Relationality, Power Dynamics and Interwovenness of the Ugandan Humanitarian NGO Landscape

Picture 1: Who can access the negotiation table?
Source: (Peace Direct, 2021).

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II.   **Abstract**

This thesis explores the research question; '*How do localization and decolonization trends impact humanitarian relations and governance and national, local and refugee-led humanitarian organizations and their work in Uganda?*' This thesis focuses on relations between various stakeholders, including power dynamics and interwovenness of humanitarian NGOs in Uganda. The main research question and sub-research questions have been answered through extensive literature review, attending webinars and online conferences and most importantly through conducting interviews. During the thesis, 24 online interviews with representatives of national, local and refugee-led humanitarian organizations in Uganda have been conducted which forms the basis of the information presented in this thesis. The collected data shows major inequalities regarding decision-making power and agenda-setting of humanitarian aid priorities. Interviewees confirm there is a large gap between the interests and needs of affected communities and what international humanitarian organizations and donors are offering in terms of humanitarian aid. 'Money is power' certainly applies to the research context since the ones funding humanitarian projects usually also decide how the majority of the funding is spent. Despite the increasing attention and awareness as well as the international commitments and agreements to address power imbalances in the humanitarian aid system, for instance the Grand Bargain, and ongoing conversations about localization and decolonization of aid, little practical and systematic changes have been achieved in order to establish a sustainable power shift. Important to note is that any shift in power and reshaping of the humanitarian aid system would require a long-term transition process. However, the question remains if international humanitarian organizations are willing to lose some of their power and through this create space for national, local and refugee-led humanitarian organizations in Uganda.

Keywords: relations, power dynamics, inequalities, funding, capacity, agenda-setting, localization, decolonization, reshaping, humanitarian aid, Grand Bargain, Uganda

Chapter 1: Introduction, background, problem statement and research questions

1.1. Introduction

In recent years there have been numerous ongoing debates and efforts to shift power from international to local-based organizations within the humanitarian sector (Peace Direct, 2021).There are many ideas and initiatives that attempt to reform aid and increase the power and resources of local organizations. Examples of these efforts include the Grand Bargain and the Charter 4 Change. However, resources are usually still divided through a top-town method instead of using a bottom-up approach. The Grand Bargain emphasized a 'participation revolution' which means that people receiving aid are involved in making the decisions that affect them. It is important to acknowledge that local organizations are the first responders in any crisis and are usually trusted, familiar and well-connected to local communities and local contexts. Moreover, usually they continue to serve the needs of affected communities after international organizations have left the area. An important aspect in changing the status quo and the current functioning of the system is building a chain of ongoing trust between various actors and being accountable to each other (The New Humanitarian, 2020). Nevertheless, limited structural change has been achieved. There is growing acknowledgement that change is required and aid needs to be reshaped and decolonised, however there is little consensus on how this can be achieved (Peace Direct, 2021). This thesis presents findings and suggestions on how the humanitarian aid sector could be improved. This information is based on an extensive literature review and primary data provided by interviewees.

There are many relations, tensions and dynamics between coloniality and humanitarian aid. Some of these dynamics are more visible than others. My thesis provides insights into the complex interwovenness of coloniality, humanitarian aid and power relations between specifically local and international non-governmental organizations. Within the humanitarian system there are strong calls and commitments for localization and decolonization of humanitarian aid. However, making adjustments to the humanitarian system is complex. My thesis assesses the interwovenness of coloniality, power relations, calls for change and humanitarian aid through extensive literature review and semi-structured interviews with local, national and refugee-led NGOs in Uganda.

1.2. Humanitarian aid and power relations

Foreign aid consists of resources that are voluntarily provided by a donor and will be received by a recipient country or organization. The United Nations has defined a target for foreign aid which is 0.7% of the donor country's gross national income. Foreign donors can have specific interests in providing foreign aid, for instance obtaining access to the natural resources of a country in exchange for aid and a reduction in the number of refugees leaving the respective country in crisis. There is a mutual dependency between donor and recipient countries. Countries in the Global South often significantly contribute to the increasing prosperity and wealth of the aid-providing country in the Global North through among others interest

payments, subcontractors, exploitation of resource and labour force (De Lauri, 2020). However, it is important to note there are also genuine humanitarian motives for providing humanitarian aid, for instance the desire to alleviate suffering and support fellow human beings in need during crisis situations.

Development and humanitarian aid are strongly connected and activities sometimes overlap. Therefore, this thesis also explores certain debates which initially seem to relate more closely to development. Nevertheless, these themes have to be understood in order to allow for full comprehension of the humanitarian imperative and influencing factors. The development-peace-humanitarian nexus should also be taken into account since there are increased efforts in linking these sectors in order to develop more comprehensive and integral responses and to provide better support to the people concerned. Different explanations are provided for the 'slow development' of Africa, including blaming African elites due to corruption and poor governance and blaming a combined and uneven nature of economic development in the global capitalist system. Nevertheless, a third perspective suggests that aid is the primary cause of the 'underdevelopment' of Africa, because aid creates a dependency culture and distorts trade (Carmody, 2016). A similar perspective is also discussed in the book Dead Aid by Dambisa Moyo (Moyo, 2009). The African continent is described as less developed than the European continent, largely resulting from the colonial past. In contemporary times, unequal relationships between the continents are still very visible.

Hilhorst and Jansen discuss the concept of 'humanitarian space' which describes the physical or symbolic space needed by humanitarian actors to deliver their services according to their principles and values (Hilhorst & Jansen, 2010). There are four principles governing humanitarian aid: humanity, neutrality, impartiality and independence. Humanity is providing aid to everyone in need, with the aim to respect and protect all. Neutrality refers to the responsibility of aid organizations not to pick sides in conflict and not to favour anyone based on political, religious or ideological reasons. Impartiality requires aid to be provided based on need and not based on any other characteristics such as nationality, ethnicity, gender, religious belief, or political party. Independence requires aid organizations to be autonomous from any military or political objectives. Since disasters and conflicts are becoming more frequent and geopolitical, adhering to these four principles is increasingly important (Rysaback-Smith, 2015).

Various authors have emphasized on the connections between colonial administration and humanitarian aid. The role of humanitarian action in North-South relations, the world order and the promotion of liberal peace has been analysed in order to understand the functions they perform. Western actors still guide the processes through which the world is conceptualized and therefore also shape much of the current humanitarianism. NGOs are the ''the mendicant orders of Empire'' and the capillary vessels of Globalization (De Lauri, 2020). In other words, NGOs are reinforcing the contemporary world order which is deeply rooted in colonial history. Policy responses and studies into migration and displacement usually have a Western bias. The significance of various forms of migration within, across and between countries of the Global South (South-South migration) is usually underreported. Instead, there is a tendency to focus

on migration from the Global South to the Global North (South-North migration). Aid provided to refugees often reflects the interests of Western governments and donors. The European Union has for instance prioritized the containment of Syrian citizens who might otherwise travel to Europe, whilst many countries that host large numbers of regional migrants and refugees receive little financial support and media attention (Fiddian-Qasmiyeh & Fiori, 2020).

When critically assessing humanitarian aid, power is one of the core concepts to look at. My thesis explores relationships and partnerships between international and local NGOs and the different influences that determine the type of programs NGOs are implementing. Special attention is paid to the divide between the Global North and Global South. However, in order to avoid bias and steering of respondents, more neutral terms are used when discussing these subjects. Humanitarianism is very broad and involves a wide range of dynamics. Providing a general background to create a sound understanding of the basics is crucial. The focus however is on the relations between international and national, local and refugee-led humanitarian organizations and particularly assesses power dynamics and inequalities. There are strong calls for decolonization and localization of humanitarian aid and this requires reshaping of humanitarian structures. One of the core aspects to analyse in order to better understand contemporary dynamics and how these could potentially be reshaped at are the relations between international and national, local and refugee-led humanitarian organizations.

1.3. (De)Coloniality and humanitarian aid

A large number of practices and attitudes in the current aid system are an implicit continuation of the colonial era and reinforce colonial dynamics and beliefs (Peace Direct, 2021). Even though formal colonization is over, many of the colonial attitudes and beliefs are still reinforced on a daily basis. Due to the so-called perceived 'superiority' of the Global North, the Global South is usually labelled as backward whilst the Global North is seen as progressive. Furthermore, neo-colonialism and exploitation of the Global South are still a reality. An example of one of the prevalent attitudes in the humanitarian aid sector is the 'White Saviour Complex' which portrays white people from the Global North as 'saviours' of people in the Global South. The White Saviour Complex portrays white and privileged people from the Global North at the centre of response efforts instead of emphasizing the role of the people affected by crises in response efforts. Moreover, organizational structures of INGOs in the Global South commonly reflect colonial dynamics in which employees from the Global North often have higher positions and receive higher wages than colleagues from the Global South.

The White Saviour complex and the ideology it represents can often be observed in communication and fundraising efforts of International Non-Governmental Organizations (INGOs). Moreover, organizational structures of INGOs usually provide more opportunities and higher salaries to foreign employees from the Global North, even if their counterparts working as national and local Ugandan employees are more experienced and knowledgeable. Next to this, the majority of the decision-making power regarding humanitarian aid is concentrated in the Global North and thus far away from most humanitarian crises (Peace Direct, 2021).

Racism, biases, prejudices and discrimination are embedded in the working culture of many INGOs, even though these are often unintentional and unconscious aspects of every day aid relations (Barnett M. , 2011). An example of this are the differences between local, national and international staff in terms of their salaries, the positions they hold in organizations and the extent to which they are appreciated and acknowledged for their contributions. Furthermore, mainstream humanitarian language suggests that 'local' communities and organizations lack skills and knowledge (Barnett M. , 2011). For instance, reference is usually made to the need for local and national organizations to build capacity or to receive training or guidance provided by organizations based in the Global North. Hence, there is often an assumption national and local organizations are lacking something instead of focusing on their unique capacities, added-value and systems which are already in place. Terminology and framing matters and certain perspectives that focus on the lack of capacity of organizations in the Global South are remnants of coloniality. The word local itself can be viewed as problematic because it can be linked to notions of 'othering' resulting from communities being supported by Western actors. Moreover, the word local has various layers and contradictions when looking at the social, economic and political position of the entity receiving assistance. Furthermore, local organizations can be national or regional organizations or even village-based organizations, hence the definition is still very broad (George, 2020).

Among the humanitarian principles, there is the principle of neutrality and many aid practitioners from the Global North perceive themselves as neutral, however, in reality this reinforces the 'white saviour' mentality. The 'white gaze' is sometimes referred to as the 'imperial gaze' and assumes that whiteness is the only referent of progress. Institutions, white people and sometimes also people of colour, might engage with non-white people, practices and institutions on the basis of their perceived inferiority to white institutions and norms. Local knowledge is devalued and mistrusted by default and programme and research design are often based on Western values and knowledge systems (Peace Direct, 2021). In practice, the emotional and spiritual needs, compassion and (well-intended) self-interest of the provider of humanitarian aid, is seen as very important and usually does not lead to assistance being provided based on objective material needs. This phenomenon often leads to paternalism, in which paternalists believe that they know best what is good for others (Barnett M. , 2011).

One of the concepts that is frequently linked to development and humanitarian aid is racism. Racism can be defined as prejudice on the basis of race leading to differences and inequalities in terms of social and institutional power of particular groups. Racism leads to advantages for some people whilst others are facing disadvantages and oppression. Ideologies about white supremacy and white superiority often play, either consciously or sub-consciously, an important role in perpetuating actions which could be considered racist. According to Jacob Holdt ''For racism should always be measured by the victim and not defined by the perpetrators with all their good intentions'' (Bond, 2021).

Peace Direct highlights the problematic and dominant narrative that local organizations and communities 'lack capacity' and according to participants of their research this is one of the most overt examples of structural racism (Peace Direct, 2021). It is often assumed that capacity

building will improve the work of local organizations and solve all issues, without assessing other options and exploring the potential root causes of problems. Additionally, the capacity building activities are usually implemented by the Global North to build the capacity in the Global South. The already existing capacities and knowledge in the Global South are usually overlooked because they might not fit into the ideas that international organizations have.

Technical and theoretical expertise is usually preferred over contextual expertise and in turn preferring international staff over local staff. This practice downplays the fact that understanding the context is crucial in finding appropriate solutions to complex issues. Local practitioners are rarely invited to provide inputs on the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of a project, usually they are just asked to provide feedback (Peace Direct, 2021). Autesserre (2014) introduces the concept of politics of knowledge. The politics of knowledge refer to how knowledge is valued and handled. Thematic knowledge has become more valued than local expertise, which consequently often leads to viewing the intended beneficiaries as helpless people. Moreover, expatriates are usually the ones in management positions even though they are not familiar with local contexts and do not speak local languages. Usually, these expatriates are relying upon universal templates and lessons learned, overlooking local input for project design and using inefficient and ineffective elements of the international system. Additionally, there is a very significant gap and discrepancy in financial resources between local stakeholders and expatriates. All these elements can turn projects into being counterproductive, sometimes understandably leading to local resentment or even violence. These expressions and display of the politics of knowledge can lead to evasion, contestation and resistance. Furthermore, local populations regularly perceive interveners as outsiders trying to impose their own ideas which leads to local people rarely feeling ownership over international programs. Due to this, some respond by ignoring, distorting or opposing foreign peace efforts which lead to various barriers to effective humanitarian intervention. Within humanitarian aid, external expertise and thematic knowledge are oftentimes valued more than local expertise and knowledge, which perpetuates hierarchical and socioeconomic differences between foreign interveners and local populations. Moreover, this approach reinforces the portrayal of intended beneficiaries as helpless people (Autesserre, 2014).

Peace Direct raises their concerns about country offices since, according to them, country offices are one of the most visible and entrenched manifestations of structural racism in the humanitarian system. Country offices reinforce power imbalances between INGOs and local organizations and is in line with Western notions of 'low capacity' in the respective host country. In some instances, country offices operate as neo-colonialist outposts competing with, and displacing, local organizations. Furthermore, networks are sometimes the most important factor in securing grants and at times these networks are only accessible to expatriates (Peace Direct, 2021). The Grand Bargain is an agreement that aims at improving the effectiveness of humanitarian aid. The Grand Bargain was established in 2016. In June 2021, the goals were reviewed and the two key priorities for the next two years are quality funding and localisation (Alexander, 2021). Following the Grand Bargain agreement, some INGOs are shifting their models through increased funding of local organizations and in certain instances even transitioning out of country offices. However, in most instances localization is a technocratic

solution which does not address the more structural problems (Peace Direct, 2021). Another important initiative to highlight is the Charter4Change. Charter4Change is an initiative led by both National and International NGOs to practically implement changes to the way the Humanitarian System operates to enable more locally-led responses. The Charter4Change includes 8 commitments that INGOs agree to implement in order to address imbalances and inequality in the global humanitarian system. These commitments include; direct funding, partnership, transparency, recruitment, advocacy, equality, support and promotion. (Charter4Change, 2022).

Rutazibwa questions the role of the Western-led order in humanitarian aid. She explains coloniality as the ''perpetuation of colonial systems and technologies of domination into the present''. Moreover, as highlighted by the scholars Quijano, Grosfoguel, Dussel and Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2019), ''the concept of decoloniality encourages systemic and historical analysis of the organised (re)production of injustice and mass human suffering''. Europeans put themselves at the centre of global history through transatlantic enslavement and formal colonialism. After the 1960s, Europeans tried to rewrite history and with it erasing the large-scale human suffering they had caused. Moreover, they started with the promotion of stories of white European innocence, superiority and exceptionalism. The system of international development and aid is harmful for many people. Many researchers are silent about this and even normalize harmful impacts of aid (Rutazibwa, 2019). Humanitarian aid can amplify already existing power imbalances and inequalities and can intensify conflict between different groups. Moreover, humanitarian aid can prolong conflicts since support is also provided to actors that are fighting. Meera Sabaratnam (2017) highlights issues with the creation of dependency on the interveners as well as a sense of entitlement by the interveners. Interveners can feel as if they are the owners and therefore when they leave, there can be limited sense of ownership among the local population. Without ownership of the local population, it is challenging to have a sustainable intervention.

Rutazibwa argues the following; ''A decolonial approach to humanitarianism challenges Eurocentric analyses, foregrounding the experiences and knowledges of the intended targets of humanitarian aid. It poses questions not so much about the political will, operational implementation and technical capabilities of humanitarians as about the perpetuation of colonial power relations in seemingly benevolent activities''. In order to take a decolonial approach it is important to ask critical questions about for instance who is allowed to speak and listened to, what the definition of expertise is and the effects of Eurocentric bias when producing knowledge (Rutazibwa, 2019). Hence, a decolonial approach allows me to assess the perpetuation of colonial power relations in humanitarianism amongst other issues.

Decolonising is about engaging with and cultivating other ways of thinking and being in the world. It calls for rethinking in a way which deviates from the hegemonic norms and values. This is crucial, since the contemporary mainstream way of thinking about global humanity is in terms of advanced and backwards, however this is based on historic systems of colonial exploitation and dispossession. Non-Western societies are often described as outsiders or lagging behind Western development. Edward Said introduces the notion of Orientalism which

is framing and portraying the East and its cultural and social norms in a negative way. Additionally, knowledge from the West is often seen as universal and 'the West knows best' (Sabaratnam, 2017). Nevertheless, there are also other ways of thinking about global humanity and 'localization' and the need to focus more on local and national development and humanitarian initiatives is gaining more traction.

There are many assumptions regarding who is entitled to what in this world, which relates to questions about inequalities and power. It is common for foreign interventions and projects initiated by the Global North, such as peacebuilding and community empowerment, to fail due to their establishment through structural relations of colonial difference which shapes the conception, operation and effects. Autesserre believes Eurocentric thinking can be observed in continued epistemic alignment with foreign interveners (Autesserre, 2014). The good intentions, technical expertise and policy objectives are always believed to be the absolute truth, even though there can be other interpretations of this, which are also shown in her own research (Sabaratnam, 2017).

There are many relations, tensions and dynamics between coloniality and humanitarian aid. Some of these dynamics are more visible than others. My thesis provides insights into the complex interwovenness of coloniality, humanitarian aid and power relations between specifically local and international non-governmental organizations. In order to illustrate these complicated relations and partnership arrangements between international, local, national and refugee-led humanitarian organizations, practical examples shared by key informants during the interviews are provided. This thesis looks at various aspects of the humanitarian system and assesses differences between local and national and international NGOs. Furthermore, trends such as localization and decolonization of humanitarian aid are explored.

1.4. Problem statement and research questions

In discussions about decoloniality and decolonization of humanitarian aid, 'local' voices and perspectives are insufficiently considered and explored, despite the intention to put local perspectives and interests at the centre being voiced over and over again. International NGOs are usually dominant and determine most of the programmatic agenda and priority setting. Partnerships between INGOs and national and local NGOs are often unequal in terms of decision-making power and financial resources. National and local NGOs are sometimes only expected to implement humanitarian programs on behalf of international NGOs. National and local NGOs are usually more connected to affected communities that are being supported by humanitarian aid and therefore have a better understanding of the needs and priorities of people affected by humanitarian crises. Moreover, since local and national NGOs are usually already working in affected regions, they are usually the first responders during crises and the ability to respond to humanitarian crises quickly is crucial. Despite the unique capacities of local and national NGOs, their contributions and efforts are usually not recognized or appreciated. The current humanitarian structures are highly problematic because the added value, capacities and potential of local and national organizations are not fully utilized.

This thesis aims to explore the dynamics between international and local, national and refugee-led humanitarian organizations in Uganda. Therefore, this thesis takes an innovative approach by highlighting the perspectives and experiences of grassroots organizations in Uganda in an effort to focus on grassroots humanitarian actors. This thesis provides a better understanding of the perspectives and experiences of trends in humanitarian governance such as localization and decolonization of humanitarian aid actors in the Global South, specifically in Uganda. Additionally, this thesis explores the interwovenness and the complexity of the humanitarian system.

The main research question of this thesis is: '*How do localization and decolonization trends impact humanitarian relations and governance and national, local and refugee-led humanitarian organizations and their work in Uganda?*'

The sub-research questions are:
- What are the core aspects of the humanitarian system and how are they experienced by national, local and refugee-led humanitarian organizations?
- How do national, local and refugee-led humanitarian organizations in Uganda perceive their current collaborations with INGOs?
- What are the perspectives and experiences of relations between national, local and refugee-led humanitarian organizations in Uganda and international humanitarian organizations operating in Uganda?

These research questions provide the basis of this thesis. The research questions are answered through an elaborate literature study and through semi-structured interviews.

Chapter 2: Context in Uganda

2.1. Uganda and Ugandan independence

This thesis focuses on relations between international, local, national and refugee-led humanitarian organizations in Uganda. Uganda is located in East Africa and neighbouring countries are Tanzania, Kenya, Rwanda, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) and South Sudan. Uganda has an estimated population of 46.2 million people (CIA, 2022). Uganda achieved independence from Britain on the 9th of October 1962. Uganda entails a lot of diversity and different ethnic groups with sometimes little or nothing in common which can make it challenging to govern the country. It is important to realize that colonialism destroyed existing African nations and the contemporary African countries were externally created by foreigners during colonial times. Natives have to try to make this arrangement work in the best way possible. Since 1986, the National Resistance Movement (NRM), led by Yoweri Museveni, has been the party in power in Uganda (Reid, 2017).
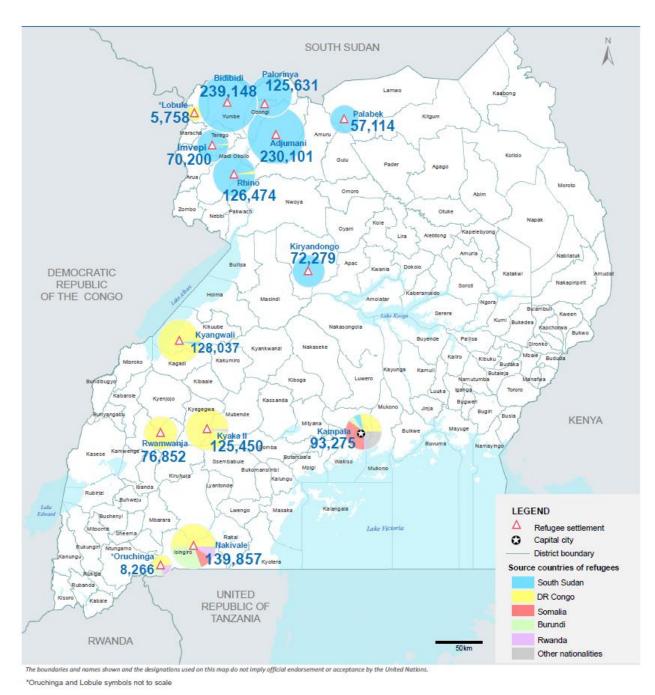
2.2. Refugees in Uganda

The case study and geographic location which is at the centre of this research is Uganda. The country has been both a source of refugees as well as a host of multiple generations of refugees since the Second World War. Uganda has hosted people displaced by the first Sudanese civil war (1955-1972), the Rwandan genocide (1994) and rebel conflicts in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) during the past three decades among others (Ntungwerisho, 2019). The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) indicates there were 1.5 million refugees living in Uganda in 2021 (OPM and UNHCR, 2021). Uganda has received global recognition and appreciation for its progressive refugee laws and policies. Furthermore, Ugandans generally have a friendly attitude towards hosting refugees. Most refugee-hosting communities in Northern Uganda have limited resources because they are still recovering from decades of armed conflict due to violence by both the Lord's Resistance Army and the National Resistance Army. Nevertheless, these communities are ordinarily responding with generosity to refugees by, for instance, offering land which is allowing refugees to establish shelters and provides them with the opportunity to engage in agricultural activities (Ntungwerisho, 2019).

