concerns are heard, considered and communicated back to the community.

Host-community focus group participants described using Local Council structures and elected representatives to raise concerns. However, they also noted that decisions at district and national levels could take considerable time to be implemented.

The findings suggest that participation differed between the two groups because the mechanisms available to them and their roles in settlement governance were not identical. Refugees used representative structures to communicate their concerns, while host-community members could also use established local government channels. In both cases, formal representation did not automatically guarantee a timely response.

Access to information was similarly important. Refugees needed reliable information about food distribution, healthcare, education, protection and available programmes. Where information was incomplete or difficult to obtain, people could find it harder to plan or determine whether they qualified for assistance.

The study therefore suggests that effective participation requires more than the existence of committees or consultation meetings. It also requires accessible information, clear eligibility criteria, feedback on decisions and meaningful opportunities for refugees and host-community members to influence matters affecting their welfare.

7.9 Experiences with Access to Land and Farming Opportunities

Land was one of the most important resources shaping experiences of self-reliance and relations between refugees and the host community. The findings show that refugee households required land for shelter and cultivation, while host-community members depended on their land for farming, grazing and other livelihoods.

However, participants described unequal access to productive land. Refugees often reported that the plots available to them were insufficient for food production, while host-community members described both the financial opportunities associated with renting land and the pressure on areas used for cultivation or grazing.

7.9.1 Insufficient and Poor-Quality Cultivation Land

Refugee participants described the land available to some households as small, dry, rocky or otherwise difficult to cultivate. These conditions made it difficult for households to produce enough food for their own consumption, much less generate a surplus for sale.

The 19-year-old refugee student quoted in Section 7.2.4 explained that the soil was dry and did not hold water and that the household lacked sufficient space to grow the food it needed. This testimony shows how land quality and plot size influenced the practical value of residential land.

The findings indicate that land allocation for shelter did not necessarily provide a viable basis for agricultural self-reliance. Cultivation also required suitable soil, water, tools and appropriate farming knowledge. Where these resources were unavailable, households had limited ability to benefit from agricultural activities.

This difficulty was particularly significant because some livelihood interventions encouraged refugees to participate in farming and kitchen gardening. Without adequate access to land and water, however, such programmes could not always produce sufficient food or income.

7.9.2 Renting Additional Land

The study found that some refugees sought to rent additional land from host-community members to improve their cultivation opportunities. A landlord from Zone 1 explained:

“We profit from the refugees' need for land, especially when they want to hire, we all agreed as landlords that it should be at Ug Shs.100,000”.

This testimony indicates that land rental could provide an income opportunity for some host-community landowners. For refugees, renting land offered a possible way to expand cultivation beyond the plots available for residential use.

However, the reported fixed price and the informal nature of some arrangements raise questions about refugees' negotiating power and the security of access.

Participants also raised concerns about the demand for land in areas where settlement facilities, organisations and businesses were located. Such demand could affect the availability and cost of land for other users, although the extent of any general price increase should be verified through additional records.

The findings suggest that renting land generated different outcomes for the two communities. Landlords could earn income, while refugees could gain an opportunity to cultivate. However, the benefit depended on the affordability of rent, the clarity of the agreement and the security of continued access.

7.9.3 Conflicts over Land and Other Resources

Resource scarcity sometimes resulted in disputes over land boundaries and the terms governing land use. A landlord from Zone 1 described a dispute in Zone 6, Block 10, during 2025:

“Early this year (2025), we had a very serious land issue at Zone 6, block 10 that almost caused a serious fight between the refugees and the host community, where a refugee (male, aged 35) hired

land at Uganda Shs 100,000. The issue arose when the refugee attempted to extend beyond the demarcated area. Both parties were claiming control over the contested portion of land. Up to date, the issue has remained unsettled because neither party is willing to talk over the issue. We reported the matter to police and OPM, who advised that the contested portion is left untampered with”.

The testimony demonstrates how a disagreement over a specific piece of land could become a wider issue involving ownership, boundaries and trust. The landlord's account indicates that the parties disagreed about the extent of the rented land and that the dispute was referred to the police and OPM.

The case illustrates the importance of clear and documented land agreements. Where the extent of a rented plot is not clearly established or understood by both parties, the potential for disagreement increases. The findings also suggest that accessible mediation and timely dispute resolution are important in preventing disputes from escalating.

The account should be presented as the landlord's testimony rather than as an independently verified determination of who was legally entitled to the contested land. Nevertheless, it provides evidence of the kinds of disagreements that could emerge when access to a valuable resource depended on local agreements.

7.9.4 Limited Farming Tools and Inputs

Refugee participants also described difficulties obtaining basic farming tools and inputs. They referred to reliance on simple tools such as hand hoes and pangas and reported that support from organisations including African Women Rising, LWF, ZOA and Seed Effect did not reach every household that needed it.

These accounts suggest that access to land alone could not guarantee productive agriculture. Farming required tools, seeds, water and, in some cases, training or other forms of support. Where these

inputs were inadequate, yields could remain low even when households made efforts to cultivate.

Host-community participants, by contrast, described their role as landholders and sources of agricultural produce and casual employment. However, their access to land did not mean that they were free from resource pressures, particularly where grazing areas or other productive land were affected by settlement expansion.

The findings demonstrate that access to farming opportunities depended on a combination of land, inputs, water and arrangements between resource users. They also show that the resource-sharing relationship could create both economic opportunities and constraints for the two populations.

7.10 Summarizing Synthesis of Findings

The experiences presented in this chapter reveal five central patterns in resource access between 2017 and 2025.

