

Issues of land accessibility and retention among the Rwandan Diaspora community in Uganda

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ABSTRACT

The study explores the challenges faced by Rwandan Diaspora migrants in Uganda in securing land rights, highlighting historical discrimination and complexities within Uganda's land tenure systems. It uses demographic data from the 2002 Uganda Population and Housing Census to reveal that Rwandese migrants are primarily involved in crop farming, challenging stereotypes about their primary occupations. The study emphasizes the link between land access, development, and poverty reduction, emphasizing the need for targeted interventions to protect vulnerable groups' land rights. It concludes by urging policymakers to adopt inclusive strategies that consider the unique circumstances of diverse communities within Uganda, emphasizing the need for targeted interventions to protect vulnerable groups' land rights.

Keywords: Land, retention, Rwandan Diaspora and Uganda

INTRODUCTION

Migration has been an integral part of Uganda's history and has included internal, regional and international movements. Migration in Uganda takes place within diverse social, political and economic contexts and has been fuelled by unstable politics in the Great Lakes region, poverty and rapid growing populations. Distinctive forms of migration characterize cross border

movements [1-2]. Several patterns of migration in the East African region occur in various forms of which there has been little academic inquiry. While country-specific manifestations of migration exist in each country, Uganda has a history of intensive inflows of migrants prompted by demographic, economic, and political factors [3].

The Rwandan diaspora in Uganda

Before the borders of Rwanda and Uganda were demarcated, the populations of South West Uganda and Rwanda shared languages, cultures, and as a result of migration and intermarriage, physical appearance. Uganda has been a home for many Rwandese immigrants dating from the 1920's when they were escaping from the harsh Belgian rule or seeking to participate in Uganda's economic prosperity [4]. A large number of Hutus migrated to Uganda to work in mines and provide casual labor on sugar, coffee, and tea plantations. The biggest numbers were however registered in the 1960's after Uganda's independence when there

was political turmoil in Rwanda and many were forced to flee to neighboring countries such as Tanzania, Burundi and Uganda. These were mainly Tutsis who were seeking refugee as the Hutu took over power in Rwanda [5].

Tutsis in Uganda were *de jure* refugees, required by law to reside in camps, but gradually the majority became *de facto* citizens, using tax receipts as identification, moving freely in rural and urban areas, gaining education, including university, acquiring land and property and entering all sectors of the society and economy [6]. Despite this relatively successful integration in Uganda, they

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were never totally secure. Anti-Rwandese sentiment was first expressed at the government level by former Ugandan President Milton Obote who ordered for their registration as a first step towards expulsion. This sentiment grew during Idi Amin's rule, as some Rwandese served in his military, police, and his much feared state research bureau, which did not endear these refugees to the average Ugandan [7].

The return of Obote to power (1980-85) however saw the resumption of the threat of the expulsion of the Tutsi from Uganda. In late September 1982, officials of the government, joined by parliamentarians from the southwest, orchestrated the violent displacement of the Rwandan refugees. Most fled back into the relative safety of the refugee camps but some were even forced to return to Rwanda [8].

The hostility towards the Rwandan refugees was further inflamed when the now Ugandan President, Museveni, launched a military campaign with his National Resistance Movement Army (NRA) to oust Milton Obote from power. Not surprisingly, Museveni's guerrilla war

Land access versus migration status

The focus of the discussion shall be limited to migrants of Rwandese origin in and out of Uganda during the last four decades. The type of migration considered in this paper is two-fold, namely immigration and internal migration. Many studies have been conducted on land access and land rights in Uganda but there are very few that have tackled the rights of the marginal group of migrants. Dating as far back as the colonial rule time, land tenure systems in Uganda have been reported to be highly not in favor of migrants but resolution of this question is a politically and economically expensive affair [10]. Nyangabyaki goes ahead to note that during the 1920's when the first group of Rwandese refugees had arrived in Uganda, the Baganda saw them as a source of available cheap labor but this diminished once the refugees discovered the 1927 busulu and envujo law which posited that one could simply settle on a kibanja,

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had found ready recruits amongst the Tutsi refugees. They saw participation in this war as an opportunity to prepare them to invade and eventually to return to Rwanda by force. After his victory in 1986, Museveni retained Rwandans in key positions in his military and government. For example, the current President of Rwanda, Paul Kagame, was made the Director of Uganda's military intelligence. The most recent movements however were noted during the 1993-1994 period prior to and during the genocide. By 1993, over one million Ugandan residents were of Rwandese origin [8].

Given their nomadic way of living, the Rwandese refugees were allocated pastoral land in Nakivale and Oruchinga refugee settlement in Mbarara district (now Isingiro district). Others were settled in Rwamwanja, Kamwenge and Kyaka in the districts of Kabarole and Kyenjojo and along the cattle corridor all the way to Hoima and the Nakasongola. After 1994, some returned home including those who had fled in the 50's and 60's. However, some still remained and went ahead to claim Ugandan citizenship [9].

pay rent and enjoy tenure guaranteed by these laws. By the time of independence, approximately 44 percent of the population in some counties of Masaka District was of Rwandese origin.