Civil war and unrest have been prevalent in the region which is now called South Sudan. Since the 1990s, millions of South Sudanese people have been displaced. In December 2013 the civil war in South Sudan resumed and ever since the conflict has displaced more than 3.1 million citizens. As of 2019, an estimated 2.4 million South Sudanese refugees are living in the surrounding countries of which approximately 790.000 in Uganda, 770.000 in Kenya and 450.000 in Ethiopia (Komakech, Atuyambe, & Orach, 2019). Most refugees in Uganda, 71% of the total refugee population, are from South Sudan. These refugees are living in 23 settlements in 5 districts in Northern Uganda. In these 5 districts 33% of the total resident population consists of refugees, which is, especially on a global level, a very high ratio of refugees to host population (Komakech, Atuyambe, & Orach, 2019).

Host communities have benefitted from the influx of refugees in various ways since refugees usually settled in neglected areas and brought economic growth (Aglionby, 2017). Refugees created bigger and more profitable markets for local farmers and the presence of refugees led to improved infrastructure and the establishment of new roads, schools and health centres usually funded by donors. The escalation of the civil war in South Sudan has increased the refugee population in Uganda. During the first 2,5 years since the start of the conflict in December 2013, the refugee flow was manageable with less than 100.000 refugees per year entering Uganda. However, the conflict has intensified and between July 2016 and April 2017 almost 600.000 refugees have entered Uganda (Aglionby, 2017). Uganda is currently the country which hosts the largest number of refugees in the African continent. Bidi Bidi refugee settlement in Northern Uganda which was established in 2016, hosted 270.000 refugees in 2017. More refugees are expected which is increasing pressure on land and creates tensions within and between communities. The Ugandan government has a policy which dictates the number of people in local communities should be higher than the number of refugees, but in some Ugandan regions adhering to this policy is a challenge. Furthermore, Uganda is regularly facing large-scale droughts, making it more difficult for farmers to remain food secure and self-sufficient. In March 2017, an appeal of the United Nations (UN) to provide aid to South Sudanese refugees in Uganda had reached only 10% of its yearly target. Nevertheless, Uganda does not have the intention of closing its border or reversing its refugee policy since the policy is seen as an investment in terms of public relations and friendship with neighbouring countries which can be seen as a long-term investment (Aglionby, 2017).

Data provided by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), indicate that as of the 31st of July 2021, there are 1.5 million refugees in Uganda. Refugees are hosted in the following districts; Yumbe, Adjumani, Madi Okollo & Terego, Isingiro, Kikuube, Obongi, Kyegegwa, Kampala, Kamwenge, Kiryandongo, Lamwo and Koboko. The refugees originate predominantly from South Sudan (61.7%) and The Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) (28.9%), and also hosts refugees from Burundi, Somalia, Rwanda, Eritrea, Ethiopia and Sudan (Uganda Comprehensive Refugee Response Portal, 2021). Data from June 2021 indicate that there are 376.459 households with refugees in Uganda. 94% of the refugees in Uganda live in settlements and 6% live in urban areas. 81% (1.2 million) of the refugee population consists of women and children (OPM and UNHCR, 2021).

Refugees are hosted in the following locations; Bidibidi, Adjumani, Kyangwali, Nakivale, Kyaka II, Rhino, Palorinya, Kampala, Imvepi, Kiryandongo, Rwamwanja, Palabek, Oruchinga and Lobule. Picture 3 below shows a map of Uganda and the various locations throughout the country that are hosting refugees. As can be seen on the map, Northern Uganda mainly hosts refugees from South Sudan whilst in Western Uganda, most refugees are from the DRC (UNHCR, 2021).

Picture 3: Map of Uganda and the various locations that are hosting refugees
Source: (UNHCR, 2021).

2.3. Coordination mechanisms and operating organizations

The Uganda Refugee Response Plan (Uganda RRP) aims at meeting humanitarian needs and achieving sustainable refugee response programming through implementing the Global Compact on Refugees (GCR), the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (CRRF) and interventions by government institutions. The core objectives which the RRP is trying to achieve consist of (1) maintaining and strengthening Uganda's asylum space, (2) government protection processes which promote rights and international protection standards), (3) focus on inclusion and self-reliance through livelihoods opportunities, (4) provision of integrated basic social services by national authorities and (5) durable solutions for refugees. The priority

outcomes include refugee protection, emergency preparedness and response through reinforcing health and WASH measures, education, livelihoods (long-term approaches), urban refugees, environment and energy and infrastructure (OPM and UNHCR, 2020).

The refugee response in Uganda is coordinated by policies and frameworks provided by OPM. The CRRF is an inclusive approach to responding to crises. In terms of operational coordination mechanisms there are various roles for stakeholders. The leadership is the responsibility of the Office of the Prime Minister (OPM) and UNHCR. However, partnerships between governments, UN agencies and NGO partners amongst others take place on all levels including on inter-agency and national level, technical sector level and district/settlement level. Uganda's refugee response is delivered by 140 partners, those are the ones that are involved in refugee response operational coordination and RRP, but there are more partners supporting refugee-hosting areas. These 140 partners include 1 community-based organization (CBO), 35 national NGOs (NNGOs), 90 international NGOs (INGOs), 10 UN agencies, 3 bilateral development partners and 1 Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement organization (OPM and UNHCR, 2020). The word partners is interesting in terms of presumptions about relations and is often used as jargon. From the available information it does not become evident to which extent each of the partners can influence agenda setting or prioritization of activities nor how the power relations between the various partner organizations are structured.

Western governments have shown more interest in funding African civil society actors since the 1990s. In 1997, Uganda was amongst the African nations receiving most foreign aid. However, these funding streams need to be critically assessed since impacts might be different than what is expected. ''Donors are not funding the popular sectors of society, but are strengthening a new African elite committed to the promotion of a limited form of procedural democracy and structural-adjustment-type economic policies in partnership with the West.'' (Hearn, 2010).

The existing structures, frameworks and coordination mechanisms largely determine the effectiveness of the humanitarian system. Moreover, the policies and regulations shape the focus and implementation of humanitarian aid. Hence, it is crucial to understand these mechanisms since they form the basis of the humanitarian system.

2.4. Challenges of civil society actors

Organizations which are led by refugees are essential but often neglected providers of social protection in Kampala, Uganda, where they fill the gaps left by formal humanitarian, development and government actors. Refugee-led organizations (RLOs) operate in very diverse areas including education, vocational training, psychosocial support, health, microfinance, sport, youth engagement and legal representation. These organizations often face a lack of funding and limited recognition to build capacity, which also reinforce each other. Some RLOs are able to expand and grow their activities but others keep struggling due to exclusion from hierarchical structures of humanitarian governance. The role of interests and power relations that shape governance authority should be recognized. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, new opportunities have arisen to create more participatory forms of humanitarian governance.

However, donor governments remain reluctant to directly fund RLOs, due to the perceived risks, accountability and lack of evidence on effectiveness. According to research conducted by Pincock, Betts & Easton-Calabria (2020), the inclusion and relative success of refugee-led organizations has to do more with their value to international and national actors, or to their ability to strategically bypass formal humanitarian governance, than with their inherent value to the communities they are serving. The inherent value of refugee-led organizations to their communities is not perceived as the most relevant factor for international and national actors when deciding about funding and inclusion of refugee-led organizations. Hence, the inclusion and funding of RLOs is more about complying with the wishes and expectations of national and international actors than the value of these organizations to the communities they are working in. In order to improve legitimacy and effectiveness of humanitarian governance, more needs to be done in order to understand the interests and power relations that form the basis of practices of inclusion, exclusion, and delegation (Pincock, Betts, & Easton-Calabria, 2020).

Recently several civil society groups and organizations have faced challenges in implementing their activities in Uganda. Ugandan authorities have suspended over 50 civic groups as a result of allegations that they are not complying with regulations. The Ugandan Non-Governmental Organization Bureau claims that the civil society groups in question did not file accounts or did not register with authorities. Earlier in 2021, one of the main donors of civil groups in Uganda, the Democratic Governance Facility (DGF) had their operations suspended, leaving many civil society groups and organizations unable to carry out their regular activities. Some perceive the recent development as assaults on civil society and claim that there is political harassment of citizens and NGOs (Aljazeera, 2021).

President Museveni, who has been in power since 1986, has, on several occasions, accused Western countries and organizations of interfering in internal Ugandan affairs (Aljazeera, 2021). According to reports of the Ugandan parliament, 99.9% of NGOs operating in Uganda receive support from international donors. It can be argued that this is a risk to sovereignty and domestic interests since foreign donors also have their own interests and agenda's (Bwambale, 2021). The provided examples illustrate some of the challenges which Ugandan civil society actors and RLOs are facing when implementing their work. The challenges they encounter include restrictive regulations, bureaucracy and unequal power relations.

Chapter 3: Theoretical framework

The theoretical framework forms the core of the thesis. This theoretical framework integrates the concepts of decoloniality, humanitarian governance and Pan-Africanism. By connecting a wide range of theories from a variety of authors, the complex topics of relationality, power dynamics and interwovenness of humanitarian aid are assessed from different angles.

3.1. Defining colonialism and decoloniality

Coloniality is a legacy of colonialism that is still present in many aspects of our daily lives and influences our knowledge production, behaviours, relations with others and our self-image. This thesis seeks to document examples of how coloniality is influencing the partnerships between international and local NGOs. The interlinkages between coloniality and contemporary relations between international and local NGOs need to be problematized. Due to the colonial legacy, there are still many inequalities between the Global North and Global South, for instance in terms of financial resources, political power and whose knowledge is valued. These inequalities translate to international, national and local NGOs since they have very different starting points and available resources to implement projects.

My thesis explores colonial asymmetry in more detail, applied in the context of humanitarian aid in Uganda. In humanitarian aid, colonial structures are often subconsciously and widely accepted as the reality instead of being challenged. The linkages and interconnectedness between colonialism and humanitarian aid should be problematized. Both colonialism and humanitarian aid started from the idea of Western superiority. These ideas of superiority of people in the Global North and in turn the inferiority of people in the Global South, could lead to interferences in sovereignty and not legitimizing already existing governance structures. Many colonial ideas and beliefs are still part of peoples worldviews and drive the behaviour of individuals. Through taking a step back, these practices which have been normalized can be critically assessed. My thesis includes practical examples in which the colonial asymmetry and inequalities between the Global North and Global South are visible.

Colonialism refers to economic and political relations where the sovereignty of a country is eroded by another country which has taken power. On the other hand, coloniality is about patterns of power which were established during colonialism, but that still play a defining role in terms of culture, labour, knowledge production and relations of the colonized societies. Coloniality continues to exist after formal colonialism ended and the notion of coloniality can be found in books, cultural behaviours and the self-image of people. Hence, there is no such thing as a post-colonial world since the colonial power matrix is still in place (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2013a). Humanitarian relations are part of this colonial power matrix since the Global North is usually having the power and makes important decisions regarding the lives of people in the Global South in terms of which projects are receiving funding. Humanitarian relations can amplify and reinforce colonial dynamics.

Colonialism is often explained as a foreign nation or power dominating, occupying and ruling over people in an area or a country. Whilst this notion is correct, colonialism consists of various elements. Colonialism can also be an internal process in which colonised people ''accept their lower ranking in the colonial order of things'', this is referred to as ''colonising the mind''. Colonialism can establish ways of thinking in line with the language, logic, values and assumptions which represent the worldview of colonisers (McLeod, 2010). Carter G. Woodson states that Western education has been used to assert dominance since it is in line with the needs of those who have enslaved and oppressed weaker people. Woodson explained this phenomenon with the following quote ''When you control a man's thinking you do not have to worry about his actions''. W.E.B. Du Bois discusses the lack of self-consciousness and mentions the ''seeing one's self through the eyes of others''. as an example of the controlled mind which has been described by Woodson (Olaniyan, 1995). Based on these arguments, it becomes evident that colonialism goes far beyond the colonization of territories, it is also about having power over knowledge and education that people have access to.

Fanon (1968) focused on the epistemic, violent and psychological sides of colonialism and stated colonialism emptied the brain of people and turns to the past of oppressed people, distorts, disfigures and destroys it. According to Thiong'o (2012), the main outcome of this process is alienation. Alienation leads to people looking at their own country as a foreign land and perceiving it through the lens of a stranger. Ake (1979) states Western social science continuously subordinates and under-develops Africa since it leads to misunderstanding the problems in the world, feeds false hopes, pushes policies which undermine competitive strength and ultimately lead to permanent underdevelopment and dependence (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2018). Ake's reflections explain that Western social sciences still contribute to suppression and underdevelopment in other parts of the world. Moreover, he argues that misinformation is provided in order to limit the development potential of countries in the Global South.

Decolonization is the process through which colonies gained independence and the United Nations played an important role in this, especially in the first two decades after the second world war. However, reducing or removing the dominance of the former colonial powers in terms of economic, social and cultural relations as well as in terms of production of knowledge is another challenge. According to Quijano (2007), the Western model is alive and globalization has created an epistemological hegemony (Grewal 2008). Mignolo 2012, describes the perspective of ''coloniality'' thinkers who believe that the ''Western Code'' is the hidden software of modernity and according to this model that is the only valid way of producing knowledge. Mignolo and Walsh advocate for ''decoloniality, the idea that a different form of decolonization or anticolonialism was and continues to be possible in the Global South – one that does not rest on Western forms of knowledge but instead on Indigenous epistemological styles and claims'' (Appadurai, 2021).

Mpofu defines decolonality as ''Decoloniality is the dismantling of relations of power and conceptions of knowledge that foment the reproduction of racial, gender, and geopolitical hierarchies that came into being or found new and more powerful forms of expression in the modern/colonial world'' (Mpofu, 2017). Ndlovu-Gatsheni describes decoloniality as ''an

epistemological and political movement and advances as a necessary liberatory language of the future for Africa. Decoloniality speaks to the deepening and widening of decolonization movements in those spaces that experienced the slave trade, imperialism, colonialism, apartheid, neo-colonialism, and underdevelopment. This is because the domains of culture, psyche, mind, language, aesthetics, religion, and many others have remained colonized'' (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2015). This certainly also applies to humanitarian aid which often works according to Western norms and values and expects others to conform to this approach. This approach is not always seen as problematic, since it can be portrayed as being universal. Nevertheless, processes in humanitarian aid can reinforce colonial dynamics.

Ortega (2017) raises the concept of un-knowing which is defined as ''practices that negate the dominant ways of knowing''. The goal of the un-knowing is to unlearn something which has been seen as universal knowledge, this is important since this dominant way of knowing could be harmful. The aim of this is to distort and negate epistemic practices that have been deployed against ignorance about marginalized selves. There are various narratives that can help us understand the world and our knowledge of knowledge in itself, for instance the work of Walter Mignolo, Enrique Dussel and Anibal Quijano who are three of the major philosophers of the decolonial movement. These philosophers and their interventions aim at ''precisely interrogating, problematizing, destabilizing, and ultimately transforming not only such macro-narratives but also their dependent corollaries in order to expose the coloniality of power and to reinscribe the colonial difference''. Moreover, the paper touches upon the words of Laura Pérez, who writes that ''Decolonizing must produce new understandings from culturally and politically or ideologically different frameworks of what gets to count as knowledge, how being is understood, both individual and collective. It is therefore evident in our thought, scholarship, and interactions with each other, and it is critical and transformative not only of the racialization and ethnocentrism of Eurocentric capitalist and imperialist cultures, but also of the patriarchal heteronormativity as central highly normalized forms of domination that historically precede these and fundamentally structure the logic of colonization and its aftermath up to the present'' (Ortega, 2017). An important part of decolonization is to challenge what is considered and recognized as knowledge and how perspectives and ideas about this are shaped by the logic of colonization.

Mignolo and Walsh highlight the concept of relationality which is ''the ways that different local histories and embodied conceptions and practices of decoloniality, including our own, can enter into conversations and build understandings that both cross geopolitical locations and colonial differences, and contest the totalizing claims and political-epistemic violence of modernity''. Coloniality is uncovering the underlying logic and structures of Western societies, its formation and planetary expansion, which has been in place since the sixteenth century. Decoloniality consists of different aspects including analytical elements and the praxis of knowing and living. Moreover, in their paper, Mignolo and Walsh make the following argument ''Decolonial epistemic reconstitution in whatever form it takes and whomever are the actors in their respective local histories to engage in it/them cannot be thought out as a global universal but as global pluriversal. No universal decoloniality can be mapped by one single local history and one single project''. According to Mignolo and Walsh ''there is no modernity without

coloniality, and there is no colonialism without all kinds of violence (physical, psychological, racist, sexist) and without the arrogance of the colonizer'' (Mignolo & Walsh, 2018).

Although the concept of decoloniality is at the core of this thesis, it is important to realize that this is a highly theoretical and academic concept which might not be widely known. Therefore, when conducting interviews, this concept was not be directly mentioned by the interviewer. If the interviewer would have mentioned this concept it would steer and influence the interview into a certain direction and might not provide an accurate representation of the situation. Therefore, a more neutral approach has been chosen in which terms such as 'relationships' are used in interview questions. The answers to the interview questions have been linked to more theoretical notions such as decoloniality when analysing the collected data.

3.2. Influence of colonial rule on the African continent

Colonial rule in Africa was present for generally less than 100 years, but had profound impacts. The colonial rule has had significant influence on the African continent in many different ways, however, only a limited number of influences will be highlighted in this thesis. Economies were created in a way that could meet the demands of industrialization in Europe, the European continent has gained much prosperity from colonizing Africa (Carmody, 2016). Border demarcations of countries on the African continent as they are today were created during the 'Scramble for Africa'. The post-colonial era has led to few changes in terms of the structure of African economies. Neo-colonialism is widely observed in economic and social domains and the former colonizing countries still exploit formerly colonized countries for their own benefit. Hence formal political independence is achieved, but economic control and indirect political power still remains with overseas powers and companies (Carmody, 2016).

Dark parts of modern European history such as the slave trade, imperialism and colonialism, all of which Africa suffered the consequences of, are sometimes portrayed as the distant past, whilst these practices still have ongoing impact today. African countries are still entrapped into colonial matrices of modern global power also referred to as the 'postcolonial neo-colonized world' (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2013b). Both terminologies focus on the period after colonization. However, it is important to avoid conflating the terminologies post-colonialism and neo-colonialism. The terms are differentiated by (Ushie, 2012) in the following manner ''A post-colonial country is one which was once colonized but now has only the scars to show for the domination, while a neo-colonial society is one which was once colonized, but which still has reeking wounds to show for the domination even under the leadership of its own people.'' Hence, it can be argued a neo-colonial society is still actively affected by coloniality and its dynamics and continues to be exploited.

Due to colonial power matrices, African identity formation, nation-building, knowledge production, economic development and democratization remain unfinished. The ''postcolonial neo-colonized world' leads to a situation where the African continent and the Western world meet on terms and in circumstances which are racialized, hegemonic, hierarchical and unequal (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2013b).

Contemporary African states were established by colonial powers and governed as if the citizens had no history. Liberation of these nations lead to denial and alienation. Decolonization aims at reflecting and progressing on the historical relation with the former colonizer in cultural, political and economic domains. This process can be painful and lead to self-critique, self-negation and self-rediscovery (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2013a).

Eurocentrism is a form of ethnocentrism which holds Western prejudices and often leads to racism, chauvinism, xenophobia and mistrust. This can be expressed in relationships between individuals, political opinions and processes and general views about society and culture (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2013a).

Many African academics are made to think and speak like Euro-American intellectuals which makes it difficult for African intellectuals to maintain a critical view on Euro-American hegemonic knowledge and the asymmetrical power relations it entails. Both the colonized and the colonizer need to be liberated in order to be fully decolonized (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2013b). Therefore, in order to accurately represent various perspectives, it is important to include African scholars who present authentic African views that might deviate from the ones of European and American scholars and also from the perspectives presented by African academics who are largely influenced by Euro-American scholars. Contributions of African intellectuals to the decolonisation of knowledge and politics is often ignored. Usually work of scholars in the Middle East, South Asia and South America is emphasized when reflecting on postcolonialism, decoloniality and decolonisation.

Quijano developed the notion of coloniality of power in order to explain the perpetuation of hierarchical and Western-centric relations (Quijano, 2000). Articles by Mignolo and Grosfoguel further elaborate on the concept of coloniality of power (Mignolo W. , 2002), (Mignolo W. , 2007), (Grosfoguel, 2002). The concept relates to the argument that modernity cannot be separated from coloniality due to its historic and epistemic nature and human hierarchy such as appropriation, violence and domination. There is a colonial asymmetry at the basis of political dynamics. It is hard to imagine several African delegations in European countries that offer assistance programmes in different sectors whilst living at a much higher standard than the poor communities they are serving (Sabaratnam, 2017). Yet, this is exactly what Europeans are doing in African countries.

3.3. Humanitarian governance

In the 1800s humanitarianism emerged as a way through which the world could be remade to better serve humanity and transform living conditions. Humanitarianism emerged from Western philosophy and post-enlightenment social movements, including social movements to end slavery, temperance movements, education activism, missionary work, and colonialism. The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) defines humanitarianism through the humanitarian principles of independence, neutrality, impartiality and humanity. Moreover, humanitarianism aims to protect the lives and dignity of victims of armed conflict and other

situations of violence and to provide them with assistance. Humanitarianism can also be defined more broadly as ''the desire to relieve the suffering of distant strangers''. Moreover, it is important to acknowledge the considerable overlap between humanitarianism and development. For instance, activities such as disaster risk reduction may lead to an organisation both providing disaster relief and development aid to the same group of people (Kennedy & Barnett, 2012).

Barnett defines humanitarian governance as ''the increasingly organized and internationalized attempt to save the lives, enhance the welfare, and reduce the suffering of the world's most vulnerable populations''. Furthermore, Barnett states that ''humanitarian governance exists only because of the existence of compassion, care, and concern for others. The desire to emancipate and protect the welfare of others can also lead to new forms of domination and configurations of power. It can lead to outcomes desired and regretted''. It is also emphasized that considerations should be given to the benchmark which is being used for judging progress or regress, what the alternative options are and whether these alternatives could be implemented, not only judged from the perspective of academics or NGOs, but also by the people of concern (Barnett M. N., 2013).

Givoni highlights the work of Mark Duffield and discusses the troubles of humanitarianism that have become part of an ethical discourse which is striving to ''develop systemic methods of prioritising problems, judging one's responsibility and analysing outcomes in order to make the best decision''. This supposedly new version of humanitarian ethics is framed by the dilemmas, hard choices and paradoxes of intervention. These are endeavours to recalibrate relief efforts and ensuring moral efficacy and ultimately leading to a reaffirmation of the humanitarian impulse on more solid and rationalised grounds Givoni (2011). A better understanding of humanitarian ethics is required and Thomas Osborne, following Michel Foucault, has defined humanitarian ethics in the following way ''those practices, ideals, norms and techniques through which agents (in this case, the humanitarian rescuers) seek to 'stylize' their attributes such as to make themselves coherent subjects of conduct''. According to this perspective, ethics are mainly consisting of a cultivation of conduct, referred to by Foucault as 'care of the self', which includes the exercise of freedom and the exercise of responsibility and making alignments with the experience of subjectivity with the government of the subject (Givoni, 2011). This also points out the need to problematize localisation as a form of decoloniality, because localization can be used as a vehicle through which similar humanitarian ethics of international actors are pushed even though these might now be enforced by national and local actors. Hence, localization does not necessarily lead to decoloniality and it is a common misconception the two are related by default.