First, the existence of a resource did not necessarily guarantee effective access. Schools, health facilities, water points and food-distribution centres were available, but participants described congestion, long queues, limited staffing, inadequate supplies and difficulties travelling to services. Access therefore depended on the capacity, quality and accessibility of facilities as well as their physical presence.

Second, resource access was unequal both between and within the two communities. Refugees often depended on humanitarian assistance and reported difficulties accessing productive land, adequate food and appropriate services. Host-community members relied more heavily on farming, local markets, land and household income, but they also reported pressure on public services and natural resources. Within both populations, differences in age, gender, household vulnerability, income, location and social networks influenced people's experiences.

Third, resource access was interconnected. Inadequate food affected school attendance and

household well-being; limited land reduced the potential for self-reliance; poor roads restricted access to education, healthcare and markets; and insufficient water and sanitation facilities affected health, safety and the time available for other activities. These connections demonstrate that problems in one resource sector could intensify difficulties in another.

Fourth, cooperation existed alongside competition. Participants described shared schools and health services, joint livelihood activities, market interactions, intermarriages and other social connections. At the same time, they reported disputes over land, pressure on water sources, food insecurity and concerns about the depletion of trees. The evidence therefore does not support a simple description of refugee-host relations as either harmonious or conflictual. Instead, relations were shaped by the particular resource involved, the arrangements governing access and the extent to which supply met demand.

Fifth, dignity, voice and accountability influenced people's experiences of access. Participants were concerned not only about obtaining resources but also about the treatment they received, the fairness of assistance criteria and whether their concerns influenced decisions. Accounts of perceived discrimination, alleged misconduct, inadequate information and ineffective participation demonstrate that resource access involved institutional and relational dimensions as well as material provision.

These findings are consistent with the broader evidence presented in UNHCR's (2018) Multi-Sector Needs Assessment and its (2020) WASH survey in Palabek, which document the importance of food security, healthcare, water, sanitation and other essential services. WFP's (2020, 2023) reports also provide context for the challenges created by funding constraints and needs-based targeting of food assistance. Research by Torre (2023) further demonstrates the importance of examining psychosocial well-being within the wider political and economic conditions of prolonged displacement.

The overall synthesis is that resource access in Palabek between 2017 and 2025 was not determined

by the availability of individual resources alone. It emerged from the interaction between household vulnerability, access arrangements, service capacity, local relationships, institutional decisions and environmental conditions. The distinction between refugees and host-community members remained important, but the findings also demonstrate that the two populations were connected through shared services, economic exchange and dependence on the same natural-resource base.

7.11 Conclusion

This chapter has examined the experiences of refugees and the host community in accessing resources in Palabek Refugee Settlement between 2017 and 2025. The findings demonstrate that access to education, food, shelter, infrastructure, water, sanitation, healthcare, protection, psychosocial support, information and land was shaped by the adequacy and quality of available resources, household circumstances and the arrangements through which people obtained assistance.

In education, the presence of schools provided opportunities for both populations, but infrastructure deficiencies, teacher shortages, overcrowding, language barriers and gender-related pressures undermined the quality and continuity of learning. Food access was affected by inadequate or reduced assistance, eligibility criteria, limited cultivation land and difficulties reaching distribution centres. These experiences show how food insecurity and limited livelihoods reinforced one another.

Shelter and infrastructure presented further challenges. Some refugee households struggled to maintain durable housing, while poor roads affected access to schools, health facilities, markets and other services. Water and sanitation difficulties similarly affected daily life, public health, personal safety and the time available for other household activities.

Healthcare experiences revealed concerns about limited facilities, long waits, medicine shortages and perceived unequal treatment. The participant accounts also highlighted the importance of accountability, communication and respectful service delivery. Protection and psychosocial needs

remained significant, particularly where economic hardship, displacement and inadequate infrastructure affected personal safety and emotional well-being. Access to information and meaningful participation also influenced the ability of refugees to raise concerns and influence decisions.

Finally, land and farming opportunities remained central to the search for self-reliance. Refugees described difficulties arising from insufficient productive land and limited farming inputs, while host-community members reported both income opportunities from renting land and pressure on their own agricultural and grazing resources. The resulting relationships involved both cooperation and disputes, demonstrating the importance of clear agreements and effective dispute-resolution mechanisms.

Overall, the chapter concludes that the experiences of accessing resources in Palabek were diverse, interconnected and historically changing. Resource shortages were not merely technical problems of supply; they also affected dignity, opportunity, social relationships and perceptions of fairness. Improving access therefore requires attention to service quality, fair and transparent procedures, effective participation, environmental sustainability and the needs of both refugees and the host community. The evidence supports an approach to resource provision that combines immediate assistance with longer-term improvements in infrastructure, livelihoods and accountable service delivery.

CHAPTER EIGHT

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS

8.0 Introduction

This section summarises the key findings of the research, presents the conclusions drawn from the analysis, and provides recommendations based on the study's outcomes. Additionally, it identifies areas for future research to further explore and expand upon the topics discussed.

8.1 SUMMARY

8.1.1 Objective One

Findings on the historical development of Palabek Refugee Settlement show that its establishment in 2017 marked a significant change in the demographic and social environment of the area. The settlement accommodated mainly South Sudanese refugees fleeing conflict, while the host community continued to depend on local land and natural resources for its livelihoods. Shared cultural and linguistic connections between some refugees and members of the Acholi host community facilitated interaction, although these similarities did not eliminate challenges associated with access to resources. From 2017 to 2025, food, land, shelter, water, education and healthcare remained important needs, while livelihood opportunities, skills development and psychosocial support also became increasingly significant. These needs were interconnected and cannot be adequately classified as either major or minor resources, because long-term well-being depended on meeting immediate needs as well as developing sustainable livelihoods.

