

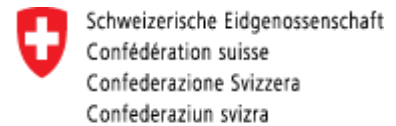


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# The Gender-Based Effects of Displacement: The Case of Congolese Refugees in Rwanda

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# **The Gender-Based Effects of Displacement: The Case of Congolese Refugees in Rwanda\***

Özge Bilgili, Craig Loschmann and Melissa Siegel<sup>1</sup>

## **Abstract**

This paper studies the effects of displacement in the case of Congolese refugees in Rwanda, with an explicit focus on gender. The analysis looks across a range of indicators related to well-being that examine labor market participation, education, social networks, and security. In addition, it examines certain household-level measures concerning food insecurity, subjective poverty, and subjective economic situation. The study contributes to the existing literature by not only detailing differences in well-being between refugees and the local population along gender lines, but also by exploring variation in experiences among refugees themselves. It also pays particular attention to female-headed households, which are commonly recognized as having a high risk of vulnerability.

As working-age refugee women are less likely to be economically active in comparison with both local women and refugee men, vocational training programs that target female refugees may confer significant gains. The higher vulnerability of women in the refugee camps may be tackled by fostering socioeconomic inclusion and reducing dependency on humanitarian aid. As female-headed households in remote camps are particularly vulnerable to food insecurity, enabling a marketplace within the camp itself for small business development and trade, while also connecting it to the nearest commercial town, may help stimulate local economic interaction. In addition, incorporating women into the planning, organization, and management of refugee camps as well as local associations should be a priority as such steps are crucial for empowerment and self-determination.

**Keywords:** forced migration, displacement, well-being, gender, refugees, Rwanda

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## 1. Introduction

A passionate debate is now taking place among academics and practitioners on the topic of forced migration. Part of this debate is driven by the fact that there are currently more displaced individuals around the world than at any time since World War II (UNHCR 2016a). Yet another element relates to the way the subject is presented in popular media, and the impression many have that refugees are “flooding” the shores of high-income countries in the Global North. While the extent of people seeking refuge in parts of Western Europe, for example, are indeed nontrivial, it is important to maintain perspective and recognize that the vast majority of refugees and asylum seekers, upward of 89 percent by some accounts, in fact reside in low-income countries neighboring some of today’s most troubling conflict zones (Devictor 2016).

A consequence of this heightened interest in the topic is an ever-greater appreciation of the need to understand the complexities of forced migration in relation to human development and individual well-being. To go beyond simply investigating the general link between displacement and well-being, however, it is equally important to recognize and reflect on the likely differentiated impacts, based on gender, for example. While gender-based analyses focused on voluntary labor migration have been more readily considered in recent years (see, for example, Fleury [2016] for a detailed review), surprisingly little scholarly research has been undertaken on forced migration and development from a gendered perspective. This line of research, therefore, would contribute to the field of forced migration studies, which, although has long recognized the particularities of female experiences in forced migration contexts (for example, Fiddian-Qasmiyeh 2014), has produced relatively little evidence based on a quantitative empirical approach.

With this in mind, this study investigates the gender-based effects of displacement in the particular case of Congolese refugees in Rwanda. Currently, about 75,000 Congolese reside in the five camps spread throughout the country, many having originally fled conflict in the Democratic Republic of Congo about two decades ago (UNHCR 2016b). The protracted situation of refugees in Rwanda, therefore, is an enduring issue of great significance within the region, and provides a unique case for deeper examination. Given the explicit focus here on gender, the key question is not just how displacement affects refugees living in camps along multiple dimensions of well-being, but how these impacts differ across gender lines.

Therefore, this analysis looks across a range of indicators related to well-being that examine labor market participation, education, social networks, and security. In addition, it examines certain household-level measures concerning food insecurity, subjective poverty, and subjective economic condition. The resulting research contributes to the existing literature by not only detailing differences in well-being between refugees and the local population along gender lines, but also by exploring variation in experiences among refugees themselves. Moreover, the analysis also pays particular attention to female-headed households, which are commonly recognized as having a high risk of vulnerability.

The paper is structured as follows: First, a review of the literature with respect to the impact of displacement on refugees more generally, followed by female refugees in particular, is provided. Next, the contextual background pertaining to Congolese refugees in Rwanda is described, again highlighting the particular situation of female refugees residing in official camps. The analytical approach is then

outlined, followed by the descriptive and empirical results. The study concludes with a discussion of the significance of the results in relation to policy and programs relevant to refugees residing in Rwanda.

## **2. Literature Review**

### **Impact of displacement on refugees**

The body of literature concerned with the impacts of forced migration is growing. While most scholarship on the topic has been principally of a qualitative or descriptive nature, in the past few years a considerable number of studies have emerged that attempt to quantitatively estimate the consequences of displacement. At the core of this emerging strand of scholarship is the idea that these consequences, whether positive or negative, are not uniform across different sectors of society, and there are indeed “winners” and “losers.” It is essential, therefore, to understand the way in which any impact with respect to well-being differs for various segments of the community.