Humanitarian governance includes a wide range of topics. This thesis critically assesses the values and norms on which humanitarian governance was build and how this relates to daily realities and relations between organizations and how this in turn influences the implementation of   humanitarian   projects.

3.4. Pan-Africanism and Afrocentrism

Asante (1987) describes Afrocentricity as ''the belief in the centrality of Africans in post-modern history and a critical perspective placing African ideals at the centre of any analysis that involves African culture or behaviour'' (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2018).

A special publication of the African Union has defined Pan-Africanism in the following manner; ''Pan-Africanism is an ideology and movement that encouraged the solidarity of Africans worldwide. It is based on the belief that unity is vital to economic, social and political progress and aims to 'unify and uplift' people of African descent. The ideology asserts that the fates of all African peoples and countries are intertwined. At its core, Pan-Africanism is a belief that African peoples both on the continent and in the diaspora, share not merely a common history, but a common destiny'' (Adi, 2018).

Themes such as self-reliance, participation, solidarity and leadership which are discussed throughout this thesis are also at the core of the 'Agenda 2063 – The Africa We Want' developed by the African Union Commission. Agenda 2063 has identified several critical enablers for Africa's transformation that are in line with the aspects that are needed to achieve decoloniality. These critical enablers include; (1) ownership and mobilization of people, (2) African resources to finance its development, (3) accountable leadership and responsive institutions, (4) capable and democratic developmental states and institutions, (5) changed attitudes and mind-sets, (6) a Pan-African perspective on critical issues of continental and global dimensions, (7) ownership of the African narrative and brand and (8) an African approach to development and transformation (African Union Commission, 2015).

As part of using decolonizing methodology, it is important to look at movements and activist groups that are trying to change the status quo and have been advocating for an alternative to Eurocentrism. Afrocentrism fights against oppression which is still taking place as a result of the colonial past. Pan-Africanism advocates for a future in which the African continent strives for unity in order to achieve economic, social and political progress for all Africans. The concepts of Afrocentrism and Pan-Africanism have been added to this thesis as a different pathway and lens through which the world can be seen and experienced as well as providing tools and suggestions for a future in which African perspectives, ideas and capabilities of Africans have more space and recognition.

3.5. Interlinking and applying the theories

Significant overlaps have been found between the different theories whilst they are also working in a complementary sense. The theories discussed in this framework have been foundational in developing and designing the interview guideline. Although the interview guideline focused more on distilling practical examples, the responses from the interviews have been linked to the aforementioned theories in order to make sense of the information which has been provided during the interviews and to appropriately contextualize them. Based on the perspectives and ideas shared by interviewees, different themes have been distinguished in

order to inform the formulation of the results chapters. It was aimed to link each of these themes to one or more theories described in this chapter. The conclusion section of the report provides a summary of the themes and theories used throughout the thesis.

In addition to linking different theories, it is also important to note that these theories have largely been applied in a context that they are not necessarily written or developed for. The concept of decoloniality for instance, is often applied in the context of education, but has now been used in the context of humanitarian aid. The same applied for concepts such as Pan-Africanism and Afrocentrism. This means that although the existing literature about the majority of the theories form an excellence basis for understanding them, the practical implications and observations when applying these theories, might significantly differ compared to what can be found in literature. This is also where my thesis adds value since it provides a different approach and angle to theories and broadens the context in which they are used.

Chapter 4: Methodology

4.1. Approach and key elements

This thesis is a combination of literature review and online interviewing and observation consisting of participating in webinars and 24 interviews with research participants. The literature consisting of a diverse range of authors that was consulted include literature from authors originating from the Global South and Global North and a mixture of academics and practitioners. Literature of several African academics was included in order to ensure their knowledge and perspectives are represented. Building an extensive and comprehensive literature review aimed at approaching concepts such as coloniality, humanitarian governance and the research context in Uganda from different angles which allowed for a more in-depth and accurate understanding of these topics. Another part of the thesis research consisted of conducting an online ethnography which included attending webinars and online events which were instrumental in informing and guiding this thesis research and helped in creating a constructive basis for my thesis. The webinars have either been attended live or were watched back later at a convenient time.

Furthermore, websites of national, local and refugee-led humanitarian organizations were explored and when relevant these organizations were consequently invited for interviews. It was key that these organizations focused on humanitarian activities and were established and led by Ugandan nationals or refugees residing in Uganda. Moreover, personal networks and connections were utilized in order to find relevant organizations to interview. As part of a decolonizing research methodology, the focus of these interviews was on interviewing national, local and refugee-led humanitarian organizations in Uganda to amplify the voices that are often insufficiently considered. An interview guideline and topic list were developed in order to structure and streamline the interviews. This interview guideline can be found in appendix 1. The interviews were semi-structured and I tried to maintain a natural conversation flow by shifting the order of the questions and asking follow-up questions wherever relevant and appropriate. After the interviews, the respondents were asked if they knew of any other organizations that could potentially be interviewed as part of my thesis research, the so-called snowball methodology.

As a result, 24 in-depth interviews with national, local and refugee-led humanitarian organizations in Uganda were conducted. The duration of these interviews ranged between one and two hours for each of the interviews. This thesis aimed at combining different perspectives. It has brought together the experiences and perspectives of academics and practitioners in the humanitarian domain. The academic literature included authors from both the Global North and Global South. This research approach provided a more comprehensive overview of the reshaping of humanitarian aid and the various relations and power dynamics between different types of humanitarian organizations with a specific focus on Uganda. The people that were interviewed for this thesis research were working for different types of organizations and operating in diverse contexts in Uganda. Some interviewees were working for refugee-led organizations in Uganda and were refugees from amongst others the Democratic Republic of

the Congo, South Sudan and Somalia. Other interviewees were with Ugandans working with vulnerable communities in humanitarian settings in Uganda. Some of the interviewees were involved in research or journalism on refugees. Moreover, several interviewees represented activist groups or alliances aiming to address unequal power relations in the humanitarian sector, with a specific focus on Uganda. Some of the interviewees resided in urban areas whilst others resided in rural areas or in refugee settlements. The majority of the interviewees were males, however, multiple women were interviewed as well. Many of the organizations that were interviewed received funding for their activities from foreign donors. Some organizations focused on teaching skills (leadership, financial literacy etc.) whilst others focused on providing services such as healthcare or legal support. All in all, the research population was diverse and provided excellent input for this thesis research.

4.2. Access

Potential research participants were approached through sending emails in which I introduced myself as a researcher and student, provided a short overview of my research and included an invitation for an interview. Furthermore, I used my personal network and connections with Ugandans to find interviewees. Additionally, I used the snowballing method by asking people I had interviewed if they had contacts and suggestions regarding other people I could interview. At a certain point I was being referred to people I had already interviewed for my thesis, a clear sign that I had already talked to a sufficient number of interviewees and that I had reached the saturation point of my data collection process. This also became evident because I kept hearing similar arguments and perspectives from my interviewees, hence, I decided that 24 interviews were sufficient to inform my thesis research and that the research population could be considered representative for a larger number of national, local and refugee-led humanitarian organizations in Uganda. The interviews were conducted through different online platforms including Microsoft Teams, Zoom and WhatsApp, depending on the preference of the interviewees. Most interviews were conducted with only audio, in order to enable a more stable internet connection and improve the flow of the conversation.

4.3. Ethics

Throughout my thesis research, communicating with research participants in a respectful manner had the highest priority. First of all, informed consent from the research respondents was sought and permission was asked to record the interviews in order to be able to listen to the interviews again and to use specific quotes from interviewees throughout the thesis. I did not intend to cause harm or contribute to any negative impacts for the interview participants I engaged with during this research. Therefore, the participants of my research remain anonymous, meaning both their own name and the name of the organizations they are working for are not mentioned anywhere in this thesis. However, in order to be transparent, the number of interviews and the date on which they were conducted are listed in appendix 2. Furthermore, the research population has been described in order to provide insights into the diversity of interviewees. Moreover, a short description with background information about the interviewee and the type of sector or organization they are representing is included with most of the quotes from interviewees. Everyone that was interviewed as part of this research had the opportunity

to stop the interview at any time or to skip a question if they did not feel comfortable with answering this particular question. Moreover, I have reported about the interviewees and their statements in a respectful and dignified manner. Throughout the thesis, the core themes and concerns as highlighted by the interviewees have been reflected in the results chapters. Additionally, this thesis has been shared with the research respondents in order to give them the opportunity to read the thesis that they have contributed to.

Chapter 5: Results - The Humanitarian Landscape and Key Actors

First of all, the key actors in the humanitarian refugee response landscape in Uganda will be described. These actors include national, local and refugee-led NGOs, international NGOs, donors and the local and national Ugandan government. Additionally, some of the key challenges mentioned by interviewees are discussed, though they are further elaborated upon in the next chapter. Thirdly, the collaborations, relations and dynamics between these actors are analysed. The aim of this chapter is to create an overview and basic understanding of the humanitarian landscape and key actors in the refugee response in Uganda. Moreover, the chapter aims at providing an overview of perceptions of the collaborations within the current humanitarian landscape in Uganda. The chapter is based on data collected during online interviews and complemented with an extensive literature review and information gathered from online meetings, webinars and events.

5.1. Key Actors in the Humanitarian Landscape

The main actors in the humanitarian response related to refugees in Uganda are identified as; national, local and refugee-led NGOs, international NGOs, donors and the local and national Ugandan government. There are many more stakeholders involved in the humanitarian landscape, but the focus is given to these actors due to their importance and influence on the sector.

There is a wide variety of humanitarian actors operating in Uganda including international non-governmental organizations (INGOs), agencies of the United Nations (UN), local humanitarian actors such as civil society organisations (CSOs), faith based organizations (FBOs) and community-based organizations (CBOs) as well as central and local government. Moreover, academic and research institutions and private sector are stakeholders in humanitarian endeavours. The Ugandan government coordinates the response of humanitarian actors through two departments of the Office of the Prime Minister (OPM), the Department for Disaster Preparedness and Management and the Department for Refugees. The OPM Directorate for Relief, Disaster Preparedness and Management is the lead agency to coordinate risk reduction, prevention, preparedness, mitigation and response actions, in consultation with other line ministries, Local Governments and other humanitarian stakeholders (Mir & Ochen, 2016).

National, local and refugee-led NGOs

There are many national, local and refugee-led NGOs in Uganda that are focused on supporting refugees. Some of these NGOs are based in the capital, Kampala, and focus on urban refugees whilst others are based in one or multiple of the refugee settlements across Uganda. Whilst the national, local and refugee-led NGOs are herein categorized as one group, it is important to understand that this is a very heterogenous group of organizations with diverse capacities and areas of focus (Pincock, Betts, & Easton-Calabria, 2020). It would be limiting to think about these organizations as homogenous entities. Even within national, local and refugee-led humanitarian organizations it is important to be conscious of the composition of staff members

for instance. Staff diversity is an important factor to consider. For organizations working with refugees, it is crucial to also have refugees as staff members, this should be part of employment practices. The word 'Local' in itself is heterogenous and consists of contestation and power struggles (Pincock, Betts, & Easton-Calabria, 2020). This is also touched upon through the concept of 'critical localism' which focuses on processes of authority and power within local contexts as well as assessing the interactions with international stakeholders (Pincock, Betts, & Easton-Calabria, 2020). The activities that national, local and refugee-led NGOs engage in range from providing language courses and entrepreneurship trainings to handing out food during the heights of the Covid-19 pandemic and many more activities.

Most National NGOs are based in the capital city Kampala. If it is a bigger NGO, they might have offices in various districts across the country, especially in areas where many refugees reside in refugee settlements. Local NGOs usually describe themselves as community-based and often work in one particular location. Refugee-led NGOs (RLOs) are led by refugees who have usually been in Uganda for several years. Most RLOs largely depend on volunteers who are generally also refugees themselves and are therefore strongly motivated and very passionate about the work they are doing. As pointed out by an interviewee of a refugee-led humanitarian organization advocating for the rights of urban refugees *'We are the people on the ground with the community, we live with them, we eat with them, we sleep with them. We spend the whole day with them, we share challenges together and we are well-placed and gain more integrity and trustworthiness from them. We know their problem, we share their problem.'* Additionally, the people working for RLOs are usually part of the same community they are supporting during their work.

Sometimes refugee-led organizations cannot register as NGOs in Uganda, due to the requirement an Ugandan citizen needs to be part of the organization. Therefore, some refugee-led organizations in Uganda are registered as foreign NGOs. If registered as a foreign NGO, fees are usually higher in order to receive permission to operate in Uganda. However, at the same time, having a foreign NGO registration would make it easier to continue or expand the NGO and its activities in the country of origin if desired. A foreign NGO is considered an international NGO, even though all activities are implemented by and for refugees within Uganda. Furthermore, this type of international NGO conflicts with mainstream ideas of international NGOs being enormous organizations with large amounts of available funding. Additionally, it also challenges the common assumption there are many misunderstandings and differences in terms of priorities between international NGOs and populations receiving humanitarian support. Therefore, categorizing organizations is sometimes challenging or even limiting since it does not encompass all complexities and nuances.

Even though outsiders can play a harmful role through for instance acts of white saviourism in which they present themselves as the heroes or saviours, it is important to emphasize there are also many inequalities among Ugandan actors themselves. The Ugandan elite and middleclass sometimes have similar ideas about development as outside Westerners and do not really understand the realities of people affected by conflict, injustice or poverty. Several interviewees mentioned that Ugandans who are from the middleclass and elite can also have the saviour

mentality which can be very harmful for ongoing activities. One of the interviewees mentioned that Ugandan staff working in a particular refugee settlement in Northern Uganda usually originate from Central or Western Uganda and have very little understanding of the interests, values and culture of people living in the refugee settlements and the host communities in Northern Uganda. Moreover, the majority of these people from other parts of Uganda do not speak languages which would enable them to easily communicate with people hence they often need translators in order to properly implement their work. Outsiders are not only foreign nationals but can also be Ugandans that are unfamiliar with the communities that they work with. One interviewee of an organization focusing on refugee rights and law mentioned *'People's understanding of themselves as saviours is common. Not just in the interaction between Global South and Global North, but also in the Global South itself. The middle class is comfortable and has a passion to help poor people.'*

International NGOs

There are many international NGOs working on the humanitarian refugee response in Uganda. International NGOs generally receive funding from international donors and they usually provide funding to national, local and refugee-led NGOs. One interviewee of a refugee network organization and an organization focusing on refugee youth described international NGOs as *'middlemen'* whilst another working for a foundation focusing on training children in leadership skills and financially literacy whilst also working on the integration of migrants referred to *'the long chain of humanitarian actors before resources reach the affected communities.'* International NGOs usually have grants for which national, local and refugee-led organizations can apply in order to receive funding. These grants usually consist of already pre-determined priorities and goals that should be achieved. Sometimes this can lead to gaps between priorities and needs of affected communities and the focus of projects. One of the interviewees, heading a refugee-led and youth focused organization mentioned *'People are very good at writing reports, but what is being done on the ground is minor. Because it is very difficult to have someone who doesn't really understand the actual problem and tell that person to solve the problem. It will not work out.'* This argument clearly emphasizes the need for a better understanding of the problems among the decision-makers and policy/report writers. It can be argued that to really understand a problem, lived experience is indispensable.

Donors

Donors are usually the ones providing money to aid agencies implementing projects. They are generally the ones doing the agenda setting and determining what projects should be about. Several interviewees raised that they are not able to disagree with the donors and international NGOs even if they know their suggested approach and activities are not in line with the priorities and interests of communities. They usually cannot raise these issues out of fear of losing funding since international donors and organizations can easily start working with other national, local and refugee-led organizations. National, local and refugee-led organizations repeatedly compete for the same funding. Donors have various ways of working and some donors show more commitment to changing and shifting power than others. Some donors and international NGOs for instance have even scaled down their operations in order to give space to national, local and refugee-led organizations.

However, it looks like most donors and international NGOs are interested in continuing their work and are not willing to give up any power or leave space for other actors to enter the arena. This also has to do with the global economy in which the focus is usually on growing, making more money and ensuring that the business or organization is well-known (sometimes referred to as 'branding'). Hence, is difficult for an organization to not aim for growth, expansion and increased visibility. There are different types of donors. An interviewee working for a national organization focusing on refugee rights and with many years of experience working with different types of donors stated the following about the diversity in behaviours of donors *'Some donors describe their grantees as partners. Some donors I think we are partners with them, for others we use their money in a more distant kind of relationship. There is a whole range of different relationships with donors. This is determined by the donors in the sense of how involved they want to be, what kind of conversation they want to have with you as grantee. There is a broad spectrum of donors, they are very diverse and you can't just say the donors are like this.'*

In terms of good or desirable behaviours and mindsets of donors, interviewees have pointed out different elements they appreciate in donors. An interviewee working for an organization advocating for the rights of refugees elaborated on the type of donors his organization likes to work with *'The best donors want to talk with you. They want to hear what is going on. They listen and help you to get through it. A lot of donors are not set up like that. That is one of the things that really bothers me about the localization agenda, it is labour intensive for donors.'* Donors have different styles of working and some are more receptive to hearing from their local partner whilst others stick to the objectives which have been set prior and are not flexible in adapting this when situations change. Flexibility, adapting and listening to others in humanitarian programming is crucial since circumstances can be unstable and can quickly change when conflict or natural disaster is involved. One of the interviewees working for a national Ugandan organization mentioned that some donors are very strict with their requirements and are not willing to shift in case a certain objective is difficult to achieve *'Other donors are not interested in the reasons why you couldn't do it (achieve a target). These tend to be the larger bureaucracies where ticking of boxes is required. It can be difficult to explain to them why something did not work'. When donors have flatter systems and you are close to focal persons whom interact directly with grantees, they are better equipped to understand what is happening on the ground and provide the right support.'* The support and flexibility of the donors depends on the organizational structure of the donors and their procedures and approach to the organizations they work with. The less bureaucratic these systems are and the more space there is to have conversations and work on improving and adapting the respective programming, the more suitable this seems to be for national, local and refugee-led humanitarian organizations.

Certainly, bureaucracy is needed to a certain degree in order for the system to function well, but humanitarian programming also requires flexibility and context-specific information in order to achieve the best possible results. Another interviewee working for an organization supporting vulnerable people recovering from war and impacted with HIV/AIDS shared the

following *'There are many experiences working with various donors. It is good when there is shared trust. When you can develop and design a joint action plan. This is our first time working with a donor like this where we can come with the activities that are most appropriate. The usual is a call for application with already dictated objectives. By designing activities within those priorities it made us exercise our power, our opinion is valued, we are close the community and there is much value in this exercise.'* This observation also discusses the diversity in the type of donors and the preference for a donor that allows for designing a joint action plan in which the national, local and refugee-led humanitarian organizations also have power and influence over the humanitarian aid programming.

Outsiders and foreign donors generally have a very large influence on the types of programmes which are being implemented. The statement 'money is power' is very evident in the humanitarian situation in Uganda. Actors with abundant financial resources are in the driver seat when it comes to decision-making processes in the humanitarian domain. Through this large influence of outsiders and foreign donors, sometimes certain 'Western values' are also being imposed on the aid receiving communities. Moreover, international organizations tend to centre themselves in the approach and cannot sufficiently recognize the ongoing efforts at community level. The activist organization No White Saviours captures this in the following quote listed on their website; ''We never said 'no white people', we just know you shouldn't be the hero of the story''.

Local and National Ugandan government
This thesis is focusing on the relationship between international and national, local and refugee-led humanitarian organizations. However, it is important to emphasize that these actors are not operating in isolation. Instead, they are actors in a complex structure. Domestic government policies and regulations in Uganda and bilateral international agreements between various countries largely shape the environment in which aid can be provided. This can be both a stimulating and encouraging factor and a limiting or restricting factor. Many interviewees mentioned that the Ugandan government plays a major role in determining which humanitarian activities can be implemented since they always have to provide permission for ongoing activities. No specific questions about the government were asked, but the majority of the interviewees mentioned them and their influence on the sector. One of the interviewees heading an Ugandan NGO that works with many different stakeholders said *'The government is the biggest power of all and if you get on their wrong side you just can't work, they will stop you in one way or another.'* Several human rights organizations have been closed due to government claims that their documents and permits were not in order. This hints at a shrinking space for civil society actors and an impediment on basic human rights such as freedom of speech.

Next to humanitarian organizations facing threats when they speak out about shortcoming they see in the contemporary humanitarian aid structures, citizens and refugees that are receiving support of these organizations can also often not fully express themselves about issues in the humanitarian system. This becomes visible through the following statement made by a NGO based in Kampala *'If you have some reluctancy on the government, citizens always feel insecure*

and they don't support it. You have to leave it out of reports and meetings, maybe people are fearing their security. This could be used as avenue of right to freedom of expression.' Moreover, this statement provides an insight into whom refugee and host communities as well as national, local and refugee-led humanitarian organizations are fearing. This view is also echoed and confirmed by other interviewees, one of them mentioned the need to maintain a good relationship with the government, because otherwise your work can not be conducted since they will find a way to block you. The importance of being approved by the government is also highlighted in the following quote by a lecturer and researcher on forced migration *'Without OPM (Office of the Prime Minister) clearance you can't do any work with refugees in Uganda.'* The government decides who can operate in the humanitarian space and which activities are allowed. Hence, there is limited room for negotiating or deviating from what an organization is expected to do and has permission to do. An interviewee working for an Ugandan university and researching and lecturing about forced migration and refugee youth volunteering shared the following reflections about this *'Last year the government ordered all refugee organizations to renew their permits and to register with OPM. A number of organizations were not allowed by the government to continue working in refugee settlements. For these organizations it was not clear what they were doing and what their source of funds was. This has not only affected organizations working with refugees, but also organizations that deal with governance and human rights. A few months ago, about 50 organizations were stopped by the government and can't continue operating. This is because they have been critical of the government, in terms of human rights and governance. If you are too critical of the government, then of course you are really targeted by the government. The government obviously has a bigger say on who operates in this humanitarian space. They will give you a permit or not and they renew this permit or decide not to renew depending on their interest. They are doing all this because they want to streamline operations of all NGOs. I am also aware that there are NGOs operating without all requirements and documents. I don't want to say that all NGOs are perfect.'* This explanation clearly shows recent developments regarding the shrinking of civil space in Uganda and the motivation to do this.

Recently several civil society groups and organizations have faced challenges in implementing their activities in Uganda. Ugandan authorities have suspended over 50 civic groups as a result of allegations that they are not complying with regulations. The Ugandan Non-Governmental Organization Bureau claims that the civil society groups in question did not file accounts or did not register with authorities. Earlier in 2021, one of the main donors of civil groups in Uganda, the Democratic Governance Facility (DGF) had their operations suspended, leaving many civil society groups and organizations unable to carry out their regular activities. Some perceive the recent development as assaults on civil society and claim that there is political harassment of citizens and NGOs (Aljazeera, 2021). Several interviewees also referred to these developments and the ones that mentioned this knew some of the NGOs that were shut down. Especially NGOs working on human rights and governance where told to stop their operations. The recent development could be categorized as a shrinking civil society space. During one of the interviews with the CEO of an Ugandan refugee law organization, an alternative view was shared about these developments *'There is different mechanisms to control civil society and academia. They really control that space. There is quite a lot of controversy. People talk about*

shrinking civil society space, but I am not sure if it is shrinking. I think the methods of controlling are more visible. When the (Ugandan) government wants to shut you down, they will shut you down. There is not very much you can do about it.' This is an interesting perspective, because it is indeed also about increased visibility of controlling methods which have been employed for decades already but are now more evident through for example social media and increased access to information. It should also be noted that civil society and non-governmental organizations should by definition not be affiliated with the government. Nevertheless, in the humanitarian context in Uganda, civil society and non-governmental organizations clearly need the support and approval of the government in order to be able to operate and implement their projects. Freedom to focus on certain politically-sensitive topics such human rights and governance is very much restricted.