8.1.2 Objective Two

This section recaps the evolving refugee needs over time, from the initial Emergency Phase (2017-2018), focused on rapid response and basic survival, to the Stabilization Phase (2019-2020), which

saw the development of more structured services like schools and health centres. The final phase, Resilience and Development Integration (2021-2025), marked a shift toward self-reliance through initiatives like vocational training and cash-based aid. The chapter emphasizes that this progression was significantly disrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic and global funding shortfalls.

8.1.3 Objective Three

While shared social services like schools and clinics have led to overcrowding and a decline in quality for everyone, economic and cultural sharing has been a positive force. Economic development programs have fostered joint business ventures, helping both groups become more self-sufficient and restoring a sense of dignity. Socially, shared spaces and intermarriages are building lasting bonds. However, a shift from humanitarian to development aid has reduced funding, and the increased population has strained communal resources like water and forests, sometimes leading to conflict.

8.1.4 Objective Four

The findings on the experiences of refugees and the host community in accessing resources between 2017 and 2025 reveal persistent challenges relating to the availability, quality, adequacy and accessibility of essential services. In education, the existence of schools did not always translate into suitable learning conditions because of overcrowding, teacher shortages, inadequate infrastructure, gender-related barriers and language difficulties. Food access was affected by reductions or inadequacy of assistance, limited cultivation land and difficulties obtaining sufficient income or producing enough food.

Both communities also experienced challenges associated with poor roads, water access, sanitation and pressure on public services. Healthcare participants reported medicine shortages, long waiting

times and concerns about the treatment they received. Some refugees perceived unequal treatment, while some host-community members felt that their contributions and resource pressures were not adequately recognised. These accounts demonstrate the importance of examining both practical access and perceptions of fairness.

Land shortages, limited farming inputs and insufficient livelihood opportunities further constrained efforts towards self-reliance. The findings also reveal that access differed within and between the two communities according to household circumstances, location, income, social networks and vulnerability. Overall, the study demonstrates that effective resource access depended not merely on the existence of facilities or assistance, but also on whether resources were adequate, reachable, reliable and delivered in ways that respected people's dignity.

8.2 CONCLUSION

8.2.1 Objective One

Palabek Refugee Settlement in Northern Uganda, established in 2017 on the traditional lands of the indigenous Acholi people, represents a complex journey from a humanitarian emergency to a developmental challenge. While a shared cultural and linguistic heritage has facilitated some initial integration between the South Sudanese refugees and the host community, the settlement's needs have evolved over time. Initially, the focus was on major resources critical for survival, such as food, water, and shelter, though persistent funding shortfalls have led to ration cuts and negative coping strategies. Over the years, the emphasis has shifted toward minor resources that support long-term self-reliance, including economic empowerment, improved infrastructure, and psychosocial support.

8.2.2 Objective Two

Palabek Refugee Settlement has evolved from an emergency hub in 2017 to a community focused on long-term development, reflecting a complex shift in its resource needs. While the initial phase was marked by an urgent demand for major resources like food and temporary shelter, the settlement's reliance on aid was strained by a massive influx of refugees and subsequent funding cuts. Over time, the focus transitioned to minor resources that support self-reliance, such as vocational training, semi-permanent housing, and psychosocial support. This progression, however, was disrupted by unforeseen events like the COVID-19 pandemic, which exacerbated vulnerabilities and highlighted the fragile nature of progress. Ultimately, the settlement's history underscores the ongoing challenge of transitioning from a state of aid-based survival to one of sustainable autonomy, a process hindered by persistent external crises and a need for continued, dedicated support.

8.2.3 Objective Three

The resource-sharing dynamics between refugees and their host community reveals a blend of shared burdens and mutual benefits. Although the shared use of social services has strained infrastructure and reduced service quality, it has also fostered joint advocacy and a collective drive for solutions. A key finding is the transformative impact of economic self-reliance; by participating in joint livelihood programs and markets, refugees and host communities are building a relationship based on shared prosperity rather than aid dependency. This economic interdependence, along with growing social bonds like intermarriage, is creating a more resilient and integrated community. Ultimately, the study argues that authentic integration is built on shared goals and mutual benefits, transforming the relationship from mere co-existence to genuine co-development.

8.2.4 Objective Four

The Palabek Refugee Settlement faces a systemic crisis where inadequate resources and services undermine the well-being of both refugees and the host community. Refugees struggle with food insecurity due to poor land and insufficient aid, while a lack of educational and healthcare infrastructure leads to overcrowding and poor outcomes, affecting the host community as well. This creates a cycle of dependency and forces refugees into informal labour, increasing competition for resources and contributing to environmental degradation. Ultimately, the situation generates significant social tension and conflict, compromising peaceful coexistence and the self-reliance goals of the settlement.

8.3 RECOMMENDATIONS

The study recommends a fundamental shift in humanitarian response strategy to break the vicious cycle of vulnerability. The key recommendations are:

- i. The government with relevant NGOs should prioritise a sustainable solution to food security, land access, and employment opportunities to address core needs. This is not just about providing aid but about enabling refugees to restore their dignity and agency.
- ii. Integrate Psychosocial support by acknowledging and addressing the silent epidemic of mental health issues through accessible and culturally sensitive psychosocial support programs.
- iii. Strengthen infrastructure by securing funding for permanent, safe shelter, improved water and sanitation facilities, and basic infrastructure like roads and electricity to create an environment that supports self-reliance and well-being.