Beginning first with the more general impact on refugees themselves, a few novel studies explore the way in which displacement influences key indicators of well-being, including labor market participation and basic economic welfare. From a descriptive perspective, Jacobsen (2005), for instance, provides a broad account of the many economic activities that refugees engage in both within camps and in urban environments. While trade in humanitarian aid is key in the former case, refugees residing in cities are commonly engaged in microenterprises in the informal sector. More specific still, Kondylis (2010) looks at displacement from the conflict in Bosnia and Herzegovina and finds that displaced individuals experienced limited access to the labor market, and were indeed more likely to be unemployed in comparison with the nondisplaced. In addition, and particularly relevant for the purposes here, this effect is noted to have varied across gender lines, with displaced women being more likely to drop out of the labor market altogether.

Focusing alternatively on measures of economic welfare in northern Uganda, Fiala (2012) finds that displaced households experienced a considerable decrease in overall consumption, as well as in the value of assets, compared with nondisplaced households. In an earlier work, Fiala (2009) arrives at a similar result in that displacement is associated with a nontrivial decrease in the likelihood of a household consuming meat, indicating worse dietary diversity and health overall. Taking a look at the effect on expenditures, Eder (2013) finds that displaced households, again from the Bosnian War, spent significantly less on their children’s education at both the primary and secondary levels, even though those same children were just as likely to be enrolled in school compared with children of nondisplaced households. Along that same line, Oyelere and Wharton (2013) explore the case of Columbia and find a significant education accumulation gap for displaced households as well as a lower rate of enrollment at the secondary level. The results of Verwimp and Van Bavel (2013) in Burundi likewise indicate that the frequency of displacement led to a decrease in the probability of completing primary school for both boys and girls.

Given that the objective of this study is to provide a more nuanced picture through a gendered perspective, we similarly want to assess to what extent female refugees face different challenges, and

examine the areas of support that are most crucial for them. With this aim in mind, the following discussion focuses on the impact of displacement for women and girls in particular.

### **Impact of displacement on female refugees**

While the literature on the general impacts of displacement is relatively limited, even fewer empirical studies consider gender-differentiated effects (Kondylis 2010; Verwimp and Van Bavel 2013; Ruiz, Siegel, and Vargas-Silva 2015; Fransen, Siegel, and Vargas-Silva 2016). Over the past few decades, however, there has been growing recognition that females face specific experiences and challenges within a forced migration context (Fiddian-Qasmiyeh 2014). Highlighting the gender dimension, therefore, is fundamental to better understanding the more nuanced consequences of displacement, and to providing insight for the planning and implementation of assistance programs for this vulnerable population (El-Bushra 2000; Bermúdez Torres 2002; Buscher 2010; World Bank 2016).

Of the many specific challenges females face due to displacement, the most commonly referenced within the literature at large is gender-based violence. Women and girls forced to move from their homes and communities are often recognized to be at greater risk of sexual assault and physical abuse. Young, unaccompanied women as well as single female household heads seem to be particularly vulnerable because they have weakened social networks and therefore little recourse in the case of abuse. Moreover, the reported consequences of gender-based discrimination in the context of displacement, apart from physical and psychological trauma, are an increase in sex industry work, unwanted pregnancies, sexually transmitted disease, and early marriage (IOM 2016).

Beyond gender-based violence, traditional cultural practices may also limit women's access to basic goods and services as well as livelihood opportunities in a displaced context. An assistance program distributing staple food items in a refugee camp, for example, might inadvertently follow male-oriented leadership structures that subsequently limits its ability to reach women and girls. For similar reasons, access to basic health care and education may also be restricted in such an environment in which preference is given to men and boys. With respect to income-generating activities, female household heads are particularly disadvantaged when expected to support themselves and the wider family (Gururaja 2000). Not only are employment opportunities overall already scarce in the context of displacement, but women may find it all the more difficult to find sustainable livelihoods when confronted with traditional gender biases.

Given the emerging recognition that displaced females face particular challenges, the humanitarian community has made considerable progress in raising awareness when developing policy and programs (for example, UNHCR 2008). However, from an academic perspective very little empirical evidence exists on the way in which gender plays a role in the relationship between displacement and well-being. Therefore, this study aims to contribute to the literature by exploring the gendered effects of displacement based on a variety of factors that relate to the social and economic lives of Congolese refugee women and girls in Rwanda.

### 3. Contextual Background

#### Congolese refugees in Rwanda

The African Great Lakes region has been the source of some of the worst conflict and displacement events in modern times. Within the Democratic Republic of Congo, one of the most heavily populated and least developed countries in Sub-Saharan Africa, years of political instability and strife have taken an enormous toll. Since the 1990s, two international wars along with incessant internal fighting, mostly in the eastern part of the country, have led to high levels of outmigration of those in search of safety. Today more than 535,000 Congolese refugees live in exile, predominately in the neighboring countries of Uganda, Rwanda, Tanzania, and Burundi (UNHCR 2015a).

Despite experiencing its own civil war in the early 1990s, Rwanda has hosted refugees from the Democratic Republic of Congo for decades. As of September 2016, UNHCR's Rwanda office supports about 75,000 Congolese refugees across five camps (UNHCR 2016b). The populations residing in two of these camps mostly fled the first and second Congo wars in the mid- to late-1990s, as illustrated in table 1; all other camps were established in 2005 or more recently to accommodate later inflows caused by renewed fighting in North and South Kivu. The vast majority in all camps are women, children, and youth under 18 years of age.

**Table 1 Congolese Refugee Camps in Rwanda**

Camp	Year Established	Total Population	Share Female (%)	Share Women, Children, and Youth (%)
Kiziba	1996	17,155	54.10	78.11
Gihembe	1997	14,205	54.48	78.47
Nyabiheke	2005	13,918	55.13	83.37
Kigeme	2012	18,646	55.50	84.94
Mugombwa	2014	8,319	58.75	88.88

Source: MIDIMAR 2016; UNHCR 2015b.