According to an interviewee whom conducts research about forced migration and refugee youth volunteering, a refugee-led humanitarian organization that he talked to reported the following *'According to the refugee policy in Uganda, refugees are supposed to be in the settlement. If you want support you have to be in a settlement. Most of them go to settlements, register there and run back to urban areas to do things. They don't have opportunities in the settlement. They might have a NGO in Kampala, and when food is given in the settlement, they have to run there, and after getting food they have to come to Kampala where they have business. This is a challenge on their part, because they can miss verification exercise or so of the activities if they are organized abruptly.'* This statement clearly indicates that Uganda prefers to provide support to refugees when they are living in settlements. This could be because this might be easier to oversee and implement. However, this also leads to a situation where it is a dilemma for refugees to leave the settlement, even though there might be limited opportunities in the settlement, at least there is some basic type of assurance of support or assistance provided.

Uganda's NGO Act (2016) includes phrases like 'interest of Ugandans' and 'acts which are prejudicial to the security of Uganda and the dignity of people of Uganda'. However, these acts are ambiguous since it is unclear what this entails. The Human Rights Awareness and Promotion Forum (HRAPF) highlights that these provisions are too broad and can be used to restrict, control and reduce civic space, which makes it challenging for NGOs to operate freely or at all. Moreover, in order for NGOs to be registered, they need to undergo a three-phase approval process from the District Non-Governmental Organisations Monitoring Committee (DNMCs), Local Governments and NGO Bureau, which is a bureaucratic, time-consuming and sometimes corrupt process. The NGO Act 2016 doesn't meet the international standards on the right to freedom of association (Bwambale, 2021). Important to note is 'The Non-Governmental Organisations Act, 2016' developed by the Republic of Uganda is aimed at providing a conducive and enabling environment for non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and the mutual partnership with the Ugandan government (The Republic of Uganda , 2016).

5.2. Chapter conclusion

This chapter explored various key actors in the humanitarian architecture in Uganda. Moreover, it assessed their roles, responsibilities and interactions. Based on the collected information it becomes evident that national, local and refugee-led humanitarian organizations in Uganda

experience many inequalities and a wide range of challenges in collaborating with INGOs. Lack of trust, being treated with less respect, not being involved in decision-making processes and a large resource gap are among the core elements which are frequently being mentioned by local actors. Obviously one should be careful with generalizing findings, since some interviewees mention there are large differences between different collaborations with INGOs and donors. Some INGOs and donors do try to make a genuine effort to collaborate in a more equal manner, however, generally speaking INGOs and donors have more decision-making power and financial resources and largely dominate the humanitarian space. The Ugandan government is also a powerful actor and controls who is allowed to operate and implement activities related to refugees. The space for humanitarian actors to operate is shrinking and is becoming more restrictive.

Chapter 6: Results - Fundamental Elements of the Humanitarian System

This chapter critically assesses several key elements of the humanitarian response that largely shape the humanitarian domain including power, funding, capacity, language/framing as well as visibility. These themes are explored in a comparative manner because in assessing these themes special attention is given to the differences and inequalities between international, national, local and refugee-led humanitarian organizations. The analysis of various elements of the humanitarian system is informed by perspectives and experiences shared by interviewees and supported by literature. An analytical angle is added by including observations and reflections. This results chapter dives into some of the most commonly mentioned themes during the interviews. These themes also closely relate to topics which have been described in the literature and are therefore connected.

In order to understand the relations between international and national, local and refugee-led humanitarian organizations in Uganda, it is important to look at both opportunities and challenges. Therefore, several reasons and motivations of national, local and refugee-led organizations to collaborate with international organizations have been identified. First of all, it was noted that opportunities to access funding are very important since this could lead to possibilities of upscaling ongoing activities and being able to serve more people. Additionally, attending trainings and courses bring a lot of added values. Moreover, sometimes these collaborations lead to being able to represent the organization at the global level at conferences. Furthermore, a lot can be learned from the expertise and experience of international organizations. The connections that international organizations have can be very helpful to national, local and refugee-led organizations. National, local and refugee-led humanitarian organizations in Uganda which were interviewed during the thesis research were all interested in collaborating with international organizations since this can offer many benefits. The benefits of collaborating with international humanitarian organizations include access to funding and resources, access to knowledge, information, and conferences as well as access to networks and mentorship and to gain experience. Nevertheless, the challenges and issues associated with relations between international and national, local and refugee-led humanitarian organizations should not be underestimated and are further explored in this chapter.

6.1. Power

As mentioned by one of the participants of the Annual Country Dialogue organized by the Charter 4 Change Uganda working group, there are many different types of power. Some are more visible than others, but they all play an important role in shaping the dynamics. The one who has money has the power. This is an argument which is frequently being made and also applies to other sectors besides humanitarian aid. In practice the actor who provides funding has most decision-making power on how this funding is spend. As a result, financial support is not always spend in the most efficient way. Decision-making power is often mentioned by

national, local and refugee-led organizations as lacking and not equally distributed among involved actors in the humanitarian sector.

According to Barnett, paternalism is an organizing principle of the international humanitarian order. The mixture of care and control is described in the concept of paternalism which is defined by Gerald Dworkin as ''the interference with a person's liberty of action justified by reasons referring exclusively to the welfare, good, happiness, needs interests or values of the person being coerced''. Paternalism is usually either actively present or dormant in most interventions that are designed for the betterment of people and the good of humanity (Barnett M. N., 2012).

An interviewee working for a rural development organization and chairing an organization advocating for localization stated the following *'International actors might think they have involved communities, but not really. We have been given opportunity to sit there, but the local organization does not decide. They are not having power in terms of resources and deciding where it is channelled and through who. The decisions are made by international organizations and donors themselves.'* Hence the involvement of national, local and refugee-led organizations can at times be more of a tokenistic type of participation in which these actors do not have any real decision-making power. The ladder of citizen participation is a common framework used to determine the level of participation. The type of participation the interviewee was referring to links to placation in which communities and national, local and refugee-led humanitarian organizations are granted a limited degree of influence in a process, but their participation is largely or entirely tokenistic, these actors are merely involved to demonstrate they were involved (Arnstein, 1969). A method which is being used by some donors to control what is happening is micro-managing in which they want to decide everything that is going on, even small day to day and routine processes. This tokenistic or symbolic type of involvement is also reported on by others for instance by the New Humanitarian website concerning refugee participation. In order for the participation of refugees to be meaningful it needs to be ''substantive, sustained, and have the potential to affect outcomes'' (Alio & Gardi, 2021).

Refugees should not be viewed as victims or as people having a lack of agency, instead they must influence both national and international policies. Forcibly displaced persons, including refugees, are approximately 1% of the world population. The lived experiences of refugees are invaluable in identifying and addressing the problems in the global response system. They deserve to be acknowledged as partners and work on global policymaking processes (Alio & Gardi, 2021). Based on the data collected from the interviews, the refugee-led organizations that were interviewed express similar sentiments and perceive their lived experiences and understanding of the challenges of refugees as a major advantage for humanitarian programming. More broadly speaking, all interviewees would like for their organizations to have increased levels of decision-making power.

Moreover, refugees and refugee-led humanitarian organizations are usually not included in decision-making. An interviewee working for an Ugandan and South Sudanese NGO focused on the well-being of internally displaced persons (IDPs), returnees and refugees, provided the

following example to support his argument that refugees are not involved in decision-making processes and do not receive adequate information *'They reduced the ratio of food (in refugee settlements). Refugees were not included or involved in this decision-making process. Refugees were informed last-minute on something that was already decided.'* The same interviewee provided another example; *'Two or three months back they were distributing soap without consultation of refugees themselves. This led to a situation where refugees had to use bathing soap for washing utensils because they don't have any other thing.'* These examples are an illustration of several issues that refugees are experiencing.

Nevertheless, it is important not to generalize when critically reflecting on the sector. There are good examples and practices of organizations which handle decision-making and partnerships in a very different way. One of the interviewees referred to a consortium in which there were international and local partners and one of the local partners was the lead partner. According to her such an arrangement was very unique and innovative and she had not encountered such an arrangement before. This consortium is a good example in which the local partner is trusted, respected and given autonomy to lead a consortium and direct international partners. However, one interviewee noted the good examples are usually implemented by international organizations with less bureaucratic procedures but also with a relatively small funding capacity. Another interviewee who has worked for several Ugandan NGOs focused on supporting vulnerable people shared about her experiences in working with INGOs *'Some INGOs are down to earth and are doing their work with dignity. They allow you to design programs according to the most urgent need in the community. They have templates that are user-friendly and they normally listen to us. They call grantees and partners their friends. They are willing to make adjustments. This is not common with the bilateral organizations, the big ones.'* In this quote, the interviewee lists various characteristics and elements that are appreciated in one INGO that her organization works with. She also points out that this is more of an exception and is certainly not the status quo among larger bilateral organizations. When there is focus on co-ownership and complementarity of various humanitarian actors, humanitarian programming and partnerships are less paternalistic and in turn usually better equipped to respond to humanitarian needs effectively using the strengths of all involved humanitarian actors. It is crucial all humanitarian actors are open to learning from each other without preconceived ideas of how humanitarian programming is supposed to look like. Based on the data collected during my thesis research, I can confidently conclude there are many opportunities for increased involvement of national, local and refugee-led organizations in creating equal partnerships and decision-making processes.

6.2. Funding

According to the 2021 Global Humanitarian Assistance Report, 1.7 million people living in Uganda are affected by crisis and are in need of assistance (Development Initiatives, 2021). Uganda has seen a notable reduction in humanitarian aid contribution, from 350 million USD in 2017 to 223 million USD in 2018, a reduction of 36% funding in just one year. Uganda was the 19th largest recipient of international humanitarian assistance in 2018 (Development Initiatives, 2020).

In Uganda, UNHCR's financial requirements of 2021 are 344.8 million USD, however as of 31 October 2021, only 45% of this is funded (UNHCR, 2021). This clearly points to a lack in required resources in order to manage humanitarian operations. This shortage in humanitarian funding across the sector was also pointed out by one of the interviewees working as a lecturer and researcher on forced migration in Uganda and neighbouring countries *'The challenge of finding sources of funding is not only affecting NGOs, it is also affecting the government. Only a small fraction of the requested amount of funding is obtained. This is a general problem affecting all actors in the humanitarian space.'* Hence, it is important to note that not only national, local and refugee-led humanitarian organizations experience issues in obtaining sufficient financial resources in order to conduct all the required humanitarian activities, international humanitarian organizations and government institutions are facing similar financial constraints. Funding always seems to be a limiting factor.

The Grand Bargain 2.0 defines quality funding in the following manner; ''Quality funding is as flexible, predictable and timely as possible throughout the delivery chain – including for local responders – while still being clear and transparent (to an appropriate level of detail) in how it is used and where it goes and what it achieves. Quality funding targets the most vulnerable with what they need most based on inclusive consultation processes with affected populations, and effective coordination open to local responders including Women Led Organizations'' (Dutch Relief Alliance , 2021).

An interviewee working as a university lecturer and researcher on forced migration expressed the following about funding processes of humanitarian aid activities *'Funding needs to be applied for every year. Organizations do not know if they will get funding for the next year. UNHCR and OPM decide the available sectors for next year where you can do bidding, where funds and donations will be available. It depends on priority areas, the next year some sectors might not be funded.'* It can be argued that this leads to a very unstable situation since it is difficult for NGOs to plan ahead, funding is only announced on a yearly basis, hence multi-year projects can be difficult to realize. The priorities are not decided upon by affected communities themselves, but listed through a top-down approach. Moreover, there is fierce competition among organizations for funding due to the bidding process. This is also highlighted by an interviewee lecturing and researching about forced migration *'Refugee-led organizations have competition from big INGOs, it is hard for them to compete favourably on their own and get funds.'* Hence, competition for funding is not only between national, local and refugee-led humanitarian organizations but also with international humanitarian organizations. Due to the huge gap in financial, material and human resources and capacity, international organizations usually have a big advantage and are more likely to attract funding.

Funding and its associated dynamics are a crucial part of the humanitarian system. The notion of money is power certainly applies to the humanitarian domain. Donors are usually the ones deciding what type of projects can be funded. A common way of working is that donors outline a project including activities and desired outcomes and national, local and refugee-led organizations can apply for this and can receive grants. This means national, local and refugee-

led organizations are often solely implementing partners or sub-contractors and don't have much influence on topics such as agenda setting. National, local and refugee-led organizations are then merely in charge of implementing activities but don't have influence on what they are implementing, they are just being told what to do by international actors. This is not desirable for most national, local and refugee-led humanitarian organizations. One interviewee leading a group advocating for localization and employed by a rural community development organization said the following *'We don't want to be subcontracted, we want to have equal partnerships. We are being held responsible by communities for the delivery of aid, we need to be part and parcel of the design.'* She emphasized the importance of equal partnerships. Currently, local and national organizations are often held accountable by communities regarding aid provision, however, sometimes they are merely implementing activities on behalf of INGOs and they do not have any influence on agenda-setting nor on designing interventions.

An interviewee in charge of a refugee law organization was very critical on using terminology such as partnerships as becomes apparent in the following quote *'There is a whole range, everybody wants to call you their partner. Lots of people use the language of partnership, but it is just a blanket term for various different types of relationships you have between various institutions, most of which I personally wouldn't characterize as partnerships in a kind of strong value sense, equality and dialogue and so on.'* The term partnership indeed implies a certain level of equality and dialogue going on between the various involved actors, something which is certainly not always the case in humanitarian projects.

One of the issues which has frequently been mentioned during interviews is the inefficiency of current funding systems. Even though there has been growing attention for localization, the 2020 Global Humanitarian Assistance Report found that there was a reduction in the share of direct humanitarian funding to local and national actors from 3.5% in 2018 to 2.1% in 2019. This percentage is extremely low, especially considering the initial aim of the Grand Bargain to achieve 25% direct funding to national and local humanitarian actors by 2020 (Dijkzeul, 2021). Currently, funding is rarely directly provided to national, local and refugee-led organizations, but is instead channelled through sub-granting and various organizations are involved. This means that less money is available to actually implement activities, because a lot of money is already spend before it reaches the communities the money is intended to benefit. The longer the aid architecture value chain, the less money will reach the communities, since each actor spends a certain amount of the money on for instance administrative and overhead costs. Therefore, the contemporary most commonly used humanitarian system with many intermediaries is usually not the most efficient way of funding humanitarian activities.

The complex humanitarian system with its large number of intermediaries is the reason that one of the interviewees working for a refugee-led network and a youth organization kept referring to middlemen and the need to reduce the number of middlemen *'How do we ensure that there is no middlemen between those who live some of the issues first-hand and support them directly?'* and *'The idea of localization is to cut down these gatemen or what we call the middlemen, a broker between NGOs and the people with money, the donors?'* Therefore, many of the people I have interviewed, mentioned they would like to see a shift from sub-granting to

direct funding being provided to national, local and refugee-led organizations. This is also part of the Charter4Change. Uganda has a Charter4Change working group and several of my interviewees are part of this working group in which amongst others issues related to direct funding are being discussed as well as other commitments related to the Grand Bargain. Members of the Charter4Change working group and attendees of these meetings include national, local and refugee-led humanitarian organizations as well as international humanitarian organizations and academics. Direct funding would tackle some of the inefficiencies in the system and would lead to more money being available to be spend directly on humanitarian activities itself. This need is also illustrated in the sentiment that was shared by one of the interviewees heading an Ugandan group advocating for localization and employed by a community development organization *'Accessing direct funding is still a big challenge for national and local actors. Sometimes we don't even know the budget. There is still that limited or lack of transparency among international actors. What they present to you is what they are supposed to benefit.'* In order to address multiple of the inefficiencies in the contemporary humanitarian system, more direct funding to national and local organizations and higher levels of transparency regarding funding streams are fundamental.

In the current system, most donors fund international organizations who in turn collaborate with national, local and refugee-led organizations. However, in terms of financial resources, there is a big gap between financial resources of international organizations and national, local and refugee-led organizations. This gap leads to a difference in capacity, as for instance one interviewee pointed out that the international organization within the consortium has one person for logistics, one for budgeting and one for human resources, whilst the local partner has one person responsible for logistics, budgeting and human resources at the same time. Additionally, salaries and working conditions at international organizations are usually more favourable, hence many Ugandans prefer working for international organizations. The gap in financial resources thus also leads to gaps in human resources.

Another major issue is the inflexibility of funding. Most funding is targeted for specific projects or activities. This leaves little opportunity for national, local and refugee-led organizations to invest in capacity building and institutional strengthening of their organization. However, strengthening the institutional capacity of national, local and refugee-led organizations is essential in order to achieve sustainable, meaningful and lasting progress in the humanitarian domain. Administrative and essential costs such as staff salaries and renting an office are usually not part of the funding. However, without providing resources to hire staff and have an office, successfully implementing project activities can be very challenging. Obviously each organization is unique and has its own requirements and core costs that need to be taken care of in order to properly run the organization. Hence, there are differences between the various types of organizations and the administrative costs which they require in order to function. Refugee-led humanitarian organizations seem to run mainly on volunteers, but they certainly also require coverage of overhead costs, such as transportation or printing costs.

Therefore, national, local and refugee-led organizations advocate for more support in terms of administrative and overhead costs in order to successfully run their respective organizations. In

order to achieve this, there is a need to reduce earmarked funding (funding which has been designated to a specific objective or project) and allow for more flexibilities in how money is being spend. This is also important when looking at risks, shocks or unexpected events that might occur and that require immediate attention and financial investments. Humanitarian projects and activities by definition carry more risks, barriers and unexpected sudden changes than many other sectors and there is a need to give national, local and refugee-led organizations a chance to respond to this adequately. Currently humanitarian funding has many conditionalities such as a predetermined project focus and a list of expected outcomes that need to be achieved as well as a maximum percentage that can be spend on overhead costs of the organization. However, in humanitarian settings it is sometimes not predictable which issues need immediate attention and priorities might shift during the course of a project. Therefore, many interviewees mentioned they would like to see more flexible funding and also institutional or core support covering administrative and logistic costs in order to run their respective organization in a more successful manner.

Increasing funding for administrative, overhead and capacity strengthening costs of national and local organizations is becoming a common topic of discussion. These type of costs are referred to as 'indirect cost recovery (ICR)' or 'non-programme attributable costs (NPAC)'. INGOs are usually able to charge these type of costs, whilst national and local NGOs are often not able to claim these unconditional budgets for their organizational sustainability. Getting a share of ICR is allowing local and national organizations to have a budget sufficient to think beyond a humanitarian response, and to think about improving the systems and enhancing the capacity of their organizations (Islam, 2020).

There are also major differences in the way funding is provided across different humanitarian donor agencies. One interviewee working for an organization focused on refugee law explained this in the following manner *'Very few donors express the interest to give you core support with which they show they believe in you as an organization and this (core support) gives you some flexibility. Most of the (core support) gets used to fill deficits in other bits of funding, rather than being creative and do agenda-setting. Other donors use their agenda, their timeframe and their money. Others are in the middle of that. It is very diverse. Some donors micro-manage a bit too much. Other donors don't micromanage but they are very concerned to their own accountability to the donors which can lead to a lot of scrutiny which can be very time consuming. There is a whole spectrum of donors.'* Each donor has a different way of collaborating and working together with national, local and refugee-led humanitarian organizations and some of these allow more co-creation and sharing of capacity, ideas and resources than others.

Humanitarian interventions are usually being framed as short-term solutions, however especially in the case of Uganda, this is not always accurate. Many refugees have been living in settlements for 10 years or more and economies and lives have developed there. Currently funding for humanitarian programming is usually provided on a short project basis of for instance 3, 6 or 12 months. However, many of the interviewees advocate for multi-year funding

which would allow for more activities being implemented and also creates stability and secure funding for national, local and refugee-led organizations for several years.

Besides specific concerns about the relations between international and local humanitarian organizations, there are also more general challenges in the humanitarian system which are fundamental to address in order to create a comprehensive overview of the enabling environment and dynamics in which humanitarian organizations operate. The disappearing of funding was also raised in several interviews. Some interviewees referred to this phenomenon as corruption, whilst others avoided this word and tried to describe it in different ways. One of the interviewees who has founded several refugee-led organizations described the contemporary humanitarian system as *'money eating machinery.'* Another interviewee working for an initiative supporting Congolese refugees in Uganda mentioned that *'people are asked to write their information when coming for (medical) assistance and the box with what they have been doing will be left empty so people can put there what they* want*.'* Corruption seems to be a structural and systematic issue, not a singular or isolated event as becomes evident from this quote by an interviewee from a Christian NGO *'In Uganda there is much corruption. Everything is corrupted.'* Additionally, when allocating monthly allowances to refugees, the manner in which this is done is not always appropriate and creates inequalities between refugees. An interviewee leading a Christian NGO mentioned the following *'Some refugees get 13.000 ugx per month and others 22.000 ugx per month. How is that inequality possible?'* The same interviewee noted that some people pay a bribe to be categorized as poor household in order to receive a higher monthly allowance. Moreover, sometimes people lie about their circumstances in order to get support. Next to disappearing funds and resources, an audit in 2018, showed that the number of refugees was increased by responding actors in order to receive more funding. This picture is also painted by a wide range of reports and news articles. An UN audit reports that UNHCR wasted millions of dollars in Uganda in 2017 through overpaying for resources and services, improper awarding of contracts and failure in the avoidance of fraud, corruption and waste of resources. Moreover, the number of refugees was significantly lower than initially reported, the re-registration process of refugees counted 24% fewer refugees than reported by the Ugandan government (Parker, 2018). It is clear that the humanitarian situation in Uganda is exploited by some in order to personally benefit from the struggles and challenges of refugees.

An interviewee working for an organization for Somali youth in Uganda touched upon the theme of nepotism and favouritism. *'Sometimes we know we are better than other organizations in terms of quality. For them they are winning. There is discrimination when you apply for their funds because they know you. It does not matter what the quality is, it* depends *on friendship and connection.'* This also relates to corruption. It also shows some flaws in the humanitarian system which is supposed to be neutral, impartial and independent. This quote shows how assessment procedures are biased and favoured towards humanitarian actors which are already known and trusted, hence newer organizations don't have a fair chance to collaborate with international actors regardless of the quality of the humanitarian aid that they can deliver to affected populations.

6.3. Risk sharing

The concept of risk sharing refers to potential risks which organizations can face. These risks are not equally shared between international and national and local organizations. National, local and refugee-led organizations usually work directly with communities and face more security risks in case something goes wrong. International staff and national staff often also have different arrangements and agreements with their respective organizations. An interviewee working for a community empowerment organization and part of an organization advocating for localization stated that national staff receive insurance for themselves but this insurance usually does not cover their families. However, another interviewee working for an Ugandan NGO focusing on sustainable development mentioned that staff working for international organizations can list 7 dependents who also receive insurance through the organization they are employed with. Another interviewee working with vulnerable people and involved in a group advocating for localization mentioned that international staff usually doesn't travel to risk areas without risk measures in place whilst national and local staff does travel to these areas without such arrangements. Moreover, it is important to note that some international staff members have certain privileges and do not face the same risks as most Ugandans.

One of the interviewees involved with multiple refugee-led organizations pointed out *'It is a bit political. If someone is connected to powerful countries, if someone comes from the U.K. and is working on refugees in Uganda, coming from the U.K. in itself is a protection. If you touch this person you touch on U.K. diplomatic interests.'* This example clearly describes an inequality in the humanitarian system which will be very challenging to change, because global relations and dynamics in the contemporary world offer protection to some and not to others. Geopolitics has a large influence on the humanitarian system. A foreigner from a Western country working on refugee rights and humanitarian issues in Uganda is protected due to the interest of Uganda to maintain good relations with these countries because of foreign trade and development and humanitarian aid relations and funding. If something happens to a foreign national from the West in Uganda, this could have a substantial negative impact on the relations of Uganda with the West. Therefore, foreigners are more protected than Ugandans or other African nationals for whom this logic usually does not apply.