- iv. *Government and NGOs operating within the settlement should secure funding for permanent, safe shelters, and invest in improved water and sanitation facilities. This is crucial for improving public health and ensuring the safety and privacy of vulnerable groups, particularly women and girls.*
- v. *The OPM should empower the communication and information gaps by providing crucial information about available services, entitlements, and legal aid. This will empower refugees to advocate for themselves and participate in decisions that affect their lives.*

8.4 AREAS OF FURTHER STUDY

The study identifies the following specific areas for further study to advance knowledge and inform future interventions:

- i. *Further research could explore the long-term effects of integrating comprehensive psychosocial support into humanitarian aid programs. Historically, refugee responses in Africa and beyond have prioritised immediate survival needs such as food, water, and shelter, while mental health support has often been sidelined. For example, in the aftermath of the Rwandan genocide and the Liberian civil war, the absence of structured psychosocial interventions left displaced populations struggling with unresolved trauma, which hindered recovery in education, livelihoods, and community cohesion. A longitudinal study in Palabek could therefore assess how embedding psychosocial support into aid frameworks might transform long-term outcomes in mental health, educational attainment, and economic self-sufficiency.*
- ii. *A future study could analyse how global events such as pandemics, international funding shifts, or political instability in home countries historically and disproportionately affect refugee settlements. The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted how refugee communities in*

East Africa faced disrupted aid delivery, mobility restrictions, and shrinking livelihood opportunities. Earlier crises, such as the 2008 global financial downturn, also triggered sharp cuts in humanitarian funding, reducing the capacity of aid agencies to sustain services. Building on these historical experiences, research could identify strategies to make settlements like Palabek more resilient to similar shocks in the future.

- iii. A comparative study could examine different aid strategies in refugee settlements across time and space to determine which approaches have historically been most successful. For instance, Uganda's Self-Reliance Strategy of the early 2000s aimed to promote integration and independence, while Kenya's encampment model in Dadaab and Kakuma maintained refugees in protracted dependency. More recently, European integration-focused models have emphasised social inclusion and economic participation. A comparative historical analysis of these diverse approaches would provide concrete evidence on which models most effectively restore dignity, build resilience, and promote long-term self-reliance.*

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Introductory Letter

GULU
P.O. BOX 166 GULU



UNIVERSITY
TEL: +256471432922;

OFFICE OF THE DEAN, FACULTY OF EDUCATION AND HUMANITIES

03rd July 2025

TO : WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

This is to introduce to you Mr. Okwir Allan Daniel (Reg No. 23/U/3925/MAH/PS) a student pursuing a programme of study leading to an award Master of Arts in History, Gulu University, Master of Gulu University.

He is undertaking research on the Topic:

REFUGEE COMMUNITIES AND RESOURCE ACCESS IN PALABEK COUNTY LAMWO DISTRICT, NORTHERN UGANDA; A HISTORIAL ANALYSIS 2017-2024

Which is in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award.

Any assistance rendered to him in relation to this research work will be highly appreciated.

Yours faithfully,



Dr. Denis Thaddeus Ofeyuru
Dean, Faculty of Education and Humanities

Appendix B. Plagiarism Certificate

GULU P.O. Box 166 Gulu, Uganda		UNIVERSITY Tel: +256-471-32924 Fax: +256 471343095 Emails: ul@gu.ac.ug URL: www.gu.ac.ug
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PLAGIARISM CHECK

Declaration for Originality Form
This form must be completed and signed for all scholarly work produced.

Name: _____ **OKWIR ALLAN DANIEL (MR)** _____

Personal File No.(staff) Reg. (student). _____ **REG. NO. 23/U/3925/MAH/PS** _____

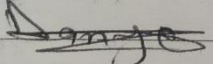
Faculty/Institute: _____ **FACULTY OF EDUCATION AND HUMANITIES, GULU UNIVERSITY**

Department: _____ **HISTORY** _____

Title and bibliographic description of the work
REFUGEE-HOST COMMUNITIES AND RESOURCE ACCESS AT PALABEK REFUGEE SETTLEMENT IN LAMWO DISTRICT, NORTHERN UGANDA: A HISTORICAL ANALYSIS (2017-2025)

Declaration.

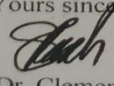
1. I understand what plagiarism is and I am aware of the University policy on this regard,
2. I declare that this ... Dissertation, ... (Proposal thesis, essay, assignment, paper, report etc) is my original work and has not been submitted elsewhere for examination, award of a degree or publication. Where other people's work or my work has been used, this has been properly acknowledged and referenced in accordance with Gulu University requirements,
3. I have not sought or used the services of any professional agency to produce this work,
4. I have not allowed, and shall not allow anyone to copy my work with the intention of passing it off as his/her own,
5. I understand that any false claim of this work shall result in disciplinary action in accordance with University Policy on Plagiarism.