Note: Figures are as of September 2015.

#### Female Congolese refugees in Rwanda

To better understand the situation of female Congolese refugees in particular, the discussion relies on various case studies and reports in Rwanda that highlight some of the basic challenges female refugees face, and to what extent they are able to overcome difficulties posed by their protracted situation. With regard to economic activities of Congolese refugees in Rwanda, a joint assessment performed by the World Food Programme and UNHCR (2014) reports that young women and girls mainly find jobs as housekeepers, hairdressers, waitresses, and cooks not far from the camps in which they reside. Within the camps, women are often known for being in charge of petty trade and small businesses. Such businesses are primarily initiated by the savings that men accumulate as casual workers, and allow the



household to diversify sources of income. Alternatively, it is not uncommon for female refugees to engage in transactional sex within the camps in an effort to support themselves and their families.

With respect to health, the same report highlights how households with pregnant or lactating women are more vulnerable to malnutrition (World Food Programme and UNHCR 2014). In light of this situation the Ministry of Disaster Management and Refugee Affairs (MIDIMAR), which is responsible for camp management and security, provides specific services to this group including blanket supplementary feeding. As for education, girls are found to be at a relatively higher risk of dropping out of school mainly because of the need to support the household economy as well as high rates of early pregnancies. Other reasons mentioned include having to take care of siblings, delinquency, drug abuse, and a lack of encouragement for education.

Gender-based violence is one of the major risks for women and young girls confronted with conflict and displacement. In this regard, Sipsma et al. (2015) show that even though almost half of all Congolese women report experiencing some type of violence during conflict, such occurrences are less common in Rwanda. Only one in ten women reports experiencing some kind of violence, be it physical, emotional, or sexual. Slightly higher in comparison, Wako et al. (2015) find that intimate partner violence is approximately 22 percent among female refugees in Rwanda. Moreover, they show that women experiencing outsider violence are 11 times more likely to report intimate partner violence in comparison with women who did not experience outsider violence.

Research also shows that gender-based violence is especially probable when negative coping strategies like transactional sex or high-risk casual labor are undertaken. Women who are obliged to collect firewood outside of camps, for example, are exposed to a higher risk of violence and abuse. Likewise, negative coping strategies are recognized as leading to more sexually transmitted disease, unwanted pregnancies, and family abandonment. Although restrictions in the data available for this study do not allow us to tackle many of these crucial issues in the analysis, they are important for the contextualization and interpretation of the findings.

### **Refugee policy in Rwanda: An integrative approach with practical challenges**

Because of its unique policy approach toward refugees, Rwanda makes for an interesting case in examining the consequences of displacement. The government, in close collaboration with UNHCR and other implementing and operational partners, provides basic support to refugees within the designated camps (for example, shelter, potable water, sanitation facilities), but also applies a policy of integration that opens up refugees' access to local education, health care, and the labor market.

It is mandatory that all children attend school, and refugee children are expected to do so alongside local children in host communities. Only in certain cases where a camp is particularly far from a community are school facilities built within the camp itself. To absorb the extra children from refugee camps, schools in surrounding communities are provided with additional classrooms, teaching materials, and uniforms (UN 2012). This integrative approach likewise applies to health care, where the goal is for refugees to have access to local clinics within the national health system. Again, where such access is not possible, health centers within the camps are set up that are also freely accessible to the local population (UNHCR 2015c).

With regard to employment, there are no official restrictions on refugees' freedom of movement outside of camps or on their right to work. Refugees, therefore, in principal have the opportunity to integrate and engage economically with their host communities, consequently allowing them to have a direct impact on local economies.

Although the Rwandan government's basic support of the refugee population and policy of integration is commendable, in practice there are clear gaps and shortfalls. For one, refugee children have few opportunities to continue schooling beyond the lower secondary level, despite the government's policy that every child complete a mandatory 12 years of basic education. The lack of access to upper secondary education, in fact, has been highlighted as resulting in increased criminal activity by young boys, as well as transactional sex and early pregnancies for young girls (UNHCR 2014). In addition, even though refugees do have access to local health facilities, they more often than not lack public health insurance, which limits their full integration into the national health system. Similarly, chronic food insecurity and subsequent malnutrition remain prevalent in the camps due in large part to a shortage of viable income-generating activities. Owing partly to the fact that Rwanda already is an extremely densely populated country, the scarcity of agricultural land both for cultivation and for grazing has left many refugees who were once farmers with limited livelihood opportunities (Hovil 2011). Even though some do find employment both within and outside the camps, the fundamental absence of job opportunities and high barriers to starting one's own business have resulted in the inability of most refugees to lead sustainable, independent lives outside of a system of humanitarian assistance. This specific policy context, in combination with community- and country-level characteristics, is essential for a more qualified interpretation of the results of this analysis.

#### **4. Analytical Approach**

As demonstrated above, the limited research not just on Congolese refugees in Rwanda, but on female refugees more generally, illustrates that female refugees need to cope with a multitude of issues that are not well understood. In line with those issues mentioned above, as well as the availability of data, the analysis focuses on a range of outcomes that are indicative of the economic, social, and subjective well-being of women and girls. In particular, it examines economic activity of working-age adults, school attendance of school-age children, formal networks based on membership in a community organization, informal networks based on the availability of help in case of financial need, and feelings of safety in the community. Although the outcomes concerning economic activity and school attendance were recorded for every working-age adult or school-age child in the household, respectively, all other outcomes were recorded only for the main respondent of the household.