Even though national staff have a better understanding of the country and its potential dangers, they are facing specific risks due to their proximity to the context. They are more likely to face blackmailing and intimidation from peers, are more exposed to sanctions or violence from authorities and usually have less protection in case of incidents such as arbitrary, detention and kidnapping. As a result of racial dynamics and power imbalances between international and national staff, they can be more vulnerable to internal threats for instance abuses of power and bullying. A lack of job security and the fear of repercussions could be an explanation why national staff might be more reluctant to refuse to travel to high-risk areas and are more likely to ignore their own risk threshold (Arthur & Moutard, 2022). Local actors might also feel more comfortable undertaking certain actions that could be considered risky or dangerous by some people. An interviewee working for an organization supporting people with HIV/AIDS and involved with an organization advocating for localization stated the following *'Local actors are willing to risk it all to extend services to the community.'* This could also be due to the fact that

local actors are closer to the people and possibly also more concerned and connected to the well-being of affected communities compared to international outsiders. National staff might feel a duty to continue operating and to support their fellow citizens, regardless of the dangers that may be involved (Arthur & Moutard, 2022).

When talking about risk sharing, it is important to understand that naturally, donors are mostly interested in risk-aversion which is a compliance culture in which a high level of control is needed and in which risks are to be avoided. Additionally, there is discomfort with uncertainty and unpredictability (Baguios, King, Martins, & Pinnington, 2021). These factors put serious constraints on risk sharing. One of the critiques on unequal power relations between local and international NGOs is the risks that local NGOs are encountering. ''Risk-sharing remains largely an aspiration, rather than a reality in the response so far'' (KUNO, 2020). In most cases, local actors are seen as sub-contractors that are supposed to implement projects around priorities determined by international actors. Hence, they are completing specific assignments or tasks that have already been designed and they do not have influence on the type of activities they are implementing. Moreover, collaboration with local actors through a model of subcontracting usually means contracts have a fixed starting and end-date. Therefore, there is limited time to build a good relationship or to create sustainable impact. Additionally, there is also less financial security for the local actors involved. As a result, many local NGOs, despite usually having the first responder role, feel like they are not treated as equal partners or lead actors. It is important that international agencies review how their own organization and programmes generate risks for local NGOs, for instance through their funding and partnership approach. Moreover, risk management should be included in the budgets of local NGOs. This shift from 'risk transfer' to 'risk sharing' reflects a wider shift of power which is needed in the humanitarian system (KUNO, 2020).

Furthermore, in order to effectively deal with risks, a fast response is usually required. However, as noted by an interviewee working for a South Sudanese civil society organization *'some donors respond positively to these requests whilst others take long to respond.'* It can be very challenging to deal with actors that respond slowly in an emergency, since time is very precious and every delay can have serious consequences for the people affected.

According to (Gordon, 2020), ''risk management has colonised new social relationships in the humanitarian sector and the precautionary principle itself has emerged as a central organising principle of programming''. The majority of the INGOs subcontract their work to smaller NGOs. Risk management can lead to the risk that all that does not conform to a narrow logic of managerial intervention are excluded. This is undermining the morally universal ethic of humanitarianism (Gordon, 2020).

Next to risk sharing, there is also the concept of resources and benefits sharing, a notion which is less well-known. The sharing of resources and benefits can for instance comprise of the sharing of an office (co-working space), the sharing of knowledge and information and the sharing of a car or fuel costs. Sharing these resources and benefits can greatly reduce the operational costs for organizations. Moreover, it can allow for knowledge exchange and working jointly according to each other's strengths. The sharing of resources and benefits can

be between INGOs, between INGOs and local/national NGOs and between local and national NGOs. Additionally, the sharing of resources and benefits can lead to a humanitarian response of higher quality due to increased collaboration.

Currently, the humanitarian aid system can be very competitive and each organization wants to attract as much funding as possible. However, there are ample opportunities to collaborate. Shared advocacy and raising awareness can also be explored further in order to increase attention for a specific humanitarian crisis. Oftentimes, humanitarian agencies target the same donor pool, hence creating an appeal together can be more efficient and can significantly increase outreach. Examples of humanitarian organizations working together are for instance Giro 555 and the Dutch Relief Alliance. Both of these organizations are based in the Netherlands. Giro 555 appeals to the Dutch general public when there is a major crisis and is comprised of 11 NGOs. The Dutch Relief Alliance consists of 14 NGOs and implements protracted and acute joint responses in various countries through funding of the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Both collaborations consist of independent organizations whom are complementing each other in an effort to improve efficiency of humanitarian responses.

Being outspoken about issues in the sector can be dangerous. Several interviewees of refugee-led organizations mentioned receiving threats for their work and for voicing opinions contrary to the government. An interviewee whom established multiple refugee-led organizations mentioned *'if you are critical on how refugees are treated or speak out, you will be attacked since this is also an attack on money'*. The attack to money aspect refers to being critical posing a threat to the current funding streams. The interviewee referred to the fact that being critical on the contemporary humanitarian system could expose corruption or inefficiencies in the system. Hence, critical voices are often silenced out of fear that funding and a flow of financial resources will stop. The actors silencing the critical voices are not necessarily afraid that the humanitarian projects will be stopped, but they are afraid that they will not be able to personally benefit and embezzle funding or resources. Hence, critical refugee leaders as well as national and local actors who are very vocal about inefficiencies in the humanitarian system usually face threats and protection issues. Interviewees mentioned that local actors are more at risk and that little protection is offered to protect them from harm. One of the interviewees mentioned that those who are supposed to protect them (the United Nations) are themselves also facing serious security and safety threats and are not even able to protect themselves and are thus certainly not able to provide safety and security for other actors, specifically refugee-led humanitarian organizations.

Some refugee leaders are facing serious security and protection issues. As was stated in one of the conducted interviews with a leader of a refugee organization *'Some organizations are so much intolerant with vocal refugees who are critical on the manner things are being done. When you are critical you can be blacklisted, most of them have police cases to answer, that is how the situation is.'* Moreover, an activist group has been named 'reputational terrorists' for calling out certain issues related to white saviourism. Hence, it becomes evident that being critical on practices taking place in the humanitarian aid sector can be dangerous and can have serious impacts ranging from losing funding to physical violence.

Safety and security risks were mentioned by many refugee-led organizations. Especially when refugees are outspoken about the flaws of the contemporary humanitarian aid architecture, they are at risk of facing serious repercussions, ranging from verbal threats to physical assault and prison sentences. Several refugee-led organizations that were interviewed for this thesis research have indicated that they are fearing for their lives due to their work. Based on this information it becomes evident that the humanitarian space in Uganda contains actors with various motives and there are many power dynamics and financial interests. Moreover, the research findings show that refugee-led organizations consist of volunteers who are usually also refugees themselves. The refugee volunteers are highly motivated and committed due to their lived experiences. This can lead them to being willing to take more risks than others and continue operating in a space which can at times be very hostile to them. Usually their security can be at risk because they are critical on certain humanitarian actors, including the government. Moreover, especially national, local and refugee-led humanitarian organizations that focus on human rights and governance face security risks. This is due to the fact that the focus of these organizations is at times incompatible with the policies and perspectives of the government, hence their views are actively being suppressed and silenced. Moreover, UN agencies and international organizations also play a role in this since they have an interest in controlling the narrative and stories that are being released globally.

Despite the crucial and irreplaceable role of refugee-led humanitarian organizations, it remains important to be critical on their involvement, just as other actors in the humanitarian system are critically being assessed. Refugee-led humanitarian organizations may not be NGOs, hence they are different actors to liaise with. Moreover, they might be so much involved that they are at risk of impeding on the humanitarian principles of neutrality, humanity, impartiality and independence. Therefore, it is important to emphasize and acknowledge the involvement of refugee-led humanitarian organizations can also lead to unique challenges.

An interviewee in charge of a refugee-led organization in Uganda said *'One of the UN agencies and one of the major refugee organizations in Uganda, are so much intolerant with vocal refugees with different opinions than their own and who are critical on the manner things are done. If you question what they are doing, if you say their programs are not profiting refugees, you become an enemy.'* One interviewee representing an organization established by and for Congolese refugees in Uganda explained this in the following way '*I am doing the best of what I can to see other people are fine. And if they kill me because of that, I thank God. Because I did not steal from anyone, but they have decided just to take me out of the refugee or humanitarian system.'* Another interviewee working for an organization focusing on peace and development described the following *'Many beneficiaries are afraid. If you speak bad against powerful actors they put us on a blacklist. People get afraid and they are not open in terms of services to speak how bad services are given to them. There is something wrong.'* Furthermore, one of the interviewees from a Christian organization mentioned *'When UN agencies are saying something everyone has to kneel down. For us we don't have to kneel down, that is why they don't like us.'*

At least one of the interviewees has been taken to jail for being too vocal about issues related to refugee-wellbeing in Uganda. Multiple interviewees from refugee-led humanitarian organizations have expressed similar sentiments that if you say things that are perceived controversial by government or UN agencies or make statements that can have a negative impact on funding for the humanitarian situation in Uganda, situations can become violent and threatening for the ones raising their voices. These refugee-led organizations were either located in the capital city Kampala or in one of the refugee settlements across Uganda. Being critical on and disagreeing with the actors in power (the government and UN agencies) can lead to hostilities and threats. If organizations don't conform to the status quo they are in fear of their lives due to the large amounts of money and political interests that are involved in the humanitarian sector.

6.4. Capacity building

In terms of capacity building several issues were raised. First of all, it is a common narrative for actors in the Global North to mention that Global South actors should build capacity. However, as noted by one of the interviewees *'Capacity of actors in the Global North also has to be developed.'* This closely relates to another issue which is that actors in the humanitarian space tend to blame each other if things are not going well instead of critically reflecting on their own performance and trying to find issues that they can improve upon themselves. Local actors are commonly framed in a way of lacking capacity hence many capacity building programs are being established and implemented. However, as one of the interviewees rightfully mentioned *'International NGOs also need to build their capacities.'* It is easy to say that another stakeholder needs to do something and that problems originate from them, however, it is essential to take responsibility and do whatever is possible to improve upon your own work.

Another major issue which occurs regularly and significantly impacts the capacity of national and local organizations relates to staff members switching from working for national and local humanitarian organizations to working for an international humanitarian organizations. Common reasons for national staff to work for international organizations usually relate to higher salaries, better working conditions and more opportunities for career progression. An interviewee who is actively involved in a humanitarian alliance and works for an organization focusing on forced migrants said *'Local organizations recruit and train people, strengthen their capacities. Then these people are lost to INGOs and UN agencies, whom want to get good material, but they don't take the time to develop it. Local actors take risks, strengthen people and then lose them, that becomes a dilemma. This is part of the reason for a lack of very strong national responders.'* This phenomenon can be seen as a form of brain drain. Brain drain refers to educated and professional people leaving their country, sector or organization for higher salaries and better living conditions. From the quote it becomes evident that the investments from local and national organizations in staff members do not always pay off, because oftentimes when staff is trained and has gained experience, they decide to work for international organizations due to the better rewards they can offer. This contributes to the inequalities between national and local and international organizations, since international organizations can usually offer more favourable working conditions and rewards, which in turn has a

tremendous negative impact on the capacity and human resources aspect of national and local humanitarian organizations.

Nevertheless, during several interviews, national, local and refugee-led organizations acknowledged that there is indeed a need to build capacity, especially in terms of professionalism, reporting and documenting. As mentioned by an interviewee involved in a group advocating for localization and working for a rural community development organization *'We need to clean our own houses first.'* An interviewee involved in a humanitarian alliance and leading a NGO focused on forced migration stated the following *'The mortality rate of organizations in the Global South can also be very high. It is difficult to earn trust from the communities they work with, the* government *and partners which stifles the growth of organizations embedded in the communities. If that problem was addressed and there would be material and financial resources, networks and opportunities at the local level that would change the dynamics.'* This quote clearly defines the longevity and sustainability of national, local and refugee-led humanitarian organizations as one of the issues. The reasons why it is difficult for local organizations to sustain themselves can be attributed to challenges in earning trust and obtaining resources to implement projects. This is also due to the fact that there is limited institutional and capacity building support towards local actors. One interviewee working for a NGO focusing on supporting internally displaced persons (IDPs), returnees and refugees in Uganda and South Sudan described this phenomenon in the following manner *'After the project, the (local) organization remains the same, empty with nothing, all the* resources *have been given to beneficiaries. There is nothing for institutional development or building the capacity of local staff.'*

One interviewee leading a group advocating for localization and working for a rural development NGO noted the following regarding the activities of national, local and refugee-led humanitarian organizations *'Local actors do a lot, but we document less and we are not visible. It is an opportunity for us now to document more, make ourselves visible and showcase what we are best at. We need to be more committed, make internal changes, be more transparent and accountable and deliver quality work which will attract more partners. We should define our own localization roadmap and promote more cross-learning, build our own system, have confidence and negotiation skills to challenge the status quo. We should define our own participation and coordination mechanisms. We should seek knowledge and information in the humanitarian ecosystem, create more network coordination and a collective and stronger voice to create the change that we desire. This is what local actors would like to see in the upcoming years, to act in a more collective and collaborative manner and to be able to challenge the status quo.'* In her description, the interviewee provided many interesting reflections and potential ways forward. In this argument, the focus is on the role the national, local and refugee-led humanitarian organizations can play in improving the humanitarian system. Obviously, in order to achieve this, support from and collaboration and partnership with other humanitarian actors would be required. However, in this argument the interviewee advocates for a better organization and streamlining of ideas among national, local and refugee-led humanitarian organizations. By getting organized through for instance improving upon documentation of activities, defining and establishing various coordination and network

mechanisms, the voices of national, local and refugee-led humanitarian actors can be significantly strengthened. Through this re-organization process, the position of national, local and refugee-led humanitarian actors can become more influential and can challenge the status quo.

Another interviewee working for an organization specialized in refugee law also strongly advocates for better organization and a more structured approach by specifically refugees and refugee-led organizations *'We encourage that they (refugees) establish into groups. When you are not organized you can't receive funding and when you can't receive funding nobody listens to you. So getting organized is quite important, it is a complicated journey and there are a lot of skills you need to pick up along the way. The only way you can shift the balance of power is by them (refugees) becoming more organized but there are many things that make it difficult for people to get organized.'* This argument shows that being organized and having a more formal structure and way of working is instrumental in order to become eligible to receive funding and to be an actor to whom people are listening.

6.5. Gaps between priorities and interests

Throughout the interviews it was commonly stated that national, local and refugee-led organizations know better what the priorities, interests and concerns of the communities receiving support are. Several refugee-led organizations mentioned that this was due to the fact that they live and eat together with the people and face the same problems, hence their lived experience results in them exactly knowing the interests and priorities of their fellow refugees. An interviewee working for an organization focusing on urban refugees said '*We are the people on the ground with the community, we live with them, we eat with them, we sleep with them. We spend the whole day with them, we share challenges together and we are well-placed and gain more integrity and trustworthy from them. We know their problem, we share their problem.'* This points at the importance of lived experience in order to design programmes that can achieve maximum impact.

An interviewee of a refugee youth organization mentioned the following *'Whenever you need a painkiller, they give you sweets. They don't give you what you want or need.'* which clearly hints to the discrepancy between the needs of affected populations whom require support and what is being provided by international humanitarian organizations. This metaphor indicates that international humanitarian organizations are either not aware or unable to provide and respond accurately to the needs of the communities they intend to serve. Another interviewee representing a Christian NGO addressed this issue in the following manner *'The international do what they prepared. They are not supporting refugees. They do what they want. They don't do what refugees want. They are building schools when we are suffering without food. There is a big gap. Refugee organizations, when they have food, they share. During the Covid lockdown we were feeding each other. International organizations had left. We were struggling to feed them (refugees) during lockdown. For us we do what refugees want.'* It seems like the priorities of organizations are different. This has been echoed by others as well, that there is a need to first focus on basic needs such as sufficient food, and after this focus on education. Moreover, this statement captures the vulnerability and pitfalls of relying on international organizations,

since they can withdraw or stop operations if it becomes challenging to work in a certain context. This withdrawing of activities happened on a large scale due to covid-19 risks although the needs of the populations increased due to the inability of many to continue working due to the strict lockdown in Uganda. Consequently, national, local and refugee-led humanitarian organizations played a crucial role in providing food to affected communities. Moreover, according to an article by (Betts, Easton-Calabria, & Pincock, 2021), refugee-led organizations (RLOs) in Uganda played an essential role in accommodating for public health needs during times with severe covid-19 restrictions and through this RLOS covered assistance gaps in humanitarian needs.

The struggle to be open about the issues and challenges in collaborations with international donors and partners is a recurring theme throughout the interviews. Moreover, in one of the interviews the following statement was mentioned by an interviewee of an organization focusing on Somali refugees in Uganda *'A beggar has no choice.'* Multiple interviewees mentioned they had no choice but had to accept whatever the international organization was offering due to the fear to lose the support of international organizations. For instance, even if the national, local or refugee-led organization thought the project outcomes could not be achieved or if they thought the project did not focus on the priorities of the communities involved, they still had to accept working on this project, because otherwise they would lose out on the funding and it would be very difficult for them to implement any project at all. This also resulted in a culture in which issues were silenced and not spoken about. Hence, if the local partner disagreed with something, it was very difficult for them to voice this. This is also due to the extensive competition between local organizations to receive funding from international actors. One of the interviewees involved with and leading multiple refugee-led organizations referred to this issue as a very difficult and frustrating choice *'I have to compromise on what I believe the priorities of refugees are because the partner wants this for reasons I don't know. This is a frustration I always face.'* Moreover, the same interviewee expressed the following *'I lost a contract, I thought I should help them, what type of programs, channel money on what is important to people. In the process they were like, no we can't continue working with you and I had to lose the project. This is exactly what happens with other organizations. There is nothing much we can influence.'* In this particular contract, the interviewee mentioned he believed the programs suggested were not in line with what was important to people in the community, when he raised this issue to the international organization that the organization was collaborating with, they stopped the collaboration and looked for another national, local or refugee-led humanitarian organization that would accept the approach suggested by the international organization. According to the interviewee, this regularly happens, also with other organizations that he knows. This shows that it can be challenging to negotiate with international organizations about the types of humanitarian aid programs that would be provided since they can easily find another partner to implement the suggested programs instead of compromising on their initial plans for providing humanitarian aid.

This is also related to large-scale competition for grants among national, local and refugee-led organizations. Competition between national, local and refugee-led organizations when for instance applying for grants in order to finance their respective projects is very common. Due

to this extensive competition and the lack of financial resources it is at times very difficult for national, local and refugee-led organizations to speak out or be critical about international organizations, since they can easily collaborate with another organization. One interviewee working for an organization supporting vulnerable refugees in Uganda mentioned *'We are the ones on the ground, for them they are driving big cars, they are not in contact with the vulnerable and the so-called beneficiaries.'* These statement clearly indicate a dissatisfaction with the current humanitarian aid system that seems to perpetuate and serve as a continuation of already existing inequalities.

6.6. Partnership and collaboration

According to the Dutch Relief Alliance, equitable partnership in humanitarian aid ''requires an emphasis on complementarity mutual respect, sharing of risks and benefits, and brokering collaborations between diverse actors and networks at community, local and national levels. Subcontracting and transactional relationships are not equitable partnerships'' (Dutch Relief Alliance , 2021). This definition provides an excellent basis to critically assess contemporary relations between international, national, local and refugee-led humanitarian actors in Uganda.

It is important to realize partnerships between international and national organizations might be the most efficient way to address some of the challenges of the contemporary humanitarian aid system. An interviewee working for an organization focused on forced migration and involved with a humanitarian alliance pointed out *'International and national organizations, each has a strength and a complementary advantage and can be a meaningful and complementary partnership. International and national organizations can learn from each other and address capacity gaps together.'* National, local and refugee-led humanitarian organizations might have other strengths and weaknesses than international humanitarian organizations, hence, by working together as equitable partners and strengthening each other, the quality and effectiveness of humanitarian aid efforts might significantly improve.

However, establishing this initial contact with international organizations to start collaborating has proven to be very difficult as can be distilled from the following quote by an interviewee from a NGO supporting Congolese refugees *'Many organizations don't want to work with local refugee organizations, they implement by themselves. They are just teasing themselves, they don't really want to work with others. There are so many international organizations here in Uganda, especially in Kampala, but they don't connect with others, you know you can write letters trying to be in partnership but they will not even respond. There are many that we have tried to be in connection with them but unsuccessful.'* This quote can be linked back to the issue of status and reputation of refugee-led organizations, as they are sometimes framed as unreliable or unqualified partners by INGOs. INGOs are usually selective in who they want to work with and there are many national, local and refugee-led organizations competing for the same funding. An interviewee working for a NGO with both projects in Uganda and South Sudan expressed the following *'There is a lack of respect for local actors. Local actors can write an invitation to a meeting, and the international partner may not show up. They look down on us and can't go to such a lower class meeting. We are not considered as equal partners.'* Another interviewee from a Christian NGO mentioned the following *'We are considered as refugees*

and not as partners. Sometimes there are meetings and they don't invite *us. They don't want us to tell the truth. We challenge them, we know what we need and they don't want us to participate.'* More national, local and refugee-led humanitarian organizations have pointed towards the difficulty of establishing contact and building relations with international organizations. Moreover, one of the interviewees mentioned that international organizations mainly work with organizations that they already know and trust and have worked with before. Hence, it can be difficult to join as a 'new' organization and to build the required connections and rapport in order to be able to receive support from international actors.

In order to reduce the inefficiencies and unintended consequences of aid efforts, better coordination and harmonization among humanitarian organizations is required **Ongeldige bron opgegeven.**. There is usually a lack in harmonization which makes it very difficult for local partners to apply for funding since each organization is using different assessment criteria and monitoring tools. As a result it takes a lot of time for national, local and refugee-led humanitarian organizations to fulfil this criteria and it requires capacity and time that could otherwise have been spend directly on implementing the respective projects. Harmonizing in essence means streamlining humanitarian aid efforts and specifically aligning application and monitoring procedures in order to improve accessibility of national, local and refugee-led humanitarian organizations to funding provided by the international community. An interviewee working for a rural development NGO and part of a group advocating for localization stated the following *'There are a number of organizations that come on ground and are working in silos without a harmonized way of doing things. This is frustrating to local partners. Local partners lose out on opportunities of funding and are not able to manage to go through the assessment process. If the tools are more harmonized and friendly this will benefit local organizations.'* This point also links to one of the workstreams of the Grand Bargain which is entitled 'Harmonise and simply reporting requirements'. This workstream focuses on simplifying and harmonizing reporting requirements by reducing the volume of reporting, jointly deciding on common terminology, identifying core requirements and developing a common report structure (Metcalfe-Hough, Fenton, Willitts-King, & Spencer, 2021).

Regarding harmonization, a harmonized reporting template, the 8+3 template has been developed in order to approve harmonization and is considered one of the successes of the Grand Bargain. The more donors adopt the 8+3 template, the greater the harmonization benefit and the more the reporting and documentation burden across the humanitarian system is reduced. The 8+3 template contains 3 different sections. The first section entails administrative information about the project. The second section consists of 8 core questions that capture the most important elements of the project (overall performance, changes and amendments, measuring results, affected persons, participation & AAP, risk management, exit strategy and sustainability and lessons learned). The third sections provides an overview of additional questions that include more specific information (value for money & cost effectiveness, visibility, co-ordination, implementing partners, activities or steps towards implementation and environment) (ICVA, 2019).