Signature _____  _____ Date 26/8/2026

Originality Report

The article/thesis/document titled above have been subjected to plagiarism check and the level was found to be.....**10%** (percent) this is classified as:

☒ Minor
☐ Moderate
☐ Serious

Yours sincerely,

Dr. Clement Lutaaya Nabutto Claire (PhD)
University Librarian



Appendix C. GUREC Clearance



To: Okwir Allan Daniel

15/06/2025

0785889240

Type: Initial Review

**Re: GUREC-2025-1219: REFUGEE COMMUNITIES AND RESOURCE ACCESS AT PALABEK
REFUGEE SETTLEMENT IN LAMWO DISTRICT, NORTHERN UGANDA: A HISTORICAL
ANALYSIS (2017-2025)**

I am pleased to inform you that at the 125th convened meeting on 17/04/2025 the Gulu University REC meeting voted to approve the above referenced application.
Approval of the research is for the period of 15/06/2025 to 15/06/2026.

As Principal Investigator of the research, you are responsible for fulfilling the following requirements of approval:

1. All co-investigators must be kept informed of the status of the research.
2. Changes, amendments, and addenda to the protocol or the consent form must be submitted to the REC for review and approval prior to the activation of the changes.
3. Reports of unanticipated problems involving risks to participants or any new information which could change the risk benefit: ratio must be submitted to the REC.
4. Only approved consent forms are to be used in the enrollment of participants. All consent forms signed by participants and/or witnesses should be retained on file. The REC may conduct audits of all study records, and consent documentation may be part of such audits.
5. Continuing review application must be submitted to the REC **eight weeks** prior to the expiration date of 15/06/2026 in order to continue the study beyond the approved period. Failure to submit a continuing review application in a timely fashion may result in suspension or termination of the study.
6. The REC application number assigned to the research should be cited in any correspondence with the REC of record.
7. You are required to register the research protocol with the Uganda National Council for Science and Technology (UNCST) for final clearance to undertake the study in Uganda.

The following is the list of all documents approved in this application by Gulu University REC



No.	Document Title	Language	Version Number	Version Date
1	Informed consent forms	Luo	Version 2.0	2025-06-14
2	Informed consent forms	English	Version 2.0	2025-06-14
3	Interview guide	Luo	Version 2.0	2025-06-14
4	Protocol	English	Version 2.0	2025-06-14
5	Focus Group Discussion guide	Luo	Version 2.0	2025-06-14
6	Data collection tools	English	Version 2.0	2025-06-14
7	Community engagement plan	English	Version 2.0	2025-06-14
8	Covid 19 & Ebola risk management plan	English	Version 2.0	2025-06-14

Yours sincerely

Julaina A. Obika (PhD)
For: Gulu University REC

Appendix D: Interview Guide for Refugees

Introduction:

This research study aims at understanding the experiences of refugee communities in accessing resources in Palabek Sub-County, Lamwo District, Northern Uganda, from 2017 to 2025.

This interview is strictly confidential and will be used solely for academic research purposes. With your consent, I would like to record our conversation to ensure accuracy. Your participation is voluntary, and you may choose to skip any question or withdraw at any time.

Demographic Information:

For Refugees:

Name (Optional): Participant No:

Age: Gender: Country of Origin:

Year of Arrival in Lamwo District: Household Size:

Section 1: History of Palabek Refugee Settlement (2017-2025)

This section aims to explore the establishment and evolution of the settlement.

1. When did you first arrive at the Palabek Refugee Settlement?
2. What were your initial thoughts and feelings when you first arrived here?
3. Can you describe the general living conditions in the settlement when you first arrived compared to now?
4. What needs were you given upon arrival and what needs are currently given to new arrivals?
5. How has the overall population of the settlement grown or changed over the years?

Section 2: Evolving Resource Needs (2017-2025)

This section focuses on the changing needs of refugees over time.

1. What were the most critical resources you needed when you first arrived? (e.g., food, shelter, water)
2. How have your resource needs changed over the past few years? (e.g., from basic survival needs to education, livelihoods, etc.)
3. Can you give examples of resources that have become more or less important to you?
4. What resources do you consider most essential for a refugee family today?
5. Are there any new types of resources or services that have become available in the settlement since 2017?

Section 3: Refugee-Host Community Resource Sharing

This section explores the dynamics of resource sharing between refugees and the host community.

1. Are there instances where you've had to share resources with members of the host community?
2. What kind of resources are most commonly shared? (e.g., water points, farmlands, health facilities, markets)
3. How would you describe the relationship between refugees and the host community in terms of resource sharing?
4. Have these sharing dynamics changed over time? If so, how?
5. What challenges or conflicts, if any, have arisen from sharing resources?

Section 4: Accessing Resources (2017-2025)

This section investigates the practical experiences of accessing resources over time.

1. What were the main challenges you faced in accessing resources (like food, water, or healthcare) when you first arrived?
2. How have these challenges evolved over time? Are there new or different difficulties now?
3. Can you share a story about a time you had to overcome a challenge to access a resource?
4. Are there specific resources that are easier or harder to access now compared to 2017?
5. What role do different organizations (NGOs, UN agencies, etc.) play in helping refugees access resources?

Closing Questions

1. **Additional Insights:** Is there anything else you would like to share that we haven't discussed?
2. **Interview Feedback:** Do you have any questions or feedback regarding this interview or the research study?

Thank you very much for your valuable time and contributions. Your insights are greatly appreciated and will contribute significantly to our understanding of refugee experiences in Lamwo District.

Appendix E: Interview Guide for Government Officials and NGO Representatives

Introduction:

This research study aims at understanding the experiences of refugee communities in accessing resources in Palabek Sub-County, Lamwo District, Northern Uganda, from 2017 to 2025.

This interview is strictly confidential and will be used solely for academic research purposes. With your consent, I would like to record our conversation to ensure accuracy. Your participation is voluntary, and you may choose to skip any question or withdraw at any time.