To identify the effect of displacement on female refugees, explicit comparisons are made in two ways. First, the differences between female Congolese refugees residing in camps and female Rwandese locals in neighboring villages are examined to emphasize the impact due to the context of displacement for this particular subpopulation. Second, the differences between female and male refugees living within camps are examined to deduce a gender-specific effect within the overall context of displacement. Such a comparative approach allows us to tackle not only the more general issues female refugees face living in Rwanda, but also highlights the particular issues female refugees face within the camps themselves.

The analysis also pays particular attention to female-headed households, who are recognized as having a high risk of vulnerability, with a focus on three household-level measures concerning food insecurity, subjective poverty, and subjective economic difficulties. The first measure indicates whether a household has experienced not having enough food, or money to buy food, at least once in the seven days before enumeration. The second measures the perception that a household, on average, does not have enough income to satisfy basic needs. The third describes the household's perception that it is facing difficulties with respect to its economic situation. Once again, comparisons are made between female-headed refugee households living within camps and those in neighboring villages, as well as between female-headed households and male-headed households within the camps.

The analysis relies on data from an original household survey collected in May 2016 across different regions of Rwanda. Data collection was managed by a team of researchers from the Maastricht Graduate School of Governance, and implemented on the ground by a research partner, Laterite Ltd., based in Kigali. A team member from Maastricht was present in Rwanda throughout the fieldwork period to assist with training the enumerators and to ensure data quality. Given the focus on displaced populations, the sampling frame incorporated the three largest Congolese refugee camps: Kiziba, Gihembe, and Kigeme (see table 1). Enumeration of households within these camps was randomized based on a master list of the population within each provided by UNHCR.

Aside from these three camps, the survey design also focused on host communities at various distances from each camp.<sup>2</sup> More specifically, four cells within a 10 kilometer radius of each of the three camps, and another four outside 20 kilometers of each, were randomly sampled.<sup>3</sup> After choosing one community with the largest population in each selected cell, households were randomly selected for enumeration from a master list created in discussion with the community representative. Overall, the research design results in a representative sample for the enumeration areas in question. Ultimately, the survey covered 1,380 households across 49 individual communities, including the three camps, which were each considered to be a single community. After screening for nonmissing values on key variables, the analysis encompasses 1,362 households of which 423, or 31 percent, are located within one of the three refugee camps.

Table 2 illustrates the differences in general characteristics between the local and refugee populations represented in the sample. Most salient for the purposes of this study, even though more than half of all individuals, both within and outside of refugee camps, are female, there are considerably more female-headed households within the camps, 42 percent vs. 28 percent. Moreover, refugees within camps are, on average, about 9 percentage points less likely to be married in comparison with locals, while household size is, on average, one person larger. Although the refugee and local populations are not significantly different along most other basic dimensions, the relatively high presence of female-headed households

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<sup>2</sup> For the purposes of this analysis, a community is defined as the lowest administrative unit in Rwanda, otherwise known as a village.

<sup>3</sup> A cell is the second lowest administrative unit above the village. Country-wide data at the village level were not readily available; therefore, predefined randomization took place at the cell level.

within the camps is a potentially important piece of information relevant to local stakeholders who routinely include vulnerable groups such as female-headed households within their programs.

**Table 2 Summary Statistics of the Sample**

	Local Community		Refugee Camp		Total
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	
Females	2,319	53.49	1,265	52.16	3,584
Female-headed households	262	27.81	179	42.32	441
Working-age adults (16 or older)	2,516	58.04	1,388	57.24	3,904
Children (younger than 16)	1,819	41.96	1,037	42.76	2,856
Age <sup>a</sup>	24.48	19.31	22.17	17.75	6,760
Married	1,340	30.91	523	21.57	1,863
Literate	2,682	61.87	1,542	63.59	4,224
Household size <sup>a</sup>	4.78	2.10	5.87	2.73	1,362
Refugee camp					
Gihembe	317	33.76	145	34.28	462
Kigeme	308	32.80	139	32.86	447
Kiziba	314	33.44	139	32.86	453

*Note:* “Refugee camp” for the local community indicates the closest refugee camp.

a. The mean and standard deviation are reported for “Age” and “Household size.”

## 5. Analysis

### Female refugees versus their local peers

The discussion first presents the differences between female Congolese refugees located within one of the three camps and female Rwandese locals in the surrounding communities. Table 3 provides a basic descriptive breakdown of the female population across these two general locations along several outcomes of social and economic well-being. First, there is a distinct difference in labor market activity between working-age (at least 16 years old) female refugees and locals— only 72 percent of female refugees are economically active in comparison with 86 percent of local females. To clarify, the definition of being economically active includes those individuals who are employed, unemployed but actively looking for a job, or performing as unpaid workers in a family business. Most individuals who are economically inactive perform housework or are permanently sick or disabled. On the other hand, refugee girls of school age (younger than 16) are substantially more likely to attend school than local girls, 78 percent vs. 68 percent.