Humanitarian aid is commonly framed and thought of as short-term emergency relief. Whilst this is often the case, in order to be more efficient and effective, it is crucial to consider long-term impacts that could be achieved through programming. Additionally, there is a need to better link different types of responses, for instance commonly referred to in academia as the 'triple nexus' which connects humanitarian, development and peacebuilding efforts. This is also essential in avoiding fragmented work in silos, but instead foster interaction and cooperation between the different activities. Addressing structural root causes of some of the issues creating emergencies such as conflict and food insecurity are very important to prevent reoccurrence of problems. Therefore, partnerships between organizations working in respectively humanitarian, development and peacebuilding should connect their activities in order to ensure continuity and effectiveness.

None of the interviewees have described the relations between international and national, local and refugee-led humanitarian organizations in Uganda as equal. Achieving complete equality between international and national, local and refugee-led humanitarian organizations is not realistic and potentially also not desirable since they are actors that fulfil different roles in the humanitarian system. However, it is of great importance that the humanitarian system is continuously evolving and improving. In order to achieve a more efficient and impactful humanitarian system, most actors agree that dynamics and relations between international and national, local and refugee-led humanitarian organizations should change. This change can be achieved through the shifting of power and decision-making from international to national and local organizations. This change in power is at the core of the Grand Bargain agreement. All of them mentioned that the international organizations, due to for instance financial resources, usually have more decision-making power and influence on the type of activities that will be implemented. An interviewee affiliated to an organization for Somali youth described the relationship between international and local organizations in the following manner *'The international organizations are the head of the family and the local organizations are the children.'* This statement perfectly captures the inequalities in the system. A similar comparison was made by another interviewee working for an activist group who described the relationship as *'The Global North is the dad and the Global South are the unwanted stepchildren.'* These quotes clearly indicate the imbalances in the current humanitarian aid system.

However, others seem more concerned about the continuation of their own organization and seem unwilling to give up any of their acquired power and space to national, local and refugee-led organizations. Some of the relationships with these INGOs were described as *'master-servant relationships'* by an interviewee involved with a group advocating for localization and working for an organization supporting people with HIV and AIDS. Another interviewee compared the relationship between INGOs and national, local and refugee-led humanitarian organizations as *'the relationship between a father and his children'* . Decision-making power is still largely held by international actors and the involvement of national, local and refugee-led organizations can at times be more of a tokenistic gesture, without genuine interest in involving them in decisions. As a consequence, there is usually a big gap between the priorities of programs and the interests and needs of affected communities. One interviewee working for an organization supporting people with HIV and AIDS whilst at the same time being involved

with a group advocating for localization shared the following *'Generally, INGOs feel more superior, once an INGO has come up with a particular strategy,* you *can't bend it, even if it would make you achieve more. It is very difficult, but you have to go with it, otherwise you are disobeying what has to be done.'*

Furthermore, it can be difficult for national, local and refugee-led organizations to speak out if they don't agree with a certain approach, usually out of fear to lose (financial) support. This often relates to projects or approaches that don't align with the priorities or needs of affected communities. Moreover, sometimes it links to major differences in values and beliefs, for instance religious beliefs or the perception regarding LGTBQI+ programs. One of the interviewees leading a youth group mentioned *'Sometimes you are trying to do things their way, not your way and what you believe in culturally, you can lower this a bit. Here in Africa we are so much religious people but in dealing with these people this is something that you should not bring on the table. They fund that they believe in. So you don't express fully what you believe in.'* This clearly indicates that national, local and refugee-led organizations sometimes have to compromise in order to satisfy the more powerful organizations that they work with and in order to relate to them in a better way. However, it is important to note that, although this is not the focus of the thesis, it is likely that international non-governmental organizations and donors face similar issues and might also have to compromise. It could be that donors are guarding a principled non-religious approach as a way of aligning with the humanitarian principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality and independence. Hence it is imaginable that having a religious approach as an organization could also be a core dilemma for them.

According to (Pincock, Betts, & Easton-Calabria, 2020), refugee-led organizations (RLOs) in Kampala, Uganda, are largely bypassed by international actors and most operate without international recognition or funding. Nevertheless, these RLOs have gained legitimacy and status as humanitarian actors within the communities in which they work (Pincock, Betts, & Easton-Calabria, 2020). Information collected during this thesis research illustrates a similar picture in which it is very difficult for RLOs to be recognized as humanitarian actors and to receive support from UN agencies and INGOs. This is usually due to a lack of trust and underestimating the capacities of RLOs. As a result, it is very challenging for RLOs to implement their projects, since they generally have to do so with very limited financial resources. However, if they do manage to secure funding from INGOs, this is usually accompanied with many conditions which affect the autonomy of RLOs and can have negative impacts on the efficiency of the support they are providing to affected communities. Conditions can include determining a large part of the agenda-setting and focus of the projects that ought to be implemented. Moreover, conditions can be a maximum amount of money to be spend on overhead costs and certain targets to be reached in terms of the number of people receiving assistance. At times these conditions are difficult to achieve and can distort the focus and impact of national, local and refugee-led organizations.

Due to a lack of financial resources, most people working for refugee-led organizations are volunteers. It is challenging for a refugee-led organization to have activities funded by international organizations due to lack of trust and credibility. Young refugees have to proof

themselves to international organizations through showing their activities and their ability to manage large amounts of money. This means they have to go through many extensive and bureaucratic procedures in order to be eligible for funding for international donors. Additionally, there are many accountability requirements that they have to fulfil. Moreover, one of the pre-requisites is usually that they have received a big amount of funding before, hence, starting collaborating with international organizations can be a major challenge for national, local and refugee-led humanitarian organizations. Despite the challenges in acquiring funding and trust from international humanitarian organizations, there are numerous refugee-led humanitarian organizations who have managed to gain this support from international actors. Examples of such stakeholders include the organization Young African Refugees For Integral Development (YARID), a NGO based in Kampala which has been founded in 2007 by young Congolese refugees living in Uganda. YARID focuses on urban refugees and engages them through sports, English classes and vocational skills training amongst others. The partners of YARID include UNHCR, the Finnish Refugee Council and the Humanitarian Innovation Fund amongst others. Another example of an organization that has been able to attract international funding is I Can South Sudan, a refugee-led NGO operating in Bidi Bidi refugee settlement as well as in South Sudan. I Can South Sudan focuses on advancing the well-being of internally displaced persons (IDPs), returnees and refugees, with a special focus on vulnerable children and women. I Can South Sudan works together with numerous organizations amongst others Oxfam, OPM and WHO. When assessing the websites of both YARID and I Can South Sudan, it becomes clear that both organizations present a lot of information on their website about their activities, which points to their ability to present themselves well as well as their capacity to document and be accountable and transparent about their activities which are key factors.

6.7. Trust, recognition and respect

An interviewee involved with an organization advocating for localization and working for a community empowerment organization shared the following perspective. *'As local as possible as international as necessary.'* This statement was part of the call of the Secretary-General at the World Humanitarian Summit in 2016 to advocate for a more local humanitarian response (Barbelet, 2018). The interviewee continued expressing the following *'The people that are playing the biggest role in changing systems, they still have a perception/mindset that is not pro-localization, the donors who have resources have the perception that local actors are corrupt and that they can't be trusted. Unless we begin to change the mindset and perception about local, then we will begin to realize the benefits.'* This statement highlights the need for a radical shift in the often negative perception of donors about local actors. If this shift in perception and mindset does not occur it is challenging for the humanitarian system to start operating in a different way.

Due to a lack of financial resources, most people working for refugee-led organizations are volunteers. It is challenging for a refugee-led organization to have activities funded by international organizations due to lack of trust and credibility. Young refugees have to proof themselves to international organizations through showing their activities and their ability to manage large amounts of money. Next to challenges that refugee-led organizations face in order

to be perceived as an organization which can be trusted, they sometimes also face discrimination or exclusion. For instance due to prejudices that refugees are not highly educated and are inexperienced which leads to an underestimation of their capacity. Moreover, it can be challenging for refugee-led organizations to officially register themselves, in some instances they have to be registered as foreign organization because their funders are not Ugandans, despite the organization being based in Uganda. Due to the registration as a foreign organization, higher fees have to be paid for processes in order to keep the organization going. Additionally. the voices of refugees are often not listened to as becomes apparent in the following sentiment shared by an employee of a Christian NGO. *'If your status is refugee, you can be chased at any time. They consider us as refugees, not as partners. Many times they are ignoring what we are saying. They are afraid that we accuse them.'*

In terms of recognition, there is a strong tendency to undermine, not appreciate and take for granted the add value and contributions of communities regarding providing support to refugees in Uganda. Nevertheless, the contributions of communities are essential in creating an enabling environment for refugees. One of the interviewees working with forced migrants and involved in a humanitarian alliance pointed this out in the following manner *'When communities donate land, we don't call them donors. But without them donating land the Ugandan refugee policy would fall apart. How and where would 1.5 million refugees be hosted?'* This quote points to the policy of the Ugandan government that every refugee gets a piece of land in order to do farming activities on this land with the aim to create self-reliance and self-sufficiency of the refugee. Oftentimes, host communities are willing to share land and resources with refugees, however, this is not typically described as donations. Hence the contributions of communities are regularly overlooked even though they are instrumental in fostering the humanitarian refugee response in Uganda.

An interviewee involved with a humanitarian alliance and working with forced migrants stated the following *'The mortality rate of organizations in the Global South can also be very high. It can be difficult for them to earn trust from the communities they work with, government and partners. If the problem was addressed of having resources at the local level this would change the dynamics. Resources can be material, financial and networks.'* The high mortality rate of organizations based in the Global South might be one of the reasons for limited trust in these organizations. Nevertheless, this high mortality rate often relates to the inability to acquire sufficient resources to implement activities, which could in turn be caused by limited trust. Hence, the reasons and consequences are interacting and influencing each other.

6.8. Language and framing

Various inequalities within the humanitarian aid system have been extensively described in previous sections. It is important to emphasize that all these inequalities relate and reinforce each other. Due to these interwoven dynamics, it is very challenging to change the system. The contemporary humanitarian aid structures and its accompanying inequalities are reinforced through for instance the language and framing which is being used when talking about certain

stakeholders within the humanitarian space. Using words such as 'beneficiaries' illustrates imbalances in the system. A term such as beneficiaries implies that the partnership is not equal.

There are numerous fables and stories within the humanitarian sector which are justifying certain institutional practices that ultimately reinforce unequal power relations and structures in humanitarian aid. Humanitarian interventions often reproduce global structures of postcolonial inequity. There is unequal access to opportunity, mobility, security provision and pay differences. Moreover, there is a hierarchy of trust which perceives foreigners as neutral whilst locals are described as having particular attachments or interests. Imperial traces continue to shape aid interventions due to its embeddedness in discourses and practices, imaginaries and representations of the 'Other' and narratives about 'progress'. The morals from fables and stories help to justify organizational decisions that maintain power imbalances between foreign staff in senior positions and locally hired employees (Myfanwy, 2022).

In terms of accuracy of information which is being shared in reports and pictures published by international organizations, there are various opinions about this and there seems to be disagreement regarding this among the interviewees. Some interviewees believe this information is a good reflection on what is happening on the ground and that the statistics and information published is the reality, also due to the fact that the local actors are usually the ones collecting and compiling this information whilst the international actors are just responsible for improving the grammar and making it more understandable for the readers. However, other interviewees mention that some issues are not presented in these reports and that numbers are sometimes different than what has been collected by the local actor. Others even mention that there is a very big gap between the information that is being presented and the reality. According to one of the interviewees this gap can be explained due to the fact that international actors don't take the time to talk to people and some issues might only come out after trust has been built, instead, they just go with initial success stories and don't ask further questions in order to get a more balanced and critical view point. As noted by an interviewee from a NGO focusing on refugee rights and law *'They (people receiving aid assistance) are telling the donor what they want to hear. How true or complete is it? Pretty much everything is against these reports being a good reflection of what is going on on the ground.'* This quote links to a narrative in which information in reports written by international humanitarian organizations is superficial and not objective nor an accurate reflection of the ongoing realities in on the ground. In terms of images, several actors mention that this needs to change, since sometimes these pictures can be considered as 'poverty porn' and portray people in very vulnerable and seemingly helpless conditions. Additionally, sometimes suitable pictures are chosen to accompany certain sections of text, but these pictures might be taken out of context. However, during another interview a divergent view was addressed since pictures are usually taken by local actors and since they have a better understanding of what is going on they take ethical guidelines into account and there are no issues with these pictures.

One interviewee, known for establishing various refugee-led organizations, addressed the following *'They will tell you good things about Uganda but on the ground it is totally different, a paradox. Uganda uses refugees as minerals, it is a way of getting money from the*

international community, not because Uganda loves refugees, it hosts refugees because this brings them so much close to money.' This touches upon a certain narrative of solidarity that is being referred to whilst the actual interests and motives of Uganda to host refugees are presumably largely related to financial benefits. This is in contrast with how Uganda likes to be seen by the international community, namely as a country which shows solidarity to people in need without expecting anything in return.

Furthermore, an interviewee that founded several refugee-led organizations touched upon the topic of framing and how refugees are usually portrayed in a manner in which they are seen as victims that need and depend on external support. *'They will never show you an image of someone like me, I came to Uganda, struggled and sustained by myself. They will never show you how someone can survive on their own. They will show you how bad the situation is and that it is important to give.'* This clearly hints at a specific narrative that organizations would like to maintain, most probably in order to attract more funding. Nevertheless, the continuous portrayal of refugees as helpless and dependent, does a lot of unintended damage an harm and perpetuates certain stereotypes rather than depicting an accurate reflection of the heterogeneity of refugees. In fact, some refugees are able to sustain themselves through for instance entrepreneurship. During one of the conducted interviews, the importance of positive programming was highlighted. This refers to the type of information and pictures which are being used when talking about projects. When for instance a malnourished child is portrayed, this is an example of negative programming and this type of picture can reinforce certain stereotypes. Hence, it is better to use a different type of picture which highlights the capacity and resilience of the person being photographed, which aligns with positive programming.

Despite the obvious inequalities and power dynamics in the humanitarian system, this is not a popular story to share with a wider audience. One interviewee working for a local office of an INGO shared the following about this topic *'International organizations would like to paint a picture of equal footing, of operating in an equal environment in which different actors listen to each other and share responsibilities. But underneath their (international organizations) decisions are more powerful and their decisions count. Local organizations largely depend on international organizations.'* However, due to the gained emphasis and attention regarding themes such as localization and shifting power in the humanitarian system, the realities of the humanitarian system are not always accurately reported on. There is a clear motivation to make practices look better and more equal than they actually are.

When talking about language, framing and the creation of various narratives, the role that the media and academia play in this should not be underestimated. Media and academia can influence and shape the public opinion about a certain topic. One interviewee heading an organization focusing on refugee law elaborated on this and highlighted it is not always about the quality of the work but also about where it is published which influences how many people will engage with the content. *'It could be the same information and coverage in the New York Times would attract a lot of attention and money whilst for a newspaper in South Africa it is very unlikely for this to happen because the ones reading it have no power and money. It is really important where things are published, it could be that no one notices it.'*

One of the interviewees mentioned that *'International organizations are trusted by default and national organizations are mistrusted by default.'* At the international level, the trust in national and local organizations is sometimes very limited. This misplaced trust and distrust happens at all levels within the contemporary humanitarian aid system. For instance, communities might be more likely to trust organizations that are local and lead by community members compared to international initiatives. Whilst another interviewee with expertise in forced migration and involved in a humanitarian alliance rightfully pointed out that *'Crossing an international border doesn't mean expertise increases.'* Unfortunately, in the contemporary humanitarian system it looks like being international is almost valued synonymously for being knowledgeable or having skills. Due to this almost automatic trust that is generally granted to international humanitarian organizations, it is easier for them to establish partnerships and implement projects. During the Annual Country Dialogue

Picture 4: An example of visibility
Source: *(I Can South Sudan, 2021)*

organized by the Charter 4 Change Uganda working group, several people mentioned the importance of visibility [1]. Visibility can often be achieved through relatively simply methods. One of the dialogue participants suggested that the organization logos of national, local and refugee-led organizations should be visual in for instance refugee settlements. In many places, the logos of international non-governmental organizations are visible, and if the logos of national, local and refugee-led organizations could also be portrayed, this would already help in making these organizations more visible and known. This limited visibility of the work of national, local and refugee-led organizations extends to reporting and documenting in which international organizations are usually the ones publishing reports and having their logos and contact information displayed in a very prominent manner. The efforts of national, local and refugee-led organizations are not always sufficiently acknowledged, recognized or credited. Similarly, in conversations on social media, whenever talking about projects, international agencies are usually the ones being referred to. However, one of the participants of the Annual Country Dialogue, pointed out the necessity for national, local and refugee-led organizations to invest time in branding themselves and making their work visible through for instance having an active LinkedIn profile, which could in turn also increase their credibility and track record, which could appeal to international organizations and might lead to certain opportunities. The topic of the importance of online presence of refugee-led organizations was also addressed in

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[1] The Annual Country Dialogue of the Charter 4 Change Uganda Working Group took place on the 20th of October 2021.

one of the interviews during which the interviewee whom is working for a refugee rights and law NGO expressed that he is not pleased about the dynamics in social media because 'friends' in the sector usually promote each other by sharing each other's messages. He then expressed the following sentiment *'If you can't beat them, join or copy them.'* As a result, he now usually retweets and shares messages of refugee-led organizations within his network in an effort to increase the visibility and amplify the voices of these refugee-led organizations.

6.9. Discrimination and exclusion

From the various interviews that were conducted, it became evident that there is widespread discrimination and exclusion. However, some interviewees were hesitant to specifically refer to these examples as discrimination and exclusion, but in their answers to other questions it became clear that they did not have access to certain opportunities and couldn't voice their concerns at some of the bigger platforms. Moreover, sometimes discrimination is hidden and not seen by the general public. One of the interviewees working for a NGO focusing on unity and development mentioned *'In terms of fundraising, we may say there is discrimination which is not seen, because they must put your application in pending while they are serving others, automatically you notice there is something wrong.'* According to this interviewee, when their organization applies for funding, they have to wait for a long time before their application is reviewed whilst other applications that came in are being handled in a timely manner. Moreover, sometimes discrimination is based on nationality as becomes apparent in the following quote from an interviewee working for a Congolese youth group in Uganda. *'You are working with someone and they start attacking you based on nationality. Someone is saying they can't keep working with these Congolese.'* This clearly shows discrimination against a whole group of Congolese refugees in Uganda. In this particular case the discrimination generalizes people from one nationality (Congolese) and states that it is impossible to work with them which is a clear example of discrimination based on nationality.

Since the majority of the interviews were conducted with refugee-led organizations and with organizations directly working with refugees, many issues and problems that refugees are facing on a daily basis came to the forefront. For many refugees from the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Rwanda and Burundi, there seems to be a language barrier, since several local languages and French are most commonly used for communication efforts in the countries of origin. Hence, living in a country with other local languages and English as an important language can be a challenge and contributes to the isolation of certain refugees due to communication barriers. Moreover, travelling to other countries can be a challenge with a refugee passport. Several refugees that were interviewed mention that it is difficult for them to go to international workshops or conferences, and hence they were unable to represent their organization at these events. Moreover, one of the interviewees working for an organization focusing on urban refugees noted there is discrimination and exclusion when refugees would like to attend workshops outside Uganda *'In terms of travelling documents, refugee passports most of the time are denied and not considered when crossing to Tanzania. We always face issues when travelling, yet you could go and represent your organization and air out realities within organizations.'* This experience also shows that due to the difficulty in travelling and the refugee passports not being considered as valid by neighbouring countries, refugee-led

humanitarian organizations miss out on opportunities to represent their organizations on regional and global platforms and hence they are not able to voice their realities, experiences and ideas at international platforms.

There are many prejudices regarding the capacities of refugees. This became apparent through statements of several interviewees. An interviewee working for a youth empowerment group said *'It is difficult for them (international NGOs) to believe in you or your credibility. Can they trust you that you can do the work which they expect from you. Being a group of refugees they cannot count on you. They don't have that natural trust in you.'* Moreover, the same interviewee mentioned that being a group of young people raises additional questions in terms of trust and credibility. Moreover, sometimes discrimination and exclusion are hidden. It is not openly said that certain actors don't have an opportunity to receive funding or to participate in the decision-making process, but it can be observed that organizations are treated differently. One interviewee representing a refugee-led humanitarian organization shared the following sentiment *'We are refugees, yes, but we are educated, we went to school. As a local refugee(led) organization it seems like it cannot be anything because of the position we have. Because of the position we have everyone may think being vulnerable is being traumatized. It is the way they discriminate, they think we can't do anything. But we have the knowledge, we can implement. Some people think by being poor you can't manage a big package of funds, which is wrong. Some organizations started as poor organizations, but are big organizations today.'*

Up until this point, different types of exclusion have been elaborately discussed and addressed. However, there is another type of exclusion which is worth mentioning and this is self-exclusion. Self-exclusion usually arises due to low confidence and self-esteem and the belief that one can't do certain things. Some of these beliefs of having less value or being incapable might still originate from the colonial time. Moreover, this can also be part of the explanation for the ongoing dependency syndrome in which communities depend on outside actors for their survival through for instance the provision of food, and they are not actively looking for ways to obtain their own food. Some interviewees have little hope that the humanitarian system will structurally change and become more equal. They mention that they see some positive changes happening but that these are rather superficial and not addressing root causes of inequalities and power imbalances. This is also related to a concept such as self-protection mechanism. In today's capitalist world, continuation and self-preservation or even growth of an organization are crucial. Hence, the current power holders have little interest in giving up some of their acquired power and providing space for other actors to step in. This is also reflected in a statement made by one of the interviewees working for an organization advocating for refugee law and rights. *'Institution survival is the real interest and priority.'* This suggests that at the core the mission is for the organization to continue existing. This is very different than the mission and vision statements which are presented on most websites of international humanitarian organizations. At the core, other interests and motivations certainly also play a role in programming and decision-making and there are many more factors involved than doing what is best for people part of humanitarian programs.

6.10. Chapter conclusion

This chapter the explored several fundamental elements of the humanitarian system including power, funding, capacity and language. The chapter elaborately reflects upon these different thematic areas and highlights the various sentiments that are being shared about these topics. While exploring the topic of power, the most prevalent one is decision-making power and national, local and refugee-led organizations mention that decisions are most commonly made by international actors. However, there are a few examples of consortiums and partnerships in which local actors have significant decision-making power, nevertheless, these seem to be the minority. Most funding is provided for a short-term basis which is understandable considering it concerns humanitarian programs. However, usually more sustainable and durable impact can be achieved through multi-year funding and by implementing the development, humanitarian and peace nexus. Additionally, national, local and refugee-led humanitarian organizations strongly advocate for more direct funding instead of receiving funding through sub-grants. An increased amount direct funding could increase decision-making power. Several interviewees addressed the need for core funding which supports administrative costs, emergency/risk budget, and would cater for institutional and capacity building. Debates around the capacity of national, local and refugee-led organizations have been tackled. Moreover, language and framing is an important element of the humanitarian system. Through language and framing usually underlying believes and values become visible. Sometimes language creates a continuation of certain dynamics and inequalities in the humanitarian system. These are some of the main elements that have been mentioned by national, local and refugee-led humanitarian organizations.