Participant Number: Role/Position:

Duration of work in Lamwo District:

Section 1: History and Establishment of Palabek Refugee Settlement (2017-2025)

1. What were the primary reasons for establishing the Palabek Refugee Settlement in 2017?
2. Could you describe the initial planning and setup process? What were the biggest challenges at the outset?
3. How has your organization's role in the settlement evolved since it was established?
4. How has the settlement's infrastructure (e.g., roads, housing, and communal facilities) developed over time?
5. In your view, how has the population growth and demographic changes within the settlement impacted its development?

Section 2: Evolving Resource Needs of Refugees (2017-2025)

1. What were the initial critical resource priorities for refugees upon their arrival in 2017?
2. Can you outline how the resource needs of refugees have evolved from basic survival needs to more long-term, development-oriented requirements?

3. From your perspective, what are the most significant resource needs of refugees in Palabek today?
4. What are the main gaps in the current provision of essential services (e.g., healthcare, education, food, and water)?
5. How has your organization adapted its programs to meet these evolving needs?

Section 3: Refugee-Host Community Resource Sharing Dynamics

1. How would you describe the official and unofficial resource-sharing arrangements between refugees and the host community?
2. What specific resources are most commonly shared, and how is this managed?
3. In what ways have these sharing dynamics impacted the social and economic relationships between both groups?
4. What mechanisms are in place to mediate and resolve potential conflicts over shared resources?
5. Have you observed any changes in the level of cooperation or tension related to resource sharing over the past eight years?

Section 4: Access to Resources (2017-2025)

1. What were the main barriers to refugees and the host community accessing resources in the early years of the settlement?
2. How have these access challenges changed for both groups over time?
3. Can you discuss any specific policies or interventions your organization has implemented to improve access to resources for refugees?

4. What are the most significant challenges that the host community faces in accessing resources, and how do these compare to the challenges faced by refugees?
5. How do you assess the overall effectiveness of resource distribution and access within the settlement and the host community?

Concluding Remarks

1. Based on your experience, what are the key lessons learned from managing the Palabek Refugee Settlement from 2017 to 2025?
2. What are the most pressing issues that need to be addressed in the next few years to ensure the well-being of both the refugees and the host community?
3. Is there anything else you would like to add regarding the history or dynamics of the Palabek Refugee Settlement?

Appendix F: Focus Group Discussion Guide for Refugees

Study Topic: Refugee Communities and Resource Access in Lamwo District, Northern Uganda

Section B: Opening Questions (Warm-up)

1. How long have you lived in this area (Palabek or nearby)?
2. What are the main ways your household meets basic needs (e.g. food, water, income)?

Resource Needs and Access

3. What are the most important resources you and your community need to live well here?
4. Since you arrived (or over the last 5–7 years), have your needs changed? In what ways?
5. How easy or difficult has it been for you to access the following resources?

(**Tick any:** Food, Water, Shelter, Health services, Energy/firewood, Land for farming)

Section D: Trends and Challenges

6. Have you noticed any changes in the availability of these resources over time?
7. What challenges have made it hard for your household or others to access what you need?
8. Are there any groups in the community (e.g. women, elderly, youth, and newcomers) that face more difficulties?

Section E: Coping and Solutions

9. What strategies have you or others used to manage when resources are scarce?
10. Have any organizations or government programs helped? Which ones have been most useful?

Section F: Closing

11. What should be done to improve access to resources for your community in the future?

12. Is there anything else you would like to share about life in this settlement or nearby?

Appendix G: Focus Group Discussion Guide for Host Community Members

Section A: Opening Questions (Warm-up)

1. What are the major sources of livelihood in your community?
2. How has life changed in your area over the past 5–7 years?

Section 1: The History and Impact of the Settlement (2017-2025)

This section aims to explore the host community's historical perspective of the settlement's establishment and growth.

1. *Can you share your memories of when the Palabek Refugee Settlement was first established in 2017? What were your first reactions?*
2. *How has the presence of the settlement changed your village or community over the past eight years? (e.g., population, land use, daily life)*
3. *In what ways has the local economy been affected by the settlement? (e.g., changes in markets, job opportunities)*
4. *How would you describe the relationship between your community and the refugees when they first arrived compared to now?*

Section 2: Resource Sharing Dynamics

This section investigates how refugees and host community members share and interact with resources.

1. *What are the main resources that your community shares with the refugees? (e.g., water sources, schools, health clinics, farmlands)*
2. *How do you feel about this resource sharing?*

3. *Can you describe any positive experiences you've had related to sharing resources with refugees?*
4. *What about challenges or conflicts? Have there been any disagreements over resources, and how were they handled?*
5. *Do you feel that the burden of sharing resources is fair? Why or why not?*

Section 3: Accessing Resources (2017-2025)

This section explores the host community's experience in accessing resources since the settlement was established.

1. *Have you noticed any changes in your own access to resources (like water, healthcare, or firewood) since 2017?*
2. *Are there specific resources that have become more difficult to access? Please provide examples.*
3. *How has the presence of NGOs and other aid organizations impacted your community's ability to access services?*
4. *What support or resources do you feel your community needs to cope with the increased pressure on local services?*

Section 4: Future Outlook and Recommendations

This concluding section gathers participants' thoughts on the future and potential improvements.

1. *In your opinion, what is the most significant change that needs to happen to improve the relationship and resource dynamics between the host community and the refugees?*
2. *What recommendations would you give to the government or humanitarian organizations working in Palabek?*

3. *Is there anything else you would like to share about your experiences that we haven't discussed?*

Section F: Closing

- Any final thoughts or issues you'd like to raise?
- Thank participants and explain how their views will help improve programs and policies.