With regard to social networks, female refugees are less likely to be active members of formal community organizations (for example, agricultural cooperative, traders’ association, credit or savings association,

women’s association), 37 percent vs. 46 percent. However, female refugees are more likely to be able to count on the informal assistance of someone beyond their immediate household if they suddenly need a small amount of money, indicating an informal network of support. The difference between these groups, however, is not statistically significant. Finally, the vast majority of female refugees and locals feel safe in their community, greater than 80 percent for both, with no statistical difference between them.

**Table 3 Descriptive Differences within the Female Population**

	Local Community		Refugee Camp		Total
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	
Economically active***	1,025	85.99	413	71.58	1,438
School attendance***	635	67.70	396	77.95	1,031
Formal network***	258	45.83	114	36.66	372
Informal network for assistance	236	41.92	144	46.30	380
Subjective safety	475	84.37	250	80.39	725

Note: \*\*\* indicates statistically significant mean difference across groups at the 1 percent level.

Table 4 goes a step beyond a general descriptive analysis, presenting the odds ratio of a logit model for each binary outcome with respect to the main variable of interest, female refugee. A coefficient greater than 1 indicates a positive association. Standard errors are listed in parentheses. The first column of each outcome shows the result for being a female refugee only, while the next column controls for the previously presented covariates including age, married, literate, household size, and the specific camp in which the individual resides or the one nearby.

Consistent with the descriptive differences, the model yields statistically significant results for those outcomes related to economic activity, school attendance, and formal networks. The model shows that a refugee woman of working age is, on average, less likely to be economically active in comparison with a local woman, which is robust to the inclusion of the controls. It is interesting to note that being married makes it more likely that a female is active in the labor market, perhaps indicating the importance of family-related businesses; however, this result is largely driven by local women in the sample, not female refugees. Moreover, women residing in and around Gihembe are far more likely to be active in the job market in comparison with the reference camp Kiziba, an outcome which is conceivably a result of Gihembe’s close proximity to an important commercial hub, Byumba. Kiziba, in contrast, is the most geographically isolated of the three camps, located on top of a mountain and at least a few hours’ drive from the nearest town, Kibuye. Alternatively, even though Kigeme is also located relatively close to a trading town, the comparatively shorter time this population has been residing in the area, only since 2012, may help explain why women there are not more economically active.

In addition, the model shows that refugee girls are significantly more likely to attend school, and this result only gets stronger once the basic controls are included. One possible explanation for this finding is a successful effort to increase access to education for refugees in general, but it may also reflect the overall

limited labor market opportunities in refugee camps, including for those younger than the official working age. It is not difficult to imagine local school-age children taking on informal income-generating activities that would cause them to drop out of class, which is simply not an option for the refugee population, resulting in fewer drop outs. Indeed, the data support such a conjecture—local children work an average of three times longer per week than refugee children on paid or unpaid activities outside the home.

Finally, female refugees are, on average, less likely to be members of a community organization in comparison with their local counterparts, and there are again fundamental differences among the camps themselves. Females in and around Kigeme seem to have, on average, a more robust formal network based on their involvement with community organizations in relation to the reference group, Kiziba, whereas women in and around Gihembe have just the opposite. Again, such a finding for refugee women in particular is interesting when taking into consideration the key difference between Kigeme camp and the other two locations. As mentioned before, Kigeme is the newest of the three camps, having been established in 2012, and therefore is comprised of a population whose past experiences are different from those groups located in Gihembe and Kiziba. Although length of time in displacement may perhaps help explain why a distinction can be seen with respect to formal networks, this seems contradictory. Another explanation may be the ever-increasing presence of the international community over recent years along the eastern border of the Democratic Republic of Congo, from where the Kigeme population primarily originates. A growing set of social and economic programs by local and international nongovernmental organizations at origin, for example, may perhaps have had an influence on the organizational capacity of this group over the years that was not afforded those who arrived in the late 1990s.

It is important to note that in line with the descriptive results, the analysis shows no evidence of discernable differences between female refugees and their local peers with regard to informal networks for assistance and subjective security. These results indicate that the lack of engagement and hence social support from organizations is not compensated for by informal networks and may potentially put female refugees in a doubly disadvantaged position. Nevertheless, it is relatively encouraging to observe that subjective safety does not show significant differences between refugee and local women, and that the overall perception is positive for a majority of women.

**Table 4 Female Refugees vs. Female Locals**

Model: Logit (odds ratio)	Economically active		School attendance		Formal network		Informal network for assistance		Subjective safety	
Female refugee	0.41*** (0.05)	0.40*** (0.05)	1.69*** (0.22)	3.46*** (0.68)	0.68*** (0.10)	0.69** (0.11)	1.19 (0.17)	1.25 (0.19)	0.76 (0.14)	0.75 (0.15)
Age		1.00 (0.00)		1.74*** (0.06)		1.01* (0.01)		1.00 (0.01)		1.01 (0.01)
Married		2.71*** (0.37)		1.00 (0.00)		0.95 (0.15)		1.16 (0.18)		1.10 (0.22)
Literate		1.08 (0.17)		1.41 (0.41)		1.74*** (0.29)		1.80*** (0.29)		0.91 (0.19)
Household size		1.00 (0.03)		1.04 (0.04)		1.05 (0.03)		1.02 (0.03)		1.04 (0.04)
Gihembe		2.65*** (0.45)		0.87 (0.18)		0.51*** (0.09)		0.76 (0.13)		1.25 (0.28)
Kigeme		0.80 (0.12)		1.02 (0.21)		1.64*** (0.28)		0.73* (0.13)		1.14 (0.25)
Constant	6.14*** (0.51)	3.53*** (1.15)	2.10*** (0.15)	0.05*** (0.01)	0.85** (0.07)	0.34*** (0.13)	0.72*** (0.06)	0.54 (0.21)	5.40*** (0.63)	2.52* (1.24)
Pseudo R <sup>2</sup>	0.03	0.09	0.01	0.49	0.01	0.05	0.00	0.02	0.00	0.01
Observations	1,769	1,769	1,446	1,446	874	874	874	874	874	874

Note: Kiziba camp is the reference. Standard errors are listed in parentheses. \*\*\*  $p < 0.01$ ; \*\*  $p < 0.05$ ; \*  $p < 0.10$ .