Chapter 7: Results – Trends and developments in Humanitarianism: Localization, Decolonization and Grand Bargain

This chapter discusses trends and developments in the humanitarian domain such as localization and decolonization and the Grand Bargain and Grand Bargain 2.0. as well as opportunities for the future. Through an extensive literature review, localization and decolonization have been identified as major trends aiming at reshaping and shifting power relations in the humanitarian aid sector. This chapter addresses these trends in the humanitarian aid architecture and the impact it has on humanitarian governance and the daily realities of national, local and refugee-led humanitarian organizations in Uganda.

7.1. Localization

In 2016 the Grand Bargain agreement was adopted by a wide range of national, local and UN actors amongst others. This is a key agreement aiming at improving humanitarian aid. One of the major aspects of the Grand Bargain is working towards a power shift through which local and national actors have more influence and decision making power regarding humanitarian aid. This is also referred to as localization. One of the core statements from the localization agenda is 'As local as possible as international as necessary' and this statement was also referred to by multiple interviewees and frequently discussed in webinars on the topic. However, 5 years later, there are debates that the Grand Bargain has not achieved its commitments and these concerns have also been echoed by interviewees. An interviewee involved with a group advocating for localization and working for a rural community empowerment NGO said *'We committed in 2016, to the Istanbul Humanitarian Summit, 5 years down the road most commitments have not been fulfilled to expectations. We need to step up our voices and address power imbalances in humanitarian architecture.'* Another quote from the same interviewee also clearly shows her frustration and dissatisfaction with the slow changes in the humanitarian aid system and the lack of agency and ownership of humanitarian aid projects by national, local and refugee-led humanitarian organizations. *'We don't want to be subcontracted, we want to be in equal partnerships.'*

Localization has various definitions and can be explained in different ways. The Dutch Relief Alliance (DRA) uses the following definition for localization ''DRA defines localization as a process towards local and national actors having a stronger role and more leadership in humanitarian assistance. The expansion of equitable partnerships between local and international humanitarian actors is key to this process to enhance the effectiveness of humanitarian assistance and address power imbalances in the humanitarian system'' (Dutch Relief Alliance , 2021). This definition aligns with approached used in this thesis where there is a focus on exploring the changing role of national and local actors and the desire for them to increase leadership, agency and decision-making power in the humanitarian domain. Moreover, the thesis views interaction between different humanitarian actors and partnership as a key component of achieving the ultimate goal of improving the effectiveness of humanitarian aid whilst simultaneously addressing power imbalances within the system.

Most respondents do recognize the intent of actors to change and some small efforts have been made in order to realize the localization agenda. However, several interviewees mentioned that the changes which have been made are superficial and will not address systemic power imbalances and inequality within the humanitarian domain. One of the interviewees mentioned localization is a long-term process which requires a lot of time and effort especially from the donors. Hence, organizations might have certain goals and commitments in mind but this might be difficult to achieve due to the time-consuming process. Moreover, something such as localization requires system change and a long-term approach. One of the interviewees mentioned that one of the reasons that the localization process has been slow could be due to the labour-intensive process that it requires. It is easy for an organization to verbally commit to agreements and goals, however, to actually reach these, requires continuous work and effort, which is something that international organizations and donors are underestimating or are unwilling to invest in.

The data which has been collected during interviews clearly indicates there are discussions about localization but little has been achieved in practical terms. This research finding correlates with results from other studies. ''In the case of refugee-led organisations in Uganda, Pincock et al. observe: ''whilst rhetoric at the global level suggests localisation has become a major theme in elite policy circles, this has failed to unfold at the local level''. Similarly, Roche et al. comment ''despite general rhetorical commitments to supporting locally led change amongst aid agencies, in reality, effective practice in this area is actually quite rare'' (Baguios, King, Martins, & Pinnington, 2021). Hence, existing literature confirms the findings of this thesis and reaches the same conclusion that many conversations and commitments include the topic of localization but very limited noteworthy successes have been achieved in the past 5 years (Baguios, King, Martins, & Pinnington, 2021). The financial resources and time investment required to achieve localization objectives are often underestimated. Moreover, there is a significant difference between committing to the localization agenda and actually implementing the localization agenda. In 2020, the Grand Bargain had 63 signatories. In the same year, 13 signatories allocated 25% or mor of their humanitarian funds to national/local responders as directly as possible (Metcalfe-Hough, Fenton, Willitts-King, & Spencer, 2020). This means the Grand Bargain target of allocating at least 25% of humanitarian funding directly to national and local responders was not achieved by 50 of the signatories.

Moreover, there seems to be a discrepancy in terms of understanding localization. There is no clear definition of localization and localization is very context-dependent. This is resulting in an ambiguity when using the term and leads to actors understanding the concept in different ways. An interviewee involved in a group advocating for localization and working for a community empowerment organization said the following *In their eyes localization is giving us money, but it doesn't work that way. We have to be part of decision-making. Power imbalances and inequalities still exist. Our voices are still not valued as we expect donors to do.'* It is evident that the respective interviewee does not believe that giving money is sufficient in order to achieve localization and cannot address the root causes of inequality. Another interviewee part of an organization supporting refugee communities also pointed out good intentions are not sufficient, instead national, local and refugee-led organizations need to be

involved in order to create successful projects. *'When you are doing something for me* and *you are doing it without me, it is against me.'* This clearly points at the essence of agency for national, local and refugee-led humanitarian organizations concerning project design and implementation, because if they are not part of the process, a project that is intended to support them, could instead disempower and disadvantage them. If local priorities are not well understood, projects could disrupt development instead of fostering it.

However, several interviewees provided examples of good practices in which international organizations did show genuine effort and contributions to the localization agenda and the shift in power. An interviewee working for a youth organization and involved with a refugee network organization said *'Some big donors have understood this, at the moment narratives where everyone is talking about localization. Pushing to see more money going directly to local organizations, because I think they also believe that problems could really be solved much better if the concerned people are capacitated in terms of providing funding to them, the solution to their own problems.'* Looking at the relations between international, national, local and refugee-led organizations, it should be noted there is a large difference between organizations, and donors and INGOs cannot be categorized or described as one homogenous group. Some donors and INGOs are at the forefront of localization and decolonization movements, for instance Oxfam, Trócaire and Open Society Foundations. These INGOs have proven they are willing to invest the required time and effort to change the status quo and their way of working and are genuinely providing space to national, local and refugee-led organizations and it looks like the interests of these organizations are prioritized which is accompanied by increased responsibilities and trust. Oxfam, Trócaire and Open Society Foundations were also mentioned by several interviewees as donors they appreciate working with because they are very open, supportive and willing to transform and adapt in order to better accommodate the priorities and interests of local and national organizations. Oxfam is a strong supporter of the localization agenda. Oxfam also has the empowering local and national humanitarian actors (ELNHA) program. Moreover, Oxfam funded a research in Uganda to explore the capacity of local and national humanitarian actors. Oxfam is a signatory to Charter4Change and according to an interviewee from a NGO operating in Uganda and South Sudan and focusing on refugees, returnees and internally displaced persons *'They give us a platform, they give voice, they give us freedom to come up with our own proposal and support it. They take the localization agenda very serious.'* Another interviewee from a NGO focusing on supporting South Sudanese in Uganda said *'Oxfam is doing amazing things. They are supporting advocacy work and supporting in terms of lobbying. Local and national organizations are given their share.'*

Another sentiment which was being shared is that national, local and refugee-led humanitarian organizations also have the responsibility to improve upon their capacity and accountability in order to improve trustworthiness and be more eligible to receive direct funding from international actors. An interviewee involved with an organization advocating for localization and working for a community empowerment NGO mentioned the following *'Donors don't trust us, that is why they rather have an intermediary who is the international actor to pass money to us. This presents an opportunity and challenge to national and local actors, we have to clean*

our houses. For us who have endorsed charter4change we have also signed the charter of accountability that can help to build trust that donors and INGOs do not have in us. We have to learn to do things the right way.'

An interviewee working as a lecturer and researcher on forced migration expressed the following about localization and concerning documentation and accountability of local actors *'I believe in the localization agenda; if there are local actors who can do the work, why not? We shouldn't forget; the local actors still need to build capacity, need to improve upon the work, some still have challenges in terms of documentation, paper work, having an office, having proper records, a website with information and with doing accountability. Because when you get funds you have to account. I know of some local NGOs that have been having problems, reports were late, not meeting deadlines, accountability not done well, documentation is lacking. Local NGOs must do their work, they must improve upon the work that is being done.'* This quote clearly indicates that national, local and refugee-led humanitarian organizations also have the responsibility to do better and improve upon the quality of their work. Generally speaking, more accountability and documentation is required from local NGOs in order to implement the necessary work successfully.

When discussing localization and ensuring a more prominent role for local and national humanitarian actors, it is crucial to keep in mind what requirements are existing in terms of capacity in order for this transformation and shift of power to be successful. In order to illustrate the humanitarian capacity in Uganda, Oxfam Uganda, as part of the 'Empowering Local and National Humanitarian Actors' (ELNHA) program, conducted a research in which it assessed the humanitarian capacity of the country. Their approach in terms of analysing capacity was organized in 5 different capacity clusters; (1) identity and mission (who and why), (2) managerial capacities (hard, how), (3) approach, commitment (soft, how), (4) technical expertise (what) and (5) size capability (how much). Moreover, the report distinguishes 13 different humanitarian hazards and causes of humanitarian disasters which include; droughts, floods, landslides and mudslides, human epidemics, animal epidemics and crop pests, heavy storms, earthquakes and volcanic activity. Moreover, there are internal armed conflicts, tribal clashes, cattle rustling, land conflicts, gender-based violence and instability in neighbouring countries leading to a large influx of refugees in Uganda (Mir & Ochen, 2016).

The Annual Dialogue organized by the Uganda Charter4Change Working Group had several major deliberations and recommendations. Multiple of these key recommendations are in line with themes which have been discussed prior in this thesis. One of the recommendations includes that partnerships should go beyond funding and project life cycles. Another recommendation is to focus on multi-year funding and to integrate the triple nexus approach (development, humanitarian and peace). Additionally, there was the request to INGOs and donors to include the logos of local organizations in reports and to acknowledge local contributions towards the development of programmes. Furthermore, the importance of prioritizing institutional capacity strengthening and integrating this into partnership agreements was emphasized (Charter4Change, 2021).

Picture 5: Attendees during a meeting of the Charter4Change Working Group Uganda.
Source: (I Can South Sudan , 2021)

(Dijkzeul, 2021) has listed four different modalities for providing aid, (1) international organizations' self-implementation, (2) direct funding to government institutions, (3) direct funding from donor government to local NGOs and (4) funding through international organizations that execute through local partners. In the same article, five factors in the relations between actors in the humanitarian aid chain which make it challenging to localize humanitarian action are elaborated upon. Firstly, needs in crises can be extremely life-threatening to the extent that the urge to immediately save lives is prioritized over longer-term capacity building, strengthening partnerships and other, more developmental activities. Secondly, the very nature of humanitarian funding can be a barrier to localization since most funding is only meant to be short-term which makes it challenging to develop capacities and strengthen partnerships. Third, there is are many differences between international and local humanitarian organizations. Fourth, local organizations usually become subcontractors because there is a focus on service delivery and not on strengthening capacities. Lastly, there is the fear of donors and international organizations that national and local NGOs don't have sufficient knowledge about humanitarian principles and standards and lack the required capacities and quality to implement humanitarian projects successfully (Dijkzeul, 2021).

The ODI report produced by (Baguios, King, Martins, & Pinnington, 2021) includes recommendations for international actors regarding achieving the objectives of the localisation agenda. These recommendations include; ''(1) learn from and accelerate initiatives that already exist – especially from the Global South, (2) transfer greater resources, including by tackling root causes of risk aversion and redesigning funding flows, (3) reduce encroachment of local actors' agency and respect their ways of being by rethinking organisational roles (and stepping back if appropriate) and shifting one's mindset and (4) let Global South actors lead the campaign to promote localisation and locally led practice''. These recommendations closely

relate with the findings and results that have been collected during this thesis research. It is important to build and strengthen already existing systems, to address root causes and giving space to national, local and refugee-led humanitarian organizations to implement projects according to their interests and values.

In order for the localisation agenda to successfully be implemented, all actors in the humanitarian architecture need to take responsibility, national, local and refugee-led organizations need to ensure that they increase accountability. One interviewee working for a youth organization and involved with a refugee network NGO noted *'International NGOs often perceive that their space is being invaded which can lead to tensions. Moreover, they serve as gatekeepers and middlemen and are not always required to keep the system going.'* Nevertheless, due to the fact that international organizations have a strong interest in continuing to operate and maintain the position of their organization, systematic and structural reforms of the humanitarian system are challenging to achieve. In terms of agenda setting, an interviewee leading a Christian NGO voiced a very critical remark about the motivations and interests of international humanitarian organizations *'They (international organizations) have a hidden agenda, they do whatever they want. This is still colonial.'* This quote illustrates a perspective which highlights the continuation of colonial practices, although in contemporary times this happens in a less visible manner.

7.2. Decolonization

In order to apply theories to decolonization and humanitarian aid, the explanation of (Baguios, King, Martins, & Pinnington, 2021) is insightful. ''Decolonial critiques argue that a specific kind of 'development' is being advanced by dominant powers: one that is 'linear, unidirectional, material, driven by commodification and capitalist markets, with negative impacts not only for social relations but also the environment. This kind of 'maldevelopment' is encouraged by a particular conception of modernity, that has a tendency for 'universalism', envisioning a 'single, now globalized world' that privileges Western ontologies (being in the world) and epistemologies (understanding the world).'' The contemporary world, including the humanitarian aid architecture, is strongly biased and favours Western ontologies and perspectives regarding development and defining priorities for humanitarian assistance. However, in the contexts where humanitarian aid is provided, the dominant Western ontology might not be applicable and can actually even result in harmful or negative impacts.

Quite surprisingly, most interviewees did not start talking about colonization or decolonization until they were specifically asked about this. Even though most of the conversation was about power relations and inequalities in the sector, the need to decolonize the sector was rarely raised by interviewees themselves during general discussions. There could be various reasons for this, first of all, it could be that the debates about decolonization and its corresponding agenda are mainly pushed by the Global North, which could in itself be perceived as another example of neo-colonialism. The concept of decolonization might be very much an academic term and jargon which is not easily applied in practice. However, another reason for the scarce mentioning of decolonization and the colonial history could have to do with my own positionality as a researcher. Due to the fact that I am a white female researcher from the Global North interviewees might not have felt comfortable voicing this issue to me, in fear of offending

me. Moreover, it could be that they view me as part of this system. Hence, if for instance an Ugandan conducted this research, the outcomes might have been very different, and it could be that issues around decolonization and neo-colonialism were frequently raised. Furthermore, it could be that interviewees were just telling me what they thought I wanted to hear. Since it could be that they were perceiving me as part of the 'problem' due to my Dutch nationality. It would have been interesting if these questions were asked by an Ugandan researcher, possibly the responses to these questions could have been very different.

Even though most interviewees did initially not refer to colonization or decolonization themselves, much of the information shared about relations between humanitarian organizations can be linked to colonization and decolonization. The contemporary structures of humanitarian organizations clearly show a strong Western hegemony as international and Western humanitarian organizations generally hold more financial resources and have more decision-making power. Humanitarian organizations resemble and perpetuate the existing global order and structures which were shaped and influenced by the remnants of the colonial era. Many influential development and humanitarian aid actors such as United Nations agencies started operating during colonial times and their structures still reflect the power imbalances between international and national and local humanitarian organizations.

One of the interviewees working for an activist group critical on the involvement of foreigners in development and humanitarian aid efforts mentioned the importance of decolonizing education since *'this can liberate them or seal them. The education I have received as an Ugandan growing up and now was and is very colonial with no room for critical thinking. There is a need to see change.'* Important to understand is that decolonization is not something which can easily be achieved. The same interviewee stated *'Decolonization is a process of liberation from political, economic and cultural colonization and removing all things that are colonial, also mental and physical. That is not something you can do in a day. Decolonization is possible and doable, but it is a long-term process of undoing so much damage that has been done by colonialism.'* This clearly points to the longevity of processes of localization and decolonization. Organizations who claim to support localization and decolonization efforts might fundamentally underestimate the investments (both in terms of financial resources and time) that it takes to achieve this. Actually, true localization and decolonization might never be achieved since there will always be things that can be improved or adjusted. Working on decolonization and localization can hence be perceived as a daunting task without an end, especially because it is also difficult to truly measure the success of working on this. Therefore, it is important that decolonization is seen as a continuous process, since true decolonization requires constant reflection and adaptation. There is always more work that can be done to decolonize. Moreover, working on decolonization can be uncomfortable since it can confrontational to be reflective on policies and behaviour that unfairly advantage some whilst disadvantaging others. No White Saviours have listed the following quote on their website ''If you're not uncomfortable, you're not listening''. Hence in order to listen or to change things, this confrontation and uncomfortable feeling is required. Continuing to work on these themes even though it can at times feel discouraging and confrontational is crucial in order to foster impactful change.

One of the interviewees working for a NGO focusing on Somali youth stated the following *'Aid is for politics. What if Uganda and the U.S.A. have a dispute on politics; they will stop the aid, that is colonization. With the projects they carry their values, books and pens come with their culture. They want to change our African culture. The West sees this as an opportunity to promote their culture with aid. The books that they bring are for free, but there is a message there. This is colonization automatically, they are using this to reach their objectives. Sometimes it is for their business, it is about their benefit.'* This perspective shows a strong dissatisfaction with aid provided by the West or so-called Global North. This interviewee perceives aid as a tool from the West to promote their culture and achieve economic benefits.

One of the interviewees, founder of several refugee-led organizations, expressed the following *'The way most of our things are set up is a continuation of the colonial past. I haven't seen much which is not a colonial driven agenda or kind of hybrid. I'm not so much seeing people independent.'* The same interviewee said *'African countries getting Western aid is a transformation of colonialism, on a smaller scale, but it is similar, Western countries set the priorities.'* This clearly points to neo-colonialism and the continued influence of the West on development and humanitarian aid. Even though the humanitarian system has undergone significant changes over time, at the core humanitarian aid still visualises and perpetuates some of the major global inequalities. In terms of decoloniality and decolonizing knowledge, humanitarian aid is still dominated by Western worldviews, at times unconsciously and only visible to those paying attention to these dynamics. It is important to ensure knowledge, skills and perspectives of national, local and refugee-led humanitarian organizations is more valued and appreciated and put at the centre of humanitarian assistance.

One of the interviewees, working for an activist group questioning and critically reflecting on the role of foreigners in development and humanitarian aid in Uganda, asked the following question; *'Is it possible to decolonize?' as* she elaborated on this with the following reflection *'Decolonization is not a one day thing that you do. It is a process of liberation from political, economic, cultural colonization and removing all things that are colonial in these sectors; economic, political, cultural, mental, physical. We reflected on how it is hard to change people's mindset. It is possible yes, but it is not a one day thing and there is no clear written path of if you do a, b, c, d. Decolonization is possible and doable, it is a long-term process of undoing so much damage that has been done by colonialism, especially in Uganda.'* This argument relates to the complexity of decolonization and that it is challenging to establish a decolonial agenda with steps that have to be taken. Moreover, it recognizes that colonization is part of various areas of people's lives and therefore extremely difficult to eliminate entirely.

Sometimes the sentiment 'Working yourself out of a job' is being shared as the ultimate goal of working for a development or humanitarian organization. Because if there is no work anymore for the organization it means that the issues which led to the need for the organization to intervene have either been solved or are accurately dealt with by the respective government or communities themselves. This can for instance also take place through a power shift and through restructuring the system which reduces the importance of the role for the international

actor. Hence, there is no need any more for the external interference of the international development or humanitarian partner. At times this can seem counterintuitive since globally most organizations and companies are aimed at growing and expanding instead of making themselves obsolete. Sometimes questions about the future of the sector are being raised and many people agree that there is an urgent need for fundamental changes in order to improve the contemporary system and improve upon the effectiveness of aid. There seems to be a consensus among organizations that certain elements of the aid sector need to change. However, it looks like there is a lack of serious commitment to achieve the outlined changes which are needed. There is a tendency to blame other actors for some of the ongoing issues instead of taking active responsibility for what the respective actor can contribute themselves. Being accountable for one's own actions is a crucial part changing the system.

Most interviewees mention that they are seeing some shifts happening after the Grand Bargain and localization commitments that aim at changing the power dynamics between international and national, local and refugee-led humanitarian organizations. However, change is usually slower than initially expected. Sometimes it is just conversations that are being held, but this is not automatically translated to better practices. Many interviewees expressed their frustrations and hopelessness regarding systemic power shifts in the sector. Part of decolonization is respecting and providing space for different types of knowledges and values. Currently some local NGOs, especially the smaller ones don't feel like they can disagree with INGOs, due to fear of losing out on funding and support. This leads to them having to accept to implement projects even though they might fundamentally disagree with this approach, but they have to compromise on some of their values.

7.3. Grand Bargain 2.0.

In June 2021, 5 years after The Grand Bargain agreement was established in Istanbul, the Grand Bargain 2.0 Framework was adopted. The document explaining the Grand Bargain 2.0 Framework highlights the original objective of the Grand Bargain which is ''to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the humanitarian system'' (IASC, 2021). There is a common understanding that the improvements in the humanitarian system can only be achieved through centring the Grand Bargain and bringing it closer to the people the agreement is supposed to serve. Due to this, the Grand Bargain 2.0 has the following overall objective ''Better humanitarian outcomes for affected populations through enhanced efficiency, effectiveness, and greater accountability, in the spirit of Quid pro Quo as relevant to all'' (IASC, 2021). The Quid pro Quo refers to a Latin phrase which means an exchange of goods or services, in this exchange the transfers depend on each other since it is give and take or a favour for a favour. The enabling priorities of the Grand Bargain 2.0 are commonly summarised as 'quality funding' and 'localisation' and in order to achieve this efficiency and effectiveness, visibility, risk sharing, transparency and accountability (including to affected populations) are at the core of the agreement (IASC, 2021). These topics align with the focus of the conducted interviews and with some of the challenges that interviewees have shared about the contemporary humanitarian aid system. When looking at how to achieve the objectives and enabling priorities, four outcome pillars have been identified ''(1) flexibility, predictability, transparency and tracking, (2)

equitable and principled partnerships, (3) accountability and inclusion and (4) prioritisation and coordination'' (IASC, 2021). The Grand Bargain 2.0 Framework can be found in picture 6.

The recommendations from the independent review of the Grand Bargain after five years by (Metcalfe-Hough, Fenton, Willitts-King, & Spencer, 2021) include the following; (1) clarify the theory of change and plan of action, (2) enable better quality funding, (3) increase support for local responders, (4) realise the participation revolution, (5) shift tactics – a 'caucus' approach, (6) increase outreach to local governmental and non-governmental actors, (7) reinforce leadership and governance, (8) simplify the coordination structures and (9) strengthen accountability (Metcalfe-Hough, Fenton, Willitts-King, & Spencer, 2021). The report also provides multiple elaborate suggestions on how these recommendations can be implemented.

GRAND BARGAIN 2.0

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE

Better humanitarian outcomes for affected populations through enhanced efficiency, effectiveness and greater accountability, in the spirit of quid pro quo as relevant to all constituencies.

ENABLING PRIORITIES

ENABLING PRIORITY 1

A critical mass of quality funding is reached that allows an effective and efficient response, ensuring visibility and accountability.

ENABLING PRIORITY 2

Greater support is provided for the leadership, delivery and capacity of local responders and the participation of affected communities in addressing humanitarian needs.