Appendix H: Observation Check List

Study Title: Refugee-Host Communities and Resource Access in Lamwo District, Northern Uganda.

Purpose: To assess resource availability, access, trends, and challenges through direct observation.

Observer **Name:**

Date:

Location:

SECTION A: GENERAL ENVIRONMENT

Observation Area	Yes	No	Partial	Comments
Settlement is visibly overcrowded				
Signs of environmental degradation (e.g., deforestation, soil erosion)				
Evidence of uncollected waste or poor sanitation				

SECTION B: RESOURCE AVAILABILITY AND INFRASTRUCTURE

(Objective 1 & 3)

Resource Area	Adequate	Inadequate	Absent	Comments
Water points (wells, taps)				
Food distribution centres				
Shelter/housing condition				

Health facilities visible/operational				
Schools and learning spaces				
Firewood or energy sources				
Accessible roads and transport paths				

SECTION C: ACCESS AND USAGE PATTERNS

(Objective 2)

Resource/Service Area	Observed Active Use?	Queues or Overcrowding?	Restricted Access Signs?	Comments
Water sources				
Health services				
Schools (children attending)				
Food distribution areas				
Communal lands or farming plots				

SECTION D: CHALLENGES AND RISKS

(Objective 4)

Observational Clue	Yes	No	Not Sure	Comments
Host-refugee tensions visible/audible				
Long queues at service points				

Unattended children or vulnerable persons				
Signs of water scarcity (e.g., dry wells)				
Firewood collection happening far from settlement				

SECTION E: NOTES AND REFLECTIONS

Unexpected observations: Observer reflections (challenges, community interactions, etc.)

.....

Appendix I: Informed Consent Form for Individual Interviews

Study Title: "Refugee-Host Communities and Resource Access in Palabek Sub-County Lamwo District, Northern Uganda: A Historical Analysis (2017–2025)"

Researcher / Investigator: Okwir Allan Daniel

Institutions: Department of History, Faculty of Education and Humanities, Gulu University, Uganda

Introduction:

This form explains the study in which you have been asked to participate. After all your questions have been answered, you decide if you want to voluntarily participate. If you do, you will be asked to sign this form and you will receive a copy.

Brief summary and purpose of the study:

The study is interested in, as the title already says: "Refugee-Host Communities and Resource Access in Palabek Sub-County Lamwo District, Northern Uganda: A Historical Analysis (2017–2025)".

Specifically, it will focus on the resource needs of refugees, the refugee community experience in accessing resources, the trend of refugee resource needs over time from 2017-2025, and the key challenges faced by refugees in accessing resources in Lamwo District from 2017 to 2025.

Sponsors of the research project:

The project is funded by an individual scholarship by the researcher himself.

Procedures:

Your participation in this study will take the form of:

- a) an individual interview. During the interview, your voice and photo will be recorded for transcription to supplement the interview notes.*

Who will participate in the study?

You have been selected to participate in this study because you fulfil the requirements for participation in this study, i.e., you live in the designated study area and are a member of the host community/Refugee in Lamwo District. Your participation will take place in the context of an individual interview and/or a focus group discussion session which will last for approximately 30-60 minutes.

Risks/discomforts:

There are no foreseeable risks of harm or discomfort that will arise from your participation in this study. In case of an interview or focus group discussion, your only discomfort will be the inconvenience in terms of time spent.

Benefits:

Potential benefits of participation in the study include the opportunity to participate in discussion formats organized by the researcher in collaboration with participating institutions that aim to engage constructively, critically, and self-reflexively with topics related to the research project, for instance the question of what the refugee community experiences are in accessing resources in Lamwo District from 2017 to 2025.

Confidentiality:

Your identity will be protected as the researcher will use codes to identify participants. He will be the only one with access to your private information and soft as well as hard copies of the collected data will be protected and stored safely under lock and key. Confidential information will only be accessed by the principal investigator.

Alternatives:

Be aware that participation in the study is voluntary, and that you will not lose any benefit if you

choose not to participate. In the context of observation of a group event (e.g., when the researcher is observing instances of land fencing, demarcation, presence or absence of land transaction documents, visible changes such as abandoned homes, etc) or interview guide, the decision not to participate will mean that none of the forms of your participation in the respective event (i.e., none of your contributions /actions etc.) will be included in the study.

Cost:

The time compensation of participants for this study will be for at least UGX.5,000 for refreshment.

Questions:

If you have any questions related to the study as a research participant, you can contact the principal investigator, Okwir Allan Daniel via Tel: 0785889240/0702542270 or Email: allanokwir11@gmail.com

Statement of voluntariness:

Participation in the research study is voluntary and you may join on your own free will. You have a right to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty. If you have any issues pertaining to your rights and participation in the study, please contact the Vice Chairperson, Lira University Research Ethics Committee, Ms Emilly Akullu through 0772370285 or the Uganda National Council for Science and Technology, on plot 6 Kimera Road, Ntinda, Kampala on Tel 0414705500

Statement of consent:

The researcher Okwir Allan Daniel has described to me what is going to be done, the risks, the benefits involved and my rights as a participant in this study. I understand that my decision to participate will not affect me in any negative way. In the use of this information, my identity will be concealed. I am aware that I may withdraw at any time. I understand that by signing this form, I do

not waive any of my legal rights but merely indicate that I have been informed about the research study in which I am voluntarily agreeing to participate. A copy of this form will be provided to me.