## Female refugees versus their male peers

Turning to a more specific comparison between female and male refugees within the camps themselves, table 5 highlights the descriptive differences across groups with regards to the same outcome variables. The analysis finds first that female refugees of working age are less likely to be economically active compared with male refugees, 72 percent vs. 79 percent. Conversely, school attendance for both boys and girls living within a refugee camp are similar at nearly 80 percent. And even though female refugees are slightly more likely to be involved in community organizations than men, 37 percent vs. 31 percent, the difference is not statistically significant. About half of both groups indicate they can count on the help of others when in need. Last, female refugees, on average, feel more secure in their camp in comparison with men, 80 percent vs. 69 percent, which is a statistically significant difference at the 1 percent level.

**Table 5 Descriptive Differences within the Refugee Population**

	Male		Female		Total
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	
Economically active***	325	78.69	413	71.58	738
School attendance	405	77.29	396	77.95	801
Formal network	35	31.25	114	36.66	149
Informal network for assistance	56	50.00	144	46.30	200
Subjective safety***	77	68.75	250	80.39	327

*Note:* \*\*\* indicates statistically significant mean difference across groups at the 1 percent level.

Table 6 presents the odds ratio of a logit model for the outcomes of interest, comparing female and male refugees. Among the refugee population, the analysis finds evidence once more that females are less likely to be economically active. Linking this result with the previous model, it is not only that female refugees are less active than their local female counterparts because they are located in camps, but they are also considerably less active than their male counterparts within the camps, indicating a distinct difference along gender lines. Similarly, those same covariates of married and Gihembe are positive and statistically significant; however, the former is for the most part due to male refugees in comparison with female.

In contrast, the procedure finds no discernible difference along gender lines for school attendance or formal network, as before, indicating that gender is not a particular issue in this respect within the refugee population as a whole. It is interesting to note, however, that female refugees are noticeably more likely to report feeling safe within their community in comparison with their male refugee counterparts. Additionally, being married is also associated with greater perceptions of security, indicating unsurprisingly that households headed by single women may be at a higher risk of vulnerability.



**Table 6 Female Refugees vs. Male Refugees**

Model: Logit (odds ratio)	Economically active	School attendance	Formal network	Informal network for assistance	Subjective safety					
Female refugee	0.68** (0.10)	0.65*** (0.11)	1.04 (0.16)	1.04 (0.23)	1.27 (0.30)	1.42 (0.41)	0.86 (0.19)	0.92 (0.22)	1.86** (0.46)	2.31*** (0.63)
Age		0.99 (0.01)		2.23*** (0.14)		1.00 (0.01)		1.00 (0.01)		1.02** (0.01)
Married		1.66*** (0.29)		1.00 (0.00)		1.17 (0.31)		0.94 (0.20)		1.72** (0.45)
Literate		1.00 (0.21)		0.24*** (0.11)		1.26 (0.34)		1.31 (0.31)		1.32 (0.38)
Household size		1.04 (0.03)		0.98 (0.04)		1.12** (0.05)		1.00 (0.04)		1.01 (0.05)
Gihembe		3.37*** (0.67)		0.43*** (0.12)		0.07*** (0.03)		1.06 (0.26)		1.05 (0.31)
Kigeme		0.76 (0.13)		0.47*** (0.13)		1.65** (0.41)		1.12 (0.27)		1.04 (0.31)
Constant	3.69*** (0.44)	2.27* (0.99)	3.40*** (0.35)	0.18*** (0.07)	0.45*** (0.09)	0.27* (0.19)	1.00 (0.19)	0.75 (0.44)	2.20*** (0.45)	0.45 (0.31)
Pseudo R <sup>2</sup>	0.01	0.07	0.00	0.54	0.00	0.21	0.00	0.00	0.01	0.04
Observations	990	990	1,032	1,032	423	423	423	423	423	423

Note: Kiziba camp is the reference. Standard errors are listed in parentheses. \*\*\*  $p < 0.01$ ; \*\*  $p < 0.05$ ; \*  $p < 0.10$ .

## Female-headed refugee households versus female-headed local households

Turning to the analysis of female-headed households exclusively, table 7 presents the descriptive differences along three household-level measures of well-being. We first notice that female-headed households within a refugee camp are more likely to report not having enough food, or money to buy food, in the seven days before enumeration, 86 percent vs. 79 percent. Second, some 81 percent of female-headed refugee households feel their household, on average, always or almost always does not have enough income to satisfy the household's basic needs, in comparison with 69 percent of female-headed local households. Finally, 88 percent of female-headed refugee households describe their current economic situation as very difficult or difficult, in comparison with 79 percent of female-headed local households.