OUTCOME PILLARS

Flexibility, predictability, transparency, and tracking

A greater amount of quality funding is transferred to humanitarian partners, including a greater proportion to local actors, to ensure a high quality response that is at scale, timely and relevant, with appropriate tracking and transparency around usage and impact of funding

Equitable and principled partnerships

Quality funding and local partnerships must be based on a system-wide understanding of risk management (including risk sharing and transfer) and clear principles for partnerships which support local leadership delivery and capacity

Accountability and inclusion

To achieve quality, responses must adapt to the capacities, priorities, and views of affected people, and support the agency and participation of people whose needs and vulnerability are heightened by gender inequality, disability, social exclusion and marginalisation, and humanitarians must be accountable to affected people

Prioritisation and coordination

Quality funding targets the most vulnerable with what they need most based on inclusive consultative processes and gender analysis with affected populations, and effective coordination that promotes increased representation and where possible leadership of local responders including Women Led Organisations

LINKS WITH CORE COMMITMENTS AGREED IN 2016/2018

Core commitments on greater transparency (1.2), supporting local responders (2.1), multi-year, collaborative and flexible planning and multi-year funding (7.1) and reduced earmarking (8.2), and harmonised narrative reporting (9.1).

Core commitments on supporting local responders (2.4), increasing cash assistance (3.1), reducing individual donor assessments (4.5).

Core commitments on joint needs assessments and analysis (5.1), engagement and accountability to affected populations (6.1) and humanitarian-development nexus (10.4).

Picture 6: Grand Bargain 2.0
Source: (IASC, 2021).

7.4.Complementarity

Focusing on complementarity of INGOs and national, local and refugee-led humanitarian organizations is fundamental. The added value and mutual benefit of collaborations between INGOs and national and local humanitarian actors should be emphasized. INGOs have unique strengths such as access to international networks and donors which is very beneficial for acquiring funding for humanitarian aid. On the other hand, national and local humanitarian actors have a better understanding of communities that are eligible to receive humanitarian aid and their interests and needs. Ultimately, when various humanitarian actors are working together this can lead to more effective humanitarian aid.

Complementarity is often lacking due to a gap in knowledge on what capacities exist locally. There are two main trends in humanitarian action where actors either feel that only local humanitarian action should be pursued or that humanitarian action should be as international as possible. There are many factors affecting complementarity including dynamics of trust, power and legitimacy between local and international actors. Moreover, coordination, risk tolerance, the nature of the crisis and the level of access all influence complementarity. The role of the government, whether or not there are long-term partnerships, and the presence and role of networks of local organizations are also influencing elements. Furthermore, it is important to consider if the objectives, interests and accountabilities of international and local actors align (Barbelet, Rethinking capacity and complementarity for a more local humanitarian action , 2019). Complementarity and working according to each other's strengths is an excellent pathway to more effective and impactful humanitarian aid.

7.5. Chapter conclusion

Localization and decolonization are major concepts aiming at restructuring humanitarian aid architecture. However, the research has shown that these concepts are currently frequently discussed and referred to, but there are still many milestones to be achieved in terms of implementation of these agenda's. At times it feels like localization and decolonization are used as buzzwords, however, even if organizations have a genuine interest in shifting power, they might not realize the time and commitment it takes to achieve these system changes. Localization and decolonization of humanitarian aid cannot be achieved over night, instead it is an extensive process which can take many years and might never be completely done. Additionally, localization and decolonization is very context-dependent and therefore it is difficult to develop a guidance on how best to facilitate this process. Moreover, the thesis indicated that localization and decolonization are at times perceived as jargon and academic terms and might not carry much meaning at the places where this is aimed to be implemented. Obviously the concerns and issues do relate to the terms, but it is possible that problems are preferable approached in an alternative manner. Another issue which makes it challenging to work on themes such as localization and decolonization is that results might not be visible immediately and hence it is unclear if time and money invested will be worth it. Moreover, the standard practice in the humanitarian and development sector is to allocate funds based on expected project outcomes. However, in order to achieve true localization and decolonization, the expected outcomes are by definition almost impossible to define since it depends on the

process led by communities and the organization or institution providing funding does not have any control or influence over this. This can make it even more challenging to make it appealing to invest in these topics. Nevertheless, small changes are being made, although now mainly superficial, it is important to continue working on improving the humanitarian sector and making it more effective and fair. Focusing on complementarity and the added value of all humanitarian stakeholders is also an excellent pathway to achieving a more effective humanitarian system.

Chapter 8: Summary, discussion and recommendations

8.1. Summary

The main humanitarian actors have been defined as national, local and refugee-led humanitarian organizations, international humanitarian organizations and donors, the government and affected populations. Generally speaking, each actor has their own distinct role in the humanitarian system. Between the different actors, there are major structural inequalities and power imbalances. The ones usually holding most of the funding and financial resources, the international humanitarian organizations and donors largely control the type of projects and activities that are being implemented. Nevertheless, the influence and power of Ugandan government actors should not be underestimated since they decide who has permission to implement activities and what type of activities can be implemented in the humanitarian space. Despite national, local and refugee-led humanitarian organizations having most contextual knowledge and understanding, their role in the humanitarian response is often underestimated or at least underfunded.

When talking about power in the humanitarian system and assessing the relations between international and national, local and refugee-led humanitarian organizations, it becomes clear that international organizations usually hold most power and money. Debates about the need to localize aid and increase the decision-making power of national and local humanitarian organizations are common, however, these conversations are rarely translated to practical transformations. This also has to do with the complexity and interdependence of the humanitarian system, which makes systematic changes very challenging. One of the key aspects of the Grand Bargain commitment is more direct funding to national and local humanitarian organizations. In terms of funding, interviewees strongly advocate for multi-year funding and give preference to unearmarked and direct funding to national, local and refugee-led humanitarian organizations. Moreover, it is important that costs for capacity and institution are covered. However, in practice, this has so far not been reached, despite increasing attention on the topic. When looking at the aspect of framing and certain language being used to describe national, local and refugee-led humanitarian organizations, they are sometimes only considered implementing partners and not involved in strategic priority and agenda-setting. Moreover, there is always a focus on capacity building instead of emphasizing the unique strengths and qualities that these organizations already possess. In terms of visibility, it has become evident that on many occasions the efforts of national, local and refugee-led humanitarian actors are not sufficiently recognized. They are for instance not accredited in reports written by international organizations nor mentioned as partners in social media posts of international actors. Moreover, their logos are not always displayed. Hence, in terms of visibility, there are still many elements that can be improved upon.

Localization and decolonization are two of the main themes when talking about humanitarian aid. Both relate to increased decision-making power regarding humanitarian aid priorities and

programs and being able to implement activities that affected communities themselves believe will support them best instead of solely relying on recommendations of international humanitarian actors. Most actors agree that these themes are crucial and should be implemented, however, working towards achieving more localized and decolonized aid has proven to be a challenge. Sometimes, this is due to the longevity of this process, it is a continuous process that will always evolve and sometimes clear indicators or steps are difficult to determine. Additionally, implementing localization and decolonization processes can be very demanding both in terms of human resources as in terms of financial capital whilst it is difficult to establish priorities beforehand, since these should actually be determined along the way if the processes are implemented correctly. Hence, it can be concluded that there is still a big gap between global debates about localization and decolonization and the systematic changes that are taking place in the humanitarian domain. Nevertheless, shifts are taking place and there a definitely some good examples that localization and decolonization can happen, it just requires a lot of commitment and a shift in mindset. Moreover, if these themes are implemented, this will fundamentally change the position and influence of international humanitarian organizations. The complementarity approach in which the added value of each humanitarian stakeholder is emphasized is also an excellent pathway to a more effective humanitarian system.

The main research question was defined as follows: '*How do localization and decolonization trends impact humanitarian relations and governance and national, local and refugee-led humanitarian organizations and their work in Uganda?*' Elements that are crucial in answering this research question have been explored in various sub-research questions and multiple results chapters. It can be concluded that national, local and refugee-led humanitarian organizations experience relations and power dynamics with international humanitarian organizations as unequal and that the majority of the decision-making power is with the international humanitarian actor or the donor whom also control the funding. Efforts to make the system more equal and shift the power have been implemented, but it has largely stayed an academic and debate for conferences, in practice, little transformations have been observed by national, local and refugee-led humanitarian organizations. The changes and adjustments that have been realized are not sufficient to comply with international agreements such as the Grand Bargain neither are they considered as fostering instrumental and fundamental changes within the wider humanitarian aid provision by national, local and refugee-led humanitarian organizations. Alterations, reshaping and restructuring of existing dynamics and ways of working have largely remained superficial and are insufficient in creating real system changes that would benefit and increase the power and autonomy of the populations concerned. Nevertheless, with continued efforts the humanitarian aid system and governance might be significantly reformed in the future with increased power for national, local and refugee-led humanitarian organizations.

8.2. General reflections and discussion of the thesis
Reflections on the collected results and the thesis research at large are gathered here. Surprising and unexpected findings are also discussed. Additionally, insights into the research process are provided and certain choices that have been made during the research are explained here. Furthermore, the section includes a reflection on the positionality of the thesis researcher.

Throughout my thesis I tried my best to include various theories and perspectives. Part of this was highlighting perspectives and theories of African academics. Contributions of African intellectuals are often ignored because they can significantly deviate from the ones of European and American scholars. Besides including a wide range of academic authors from both the Global North and Global South, my thesis focused on emphasizing the experiences and perspectives of local, national and refugee-led humanitarian organizations. This is important since conversations about changing the humanitarian system and power dynamics are often approached from the perspective of international NGOs.

In a way I am not surprised by my research findings that there is still a lot of work to be done in terms of localizing, decolonizing and shifting power to national, local and refugee-led humanitarian organizations in Uganda. This is mainly because the existing literature that I consulted and online webinars I attended before conducting interviews confirmed the perspective that major shifts in the humanitarian system are much needed but that implementation of these changes is lacking behind what is formally agreed upon. My interviewees align with this perspective on the shift in power, that major changes are still to take place. Nevertheless, it is important to note that in all of the literature consulted, the webinars attended and the interviews conducted, there is no question whether or not localization, decolonization and a shift in power to national, local and refugee-led humanitarian organizations is necessary. All of the humanitarian actors which I engaged with seem to agree and achieve consensus about the fact that the humanitarian system requires fundamental and structural changes in order to be more efficient and serve people in need in a better and more equal way. Nevertheless, the debates seem to be mainly centred around how these changes can be realized. Many actors show commitment to the themes discussed in the Grand Bargain, nevertheless the challenges and obstacles arise with implementing the commitment because systemic and structural changes in humanitarian aid architecture are challenging to achieve.

The results of this thesis highlight the perspectives of national, local and refugee-led humanitarian organizations in Uganda regarding relations with international organizations. Themes discussed during interviews include power relations and dynamics, visibility, discrimination, localization and decolonization. This thesis adds to the already existing literature about this topic due to the focus on the perspectives of national, local and refugee-led humanitarian organizations in Uganda instead of emphasizing the views of big international actors regarding shifting the power, this in itself can be considered a decolonial and grass-roots methodology since the people that are supposed to be at the centre of humanitarian operations in the re-imagined humanitarian aid system, are at the core of the data collection for this thesis. Moreover, the quotes and practical examples and suggestions offer new insights and angles into how unequal power relationships materialize as well as how these relations could be altered and improved in order to increase the influence of national, local and refugee-led humanitarian organizations in terms of agenda-setting and decision-making power amongst others. However, the thesis is not written in isolation and complements and links information collected during interviews with existing literature and theories on the concerned themes as well as taking ideas and inspiration from a wide range of webinars. Therefore, this thesis presents a comprehensive

picture of the perspectives of national, local and refugee-led humanitarian actors about the relations with international humanitarian actors as well as a global picture of the achievements so far in terms of re-imagining these power relations.

Throughout the thesis, the research focus and research questions have been adapted multiple times. During the development of the interview questions, I discussed with my supervisor that some of the questions were quite theoretical and direct and might not align well with the experiences of my prospective interviewees. Consequently, the interview questions were written in a simplified, more common-day language in order to be more understandable to the research participants. After conducting the interviews through this approach, the idea was to bring back the more theoretical dimensions and frameworks and connect some of the research outcomes to the theoretical and academic literature that was collected at the start of the thesis research. During the data collection and interview process, I discovered that decolonization was less broadly discussed than I expected, it turned out to not really be at the core of my thesis. There were many more interesting dynamics and topics discussed about humanitarian aid that could not always directly relate to colonization or maybe it could, but this was not automatically the association that most interviewees had. Therefore, I decided to alter my research questions to better reflect and represent the content of the interviews I had conducted.

In my experience it was relatively easy to find new interviewees. This was due to the fact that I employed various methodologies in finding new interviewees. Firstly, I tried to find relevant national, local and refugee-led humanitarian organizations operating in Uganda online through looking at various websites and selecting the ones that were fitting with my selection criteria. Moreover, I used my personal and professional network and shared with (Ugandan) friends that I was looking for interviewees as well as creating a LinkedIn post about this. Additionally, after the interviewees I would ask if the person had other people in mind that I could interview for my thesis, the so-called snowball approach. Moreover, I was quite persistent with arranging the interviews, on several instances I did not get a reply from the concerned organization immediately, and I followed this up with sending a second email after two weeks, through which I gained several more interviewees whom initially did not respond to my email. I was positively surprised that people were willing to talk to me and share their experiences. Especially because some of the themes of this thesis can be considered sensitive and might be difficult to discuss. Generally speaking I found my interviewees very open and collaborative. Occasionally, they pointed me to the fact that they were going to share a specific example to illustrate their point but due to the sensitivity of the matter, they wished that this was not incorporated in the final thesis report. All 24 interviewees agreed to the interview being recorded which was a hugely beneficial for efficient data processing. Their approval to have the conversation recorded also showed trust they had in me as a researcher and that I would handle their information in a proper way. Being a student from another country could in this case potentially be an advantage because perhaps they connected or understood this as me being a more neutral actor. Especially because some of the interviewees were quite critical on the role of the government, my positionality could actually be an advantage here, since they might not have felt comfortable to share these views if I was an Ugandan citizen. Hence, it becomes

evident that my positionality as a researcher involved both considerable advantages and disadvantages.

8.3. Limitations

This thesis research, was conducted at the peak of the global Covid-19 pandemic, and international travel was largely restricted by my university and strongly advised against by the Dutch government. Not being able to visit Uganda and the various areas where the interviewed humanitarian organizations were operating from is considered one of the biggest limitations of this thesis research. Part of my target group might have been unintentionally excluded from this thesis research since their online presence, for instance a website or stable internet connection, was possibly limited, hence I did not have an opportunity to reach out to them online. If travelling was possible, I would have been able to see the areas in Uganda that were part of this thesis research as well as being able to actively engage with the residents in those areas. By being present physically, the thesis research would have become more informal, since I would have been able to form connections and friendships with the people that are part of the target group of this thesis research and possibly join them for parts of their work or make observations during humanitarian activities. This is crucial since these regular informal interactions contribute to building trust and research participants might have felt more comfortable to share (sensitive) information with me. This would have allowed me to develop a better understanding of the contexts in which humanitarian organizations are operating and about their relations with other organizations and individuals. However, the only option I had was to conduct this thesis research online. Nevertheless, this online methodology also had distinct advantages because it made the research more flexible and meetings were easier to reschedule which was convenient for the research participants. Moreover, the online methodology allowed the researcher to communicate and include participants from across Uganda since distance was not a limitation.

I was only able to conduct interviews in English. This has unintentionally excluded certain national, local or refugee-led humanitarian organizations due to my inability to conduct the interviews in their native languages. If I was physically present, I could have possibly arranged an interpreter and some of the interviews could have been conducted in people's native language, which would arguably allow them to express themselves in a more comfortable and elaborate manner.

Another limitation, or at least a factor of which I expect it could have had a major influence on the thesis results, is my positionality as a researcher. I picked this research topic due to my personal interest in it, the ongoing debates I have seen around this theme as well as the international relevancy of it, and because I wanted to make an attempt to understand my own (future) role in the humanitarian system in a more comprehensive manner. I am aware that this in itself could also be considered a colonial approach to doing research, since the research agenda is largely determined by me and not by the research participants. Being a white Dutch woman studying at a university in the Global North has impacted the results which I have collected. First of all, my positionality influenced my research focus and the questions I asked to the research participants even though I tried to limit this bias through exploring a wide range

of literature from diverse authors and asking my friends from various nationalities to proof read my questions. My positionality as a researcher has influenced the interactions and answers of the research participants. It is possible that they might have felt uncomfortable sharing their opinions and perspectives on certain sensitive topics with me such as on the influence and impact of colonization on their work. I noticed that when asking the question about colonization and neo-colonization, some participants started laughing, which could have been a sign of them feeling uncomfortable. However, these are all speculations. Lastly, even after conducting the interviews, my positionality to the research topic influenced the outcomes since I am the one distilling the core themes and interesting quotes to focus on from the interviews. Another researcher could have picked a different angle or put emphasis on other issues than I have done. Therefore I am confident that if another person would have conducted this thesis, for instance a native Ugandan, their thesis results could have been very different. My positionality in this thesis research is not necessarily a limitation but more something that is good to be aware of. Generally speaking in social sciences the researcher plays a big role in shaping the research.

During the thesis research I made use of purposive sampling and directly targeted relevant organizations and invited them for an online interview. I found some of the organizations I interviewed through an online search using key words such as 'grassroots', 'refugees', 'humanitarian' and 'Uganda'. Moreover, I made use of snowball sampling, in which I asked interviewees to suggest the next organization or person to contact regarding my thesis research. I am aware of the potential bias in respondents that might have occurred as a result of using the snowball method. The risk would be that the organizations I talked with all have similar views regarding my thesis topic since they are somehow connected. Moreover, this could lead to my sample of collected data not being representative. However, I used different approaches to get in touch with research respondents and approached different organizations from the beginning of my research. This resulted in the snowballing methodology taking place across multiple organizations, limiting the risk of bias in research respondents.

The limited timeframe was one of the other challenges encountered during the thesis. Due to the time restrictions, the thesis focused on the experiences and perspectives of national, local and refugee-led humanitarian actors in Uganda in terms of relations and dynamics with international actors. However, the humanitarian system consists of a wide range of actors and it would have been very insightful to include perspectives of international humanitarian organizations, donors, national and local governments and United Nations agencies amongst others among the interviewees. Their perspectives and visions on the relations and dynamics with national, local and refugee-led humanitarian organizations in Uganda presumably differs from the information I have collected for my thesis. Talking to a broader range of humanitarian actors could have provided more in-depth insights and a more comprehensive understanding of the relations and dynamics in humanitarian aid in Uganda. Therefore, exploring the perspectives, sentiments and interests of other actors involved with these themes is one of the core recommendations of this thesis in order to better understand the humanitarian space.

8.4. Recommendations

The thesis answered the research questions that were at the core of this thesis research. Nevertheless, there are several recommendations and suggestions for further research that could be taken into account. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, this thesis was conducted online. It would be recommended that offline research would take place because this would allow for a different type of interaction with interviewees. Face to face interactions usually allow for more informal conversations which could in turn lead to interesting research observations and data. Furthermore, other organizations could be included through this approach since having a stable internet connection would not be a requirement to participate in the research anymore. Also, if the thesis were to be conducted on various locations in Uganda, other types of data collection can be utilized. Next to conducting interviews, focus group discussions could be organized and informal conversations and observations could be included in the thesis as well. Using different data collection methodologies would allow for triangulation of data which ultimately improves the quality of collected information.

Additionally, it would be interesting if a similar research was conducted by someone with another positionality than the researcher of this thesis, because this could largely influence and change the answers provided by the interviewees. The positionality of the researcher of this thesis as a white woman from the Netherlands also shapes how interview results are interpreted and presented in this thesis. It would be good if a similar research would be conducted by an Ugandan researcher who is more connected to the people that are part of the research.

Lastly, it is recommended that more humanitarian stakeholders would be interviewed. Due to time constraints, the focus in this thesis was on the perspectives of national, local and refugee-led humanitarian organizations, however, in order to obtain a more comprehensive and balanced view of the situation, it would be very valuable to also engage with other actors, for instance, the Ugandan government and international humanitarian organizations. This would ensure perspectives of all relevant stakeholders are represented.

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Appendix 1: Interview guide

Thank you for taking the time to participate in my thesis research. Let me first introduce myself: my name is Marlous Rottier and I am a Master student International Development Studies at Wageningen University and Research in the Netherlands.

I am currently conducting my thesis which aims at getting a better understanding of the relations between international and local humanitarian NGOs operating in Uganda. Moreover, my thesis aims at illustrating practical examples of these relations and how humanitarian aid could be more efficient. The interview will take approximately 1 hour.

Participating in this research is on a voluntary basis. If you don't feel comfortable answering a question, you can indicate this and we move on to another question. Additionally, if a question is unclear, please ask for clarification.

Can the interview be recorded? This is just for analysis purposes and will not be shared with anyone. Or do you prefer if I just take notes of the conversation?

Do you have any questions before we start the interview?

1. Could you please explain about your position and responsibilities within your organization?
2. How would you categorize your organization in terms of the type and size of the organization? (Would it be community-based, local organization, national organization, etc.)
3. Which actors do you work with?
4. Can you describe the relations you have with other actors (NGOs, communities, government, private sector, academia, media, etc.)?
5. How do these relations impact the work of your organization?
6. What do you think about international development and aid organizations and the work they are doing in Uganda? And how does their work impact your organization?
7. What challenges does your organization face in relations with international NGOs?
8. What opportunities does your organization see in relations with international NGOs?
9. How would you describe the power relations and dynamics with other humanitarian organizations operating in this sector? (probe more about INGOs)
10. What is your opinion about the type of images and information that are being used by INGOs when they are talking about their work in Uganda? (in your opinion does it represent the reality) (in order for them to raise funds/awareness)
11. Do you observe any inequality when collaborating with INGOs?
12. Have you or other staff of the organization ever experienced (structural) racism, discrimination or exclusion when collaborating with INGOs? Can you give examples?
13. Currently there are many ongoing debates about localization of humanitarian aid which are emphasizing on the importance of shifting (decision-making) power and responsibilities to local and national actors. Does your organization have experience with localization? Could you elaborate upon this?

14. Another topic which is increasingly discussed is the topic of risk sharing between local and international humanitarian actors. Oftentimes local actors face more risks when implementing their work and the international actors don't always acknowledge these risks or take them into account. What is your perspective on risk sharing? How is this currently arranged among the partners you work with? (accountability, safety, etc.)

15. What influence does the colonial past have on your work as an NGO? (gap between resources, global north + south divide)

16. Is there anything that we have not yet talked about but that you think is important to discuss?

17. Do you have any tips or advice for me during the remainder of my research?

18. Can you suggest other organizations or people I could talk to for my research?

Thank you for participating in my research. If you are interested I will send you a copy of my thesis after completion.

Appendix 2: List of conducted interviews

Below an overview of the number of interviews and the dates on which these interviews were conducted can be found. This list is provided for accountability purposes. Due to some research topics being sensitive, the interviewees remain anonymous and hence no details are provided about their names or the organizations they are working for. In total, 24 online interviews were conducted through MS Teams, Zoom and WhatsApp, depending on the preference of the interviewee. The interview duration ranged from 1 to 2 hours per interview.

Interview number	Date of interview
1	26-09-2021
2	26-09-2021
3	30-09-2021
4	06-10-2021
5	06-10-2021
6	06-10-2021
7	07-10-2021
8	07-10-2021
9	07-10-2021
10	08-10-2021
11	11-10-2021
12	12-10-2021
13	12-10-2021
14	12-10-2021
15	13-10-2021
16	13-10-2021
17	17-10-2021
18	18-10-2021
19	19-10-2021
20	25-10-2021
21	26-10-2021
22	27-10-2021
23	31-10-2021
24	9-11-2021