Name of participant: Signature: Date:

Name of witness: Signature: Date:

Name of interviewer: Signature: Date:

Statement of consent for photographs and video recordings:

Tape/Audio Recording

During the interview, your voice will be recorded with a digital voice recorder for accuracy during translation, and transcription for coding and theme analysis. Voice-recordings will be stored on a password protected computer. You will be offered to receive a copy of the audio-recording. Your voice recording will not be shared among anyone outside of study team and will not be used for any other activity besides this study. All audio recordings will be destroyed after 3 years.

Statement of Consent to be audiotaped

I understand that audio recordings will be taken during the study. *(For the statement below, please choose YES or NO and **insert your name and initials** in the relevant space)*

- I agree to be audio recorded

Yes

No

Name of Participant

Signature/thumbprint

Date

Name of witness

Signature/thumbprint

Date

Appendix J: Informed Consent Form for FGDs

Study Title: "Refugee-Host Communities and Resource Access in Palabek Sub-County Lamwo District, Northern Uganda: A Historical Analysis (2017–2025)"

Researcher / Investigator: Okwir Allan Daniel

Institutions: Department of History, Faculty of Education and Humanities, Gulu University, Uganda

Introduction:

This form explains the study in which you have been asked to participate. After all your questions have been answered, you decide if you want to voluntarily participate. If you do, you will be asked to sign this form and you will receive a copy.

Brief summary and purpose of the study:

The study is interested in, as the title already says: "Refugee-Host Communities and Resource Access in Palabek Sub-County Lamwo District, Northern Uganda: A Historical Analysis (2017–2025)".

Specifically, it will focus on the resource needs of refugees, the refugee community experience in accessing resources, the trend of refugee resource needs over time from 2017-2025, and the key challenges faced by refugees in accessing resources in Lamwo District from 2017 to 2025.

Sponsors of the research project:

The project is funded by the BSUIV scholarship program.

Procedures:

Your participation in this study will take the form of:

- b) an FGD. During the FGD, your voice and photo will be recorded for transcription to supplement the interview notes.*

Who will participate in the study?

You have been selected to participate in this study because you fulfil the requirements for participation in this study, i.e., you live in the designated study area and are a member of the host community/Refugee in Lamwo District. Your participation will take place in the context of an individual interview and/or a focus group discussion session which will last for approximately 30-60 minutes.

Risks/discomforts:

There are no foreseeable risks of harm or discomfort that will arise from your participation in this study. In case of an interview or focus group discussion, your only discomfort will be the inconvenience in terms of time spent.

Benefits:

Potential benefits of participation in the study include the opportunity to participate in discussion formats organized by the researcher in collaboration with participating institutions that aim to engage constructively, critically, and self-reflexively with topics related to the research project, for instance the question of what the refugee community experiences are in accessing resources in Lamwo District from 2017 to 2025.

Confidentiality:

Your identity will be protected as the researcher will use codes to identify participants. He will be the only one with access to your private information and soft as well as hard copies of the collected data will be protected and stored safely under lock and key. Confidential information will only be accessed by the principal investigator.

Alternatives:

Be aware that participation in the study is voluntary, and that you will not lose any benefit if you

choose not to participate. In the context of observation of a group event (e.g., when the researcher is observing instances of land fencing, demarcation, presence or absence of land transaction documents, visible changes such as abandoned homes, etc) or interview guide, the decision not to participate will mean that none of the forms of your participation in the respective event (i.e., none of your contributions /actions etc.) will be included in the study.

Cost:

The time compensation of participants for this study will be for at least UGX.5,000 for refreshment.

Questions:

If you have any questions related to the study as a research participant, you can contact the principal investigator, Okwir Allan Daniel via Tel: 0785889240/0702542270 or Email: allanokwir11@gmail.com

Statement of voluntariness:

Participation in the research study is voluntary and you may join on your own free will. You have a right to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty. If you have any issues pertaining to your rights and participation in the study, please contact the Vice Chairperson, Lira University Research Ethics Committee, Ms Emilly Akullu through 0772370285; or the Uganda National Council for Science and Technology, on plot 6 Kimera Road, Ntinda, Kampala on Tel 0414705500.

Statement of consent:

The researcher Okwir Allan Daniel has described to me what is going to be done, the risks, the benefits involved and my rights as a participant in this study. I understand that my decision to participate will not affect me in any negative way. In the use of this information, my identity will be concealed. I am aware that I may withdraw at any time. I understand that by signing this form, I do

not waive any of my legal rights but merely indicate that I have been informed about the research study in which I am voluntarily agreeing to participate. A copy of this form will be provided to me.

Name of participant: Signature: Date:

Name of witness: Signature: Date:

Name of interviewer: Signature: Date:

Statement of consent for photographs and video recordings:

Tape/Audio Recording

During the interview, your voice will be recorded with a digital voice recorder for accuracy during translation, and transcription for coding and theme analysis. Voice-recordings will be stored on a password protected computer. You will be offered to receive a copy of the audio-recording. Your voice recording will not be shared among anyone outside of study team and will not be used for any other activity besides this study. All audio recordings will be destroyed after 3 years.

Statement of Consent to be audiotaped

I understand that audio recordings will be taken during the study. *(For the statement below, please choose YES or NO and **insert your name and initials** in the relevant space)*

- I agree to be audio recorded

Yes

No

Name of Participant

Signature/thumbprint

Date

Name of witness

Signature/thumbprint

Date