**Table 7 Descriptive Differences within Female-Headed Households**

	Local Community		Refugee Camp		Total
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	
Food insecurity*	207	79.01	154	86.03	361
Subjective poverty***	179	68.32	145	81.01	324
Subjective economic difficulties***	207	79.01	158	88.27	365

*Note:* \*\*\* indicates statistically significant mean difference across groups at the 1 percent level; \* at the 10 percent level.

Using the same logit model, table 8 shows the odds ratio of these three household-level outcomes using female-headed refugee household as the main independent variable. The empirical results confirm the descriptive differences with respect to subjective poverty and subjective economic difficulties, in that female-headed households within the refugee camps are, on average, more likely to report not having enough income to meet basic needs of the household, and finding the current economic situation difficult, in comparison with female-headed households in surrounding communities. These results are statistically significant at the 1 and 5 percent levels, respectively. However, there is no statistically significant difference with respect to food insecurity once basic characteristics are controlled for.

Not unlike what was found previously, there are also key differences across individual settings. Female-headed refugee households in and around Kigeme, for example, seem to be worse off, on average, given that they are more likely to report not having enough food, or money to buy food, as well as not having enough household income. Still, these results are largely driven by local female-headed households, and in fact are not statistically significant when focusing on female-headed households residing in Kigeme camp itself.

**Table 8 Female-Headed Refugee Households vs. Female-Headed Local Households**

Model: Logit (odds ratio)	Food insecurity		Subjective poverty		Subjective economic difficulties	
Female-headed refugee hh	1.64*	1.46	1.98***	2.15***	2.00**	2.18**
	(0.43)	(0.42)	(0.46)	(0.55)	(0.55)	(0.68)
Age		0.99		1.01		1.00
		(0.01)		(0.01)		(0.01)
Married		0.66		0.87		0.56*
		(0.21)		(0.24)		(0.17)
Literate		0.71		0.87		0.60*
		(0.21)		(0.22)		(0.18)
Household size		1.08		0.97		0.96
		(0.07)		(0.05)		(0.06)
Gihembe		1.40		1.01		0.42***
		(0.39)		(0.25)		(0.14)
Kigeme		3.28***		2.63***		0.79
		(1.23)		(0.84)		(0.30)
Constant	3.76***	3.64*	2.16***	1.40	3.76***	11.37***
	(0.57)	(2.47)	(0.29)	(0.82)	(0.57)	(8.46)
Pseudo $R^2$	0.01	0.05	0.02	0.05	0.02	0.07
Observations	441	441	441	441	441	441

Note: hh = household. Kiziba camp is the reference. Standard errors are listed in parentheses. \*\*\* $p < 0.01$ ; \*\* $p < 0.05$ ; \* $p < 0.10$ .

### Female-headed refugee households versus male-headed refugee households

Taking the same approach as before, table 9 compares female-headed households to male-headed households within the refugee camps. The analysis finds that female-headed households are more likely to report not having enough food, or money to buy food (86 percent vs. 80 percent), and are also more inclined to report not having enough income for basic needs (81 percent vs. 72 percent). However, male-headed households are slightly more likely to describe the current economic situation of the household as difficult or very difficult (91 percent vs. 88 percent), but this difference is not statistically significant.

**Table 9 Descriptive Differences within the Refugee Population**

	Male-headed		Female-headed		Total
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	
Food insecurity*	195	79.92	154	86.03	349
Subjective poverty**	176	72.13	145	81.01	321
Subjective economic difficulties	222	90.98	158	88.27	380

*Note:* \*\* indicates statistically significant mean difference across groups at the 5 percent level; \* at the 10 percent level.

Finally, table 10 presents the odds ratio of the logit model when looking at female-headed households in comparison with male-headed households among the refugee population. Once the range of controls is included, the model finds no statistically significant difference along any of the measures when comparing female- and male-headed households. With respect to particular camp settings, the analysis again finds that households located in Kigeme are more likely to experience food insecurity than in all other locations, while those in Gihembe are less likely to feel their current economic situation is difficult. Again, however, these findings are in fact largely due to male-headed refugee households within those respective settings.

**Table 10 Female-Headed Refugee Households vs. Male-Headed Refugee Households**

Model: Logit (odds ratio)	Food insecurity		Subjective poverty		Subjective economic difficulties	
Female-headed refugee hh	1.55 (0.42)	1.29 (0.38)	1.65** (0.39)	1.45 (0.38)	0.75 (0.24)	0.57 (0.20)
Age		1.01 (0.01)		1.01 (0.01)		1.00 (0.01)
Married		0.63 (0.19)		0.84 (0.22)		0.35*** (0.14)
Literate		0.77 (0.24)		0.77 (0.21)		0.84 (0.32)
Household size		1.04 (0.05)		1.01 (0.04)		1.09 (0.07)
Gihembe		0.74 (0.23)		1.57 (0.45)		0.27*** (0.12)
Kigeme		2.02** (0.72)		1.25 (0.35)		0.66 (0.32)
Constant	3.98*** (0.64)	3.19* (2.18)	2.59*** (0.37)	1.95 (1.18)	10.09*** (2.26)	29.45*** (27.16)
Pseudo R <sup>2</sup>	0.01	0.04	0.01	0.02	0.00	0.06
Observations	423	423	423	423	423	423

Note: hh = household. Kiziba camp is the reference. Standard errors are listed in parentheses. \*\*\*  $p < 0.01$ ; \*\*  $p < 0.05$ ; \*  $p < 0.10$ .

## 6. Conclusion and Policy Discussion

With the aim of understanding the complexities of gender and displacement, the analysis presents gender-differentiated impacts associated with being a refugee on economic and social domains of well-being in Rwanda. Although a better understanding of how displacement differs across gender lines is important in its own right, it is just as important to reflect on the policy implications. The discussion previously addressed the Rwandan government's integrative approach of enhancing the relationship between refugees and local populations, while at the same time providing refugees greater access to services and employment in local communities. It is not possible through this analytical approach to directly identify the extent to which this policy has had an impact on the well-being of female refugees in particular. Nonetheless, the findings highlight the disadvantaged position of female refugees along a

range of measures that should be taken into account when devising future policies and programs concerning displaced populations.

First, with respect to the labor market, the analysis finds that working-age refugee women are less likely to be economically active in comparison with both local women and refugee men. Such a result is not altogether unsurprising given the limited income-generating opportunities commonly found in camp settings, but highlights the precarious nature of females and their dependency on assistance. Although the Rwandan government's official policy does not restrict work-related activities for refugees either inside or outside the camps, the results indicate clear structural barriers that female refugees find difficult to overcome. To address this specific challenge, vocational training programs that explicitly target female refugees may confer significant gains not just on the beneficiaries, but on the local economy as well. Indeed, refugees often arrive at a destination with a diverse set of skills, and may be well positioned to take advantage of market opportunities under the right conditions.

Along this same line, the analysis also finds that refugee women have considerably lower levels of organizational membership in relation to local women, although not in comparison with refugee men. As such, more concrete and tangible measures to build social links among refugee women and to increase their formal association may help strengthen the social capital of this population at large, and help generate novel solutions to local problems, benefiting a wider group than otherwise would be the case. For example, Plan International Rwanda, a UNHCR partner charged with child protection in the current refugee emergency response program, and the Minister of Disaster Management and Refugee Affairs emphasize that women should play a more systematic, active, and central role when fighting against the physical abuse of children and providing child-friendly spaces (*The East African* 2016).

Likewise, there are a number of conclusions to be drawn from the separate analysis of female-headed households. Although female-headed households are already well understood to have a high degree of vulnerability, the results highlight the way in which those residing within the refugee camps are indeed worse off in comparison with their local counterparts. Such a finding underscores the need to target this group in all programming within the camp settings, to prevent them from falling through the cracks. Considering UNHCR's key strategy for 2017 to foster socioeconomic inclusion and reduce dependency on humanitarian aid, greater social assistance possibly in the form of cash transfers that explicitly targets this population may be warranted (UNHCR 2016c).

Beyond the averages, the significant differences between locations also illustrate that a more targeted approach should be developed after identifying priorities in each community. The findings, for example, show that Kiziba camp and surrounding communities appear to have a lower amount of local economic activity. Considering the remoteness of Kiziba, an initiative that aims to support the marketplace within the camp itself for small business development and trade, and also connect it to the nearest commercial town, may help stimulate local economic interaction. And female-headed households both within and around Kigeme camp seem to be particularly vulnerable to food insecurity, which is an area in which targeted programs by international and local nongovernmental organizations can make a sizable contribution.

Not surprisingly, much of the research on female migrants has focused solely on women-specific issues (for example, Fleury 2016). The analysis here is not limited by such restrictions and looks at both females and males across various dimensions of well-being. For instance, it has shown that female refugees in fact feel safer in their communities than males. These results are intriguing and hint at two possible discussion points. First, one needs to be cautious with the results considering that women may be likely to give socially desirable answers and may have relatively different perspectives on safety than men, leading to a more positive assessment of their feelings of safety. Second, these results demonstrate that men's feelings of safety may have been unfairly neglected in the past, both in policy discussions and in the literature. This study's results highlight that males may in fact find it more difficult to cope with displacement, and that experiences of conflict may linger for an extended period. Moreover, recent research has highlighted that both men and women are vulnerable to abuse and exploitation (Bermúdez Torres 2002; Dolan 2014; Schulz and O'Rourke 2015).

From a policy perspective it is crucial to understand the different ways in which males and females are affected by conflict and displacement at the individual level, and the different perceptions they have. Considering the various challenges women and girls face, policies and programs often target them in an effort to provide greater empowerment within their communities. These programs, however, may have unintended and poorly understood consequences on males and gender dynamics. Turner (2000), for example, indicates that among Burundian refugees, increasing support to improve the agency of female refugees has caused resentment from males who feel challenged and disrespected. These particularly sensitive issues, therefore, need to be tackled by special programs, requiring a much more in-depth understanding of gender relations and community realities.

In short, the nuanced conclusions regarding the gendered effects of displacement highlight the importance of identifying the unique challenges and needs of particular groups, and the inclusion of these groups in negotiations with the wider community and stakeholders to better understand their situation. Only then can a more significant step toward effective programs be taken to mitigate the negative effects of displacement and improve the well-being of refugees along multiple dimensions. Finally, we conclude by restating that incorporating women into the planning, organization, and management of refugee camps as well as local associations should be a priority. Promoting women's membership in community groups and associations, and giving them greater decision-making power in dialogue with other members of the community, are crucial steps toward empowerment and self-determination. In the long run, the continuous involvement and interaction with their communities may go a long way toward improving the dynamics between men and women, not to mention refugees and locals, thus benefiting all.

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