As land becomes scarce under the impact of population growth and agricultural commercialization, rights in land are increasingly individualized along two dimensions, namely the range of rights held and the extent of autonomy afforded by the landholder in exercising these rights. For the purposes of this paper, land access will be defined as the process by which people individually or collectively gain rights and opportunities to occupy and utilize land (primarily for productive purposes but also other economic and social purposes) on a temporary or permanent basis. These processes include participation in both formal and informal markets, land access through kinship and social networks, including the transmission of land rights

through inheritance and within families, and land allocation by the state and other authorities with control over land and landowners [5].

The purpose of this paper is to contribute to the understanding of land access among Rwandese migrants in Uganda and the existing land resource management strategies adopted by the Rwandan diaspora as linked to community and individual perceptions on tenure/ownership of the land resource while highlighting the predicaments they face in accessing and retaining land [6]. Opportunities for the immigrants to acquire full rights of ownership of land assets equivalent to those conferred by freehold title (amounting to rights guaranteed by the state to occupy, utilise and transfer land at will, in addition to the powers to enforce those rights) represent the strongest form of access to land. All the while, policies relating to land access are equally concerned with opportunities for poor/immigrants farmers and others to access land or to increase operated areas on a temporary basis and to secure use rights to land and natural resources according to need through market and social processes and tenure arrangements other than those of formal title. However, discussion of the forms of tenure and tenure institutions is beyond the scope of the paper; and it does not attempt any detailed or explicit coverage of land titling, registration or tenure regularization programmes or the role of land administration systems. Nevertheless, tenure security remains an important dimension of land access for the poor/immigrants [6]. Consequently

Majority of these came as refugees but have gone ahead to claim Ugandan citizenship, that is, 16% of the total lifetime immigrants. The number of immigrants in Uganda is estimated to be 333,000, 13.6% of which are from Rwanda. This paper uses the 10% 2002 population census data and focused on findings in the western region. Out of the 2,497,449 total respondents, 56565, that is, 2.26% said they were immigrants from around Africa, ie, Tanzania, Kenya, Burundi,

interventions to protect and defend the land rights and access opportunities of vulnerable groups including women, indigenous peoples, pastoralists and others like immigrants who are dependent on common resources, and seasonal laborers and labor tenants deserve consideration. Access to land, and the conditions under which it happens, play a fundamental role in economic development. This is because how the modes of access to land, the rules and conditions of access are set, as policy instruments, has the potential of increasing agricultural output and aggregate income growth, helping reduce poverty and inequality, improving environmental sustainability, and providing the basis for effective governance and securing peace. This potential role is however, difficult to capture, and there are many cases of failure. History is indeed replete with serious conflicts over access to land and with instances of wasteful uses of the land, both privately and socially. Governments and development agencies have for this reason had to deal with the "land question" as an important item on their agendas [8]. Land is not only a factor of production, and as such a source of agricultural output and income, it is also an asset, and hence a source of wealth, prestige, and power. Because it is a natural asset, its use affects environmental sustainability or degradation. For these reasons, the link between access to land and development is quite multidimensional and complex, with many tradeoffs involved.

RESULTS

Rwanda etc as well as from all over the world. As it is practically impossible for total border surveillance, unaccounted for immigration and emigration occurs through such a process.

Sudanese were the majority immigrants contributing 29.4% to the total number of migrants followed by 19.43% Rwandese. However, it has been reported in a few studies that most Rwandese have gone ahead to claim that they are Ugandans exploiting the fact that they have a lot in

common like cultures and physical resemblance. So, this statistic may be questioned. Out of the 10989 respondents who claimed Rwandese nationality, only 58.97% were born in Rwanda, which implies that some of the remaining 41.03% could have been born here in Uganda or even in other countries. 0.2% of the total population reported to have Rwanda as their previous place of residence. Out of the 10989 respondents, only 9232 revealed their activity status. Majority, that is, 28.2% said they were full time student, 21.1% were paid employees while 0.08% were retired pensioners. Out of the 4052 Rwandese migrants that said

This study explores the complex relationship between migration, land access, and retention within the Rwandan Diaspora community in Uganda. The study highlights the resilience of these migrants, who have played a significant role in shaping Uganda's socio-economic landscape. The challenges faced by the Rwandese community in securing land rights are highlighted, revealing a historical pattern of discrimination and difficulties in accessing favorable land tenure systems. The paper emphasizes the need for targeted interventions to safeguard the land rights of vulnerable groups, including immigrants, emphasizing the importance of tenure security in fostering economic development and mitigating poverty. The demographic analysis provides insights into the current status of Rwandese immigrants in Uganda, raising concerns about potential underreporting due to their assimilation into Ugandan society. The study also highlights the diversified

CONCLUSION

Kamusiime they were involved in one industry or the other, majority, that is, 66.7% were doing crop farming while 7.1% were involved in livestock farming. This may be disputed and could cause a lot of argument given the belief that Rwandese are pastoralists but there must be a reason why and that is what this paper will discuss. In Uganda, most Rwandese, 13.2% were staying in Mbarara district, 13.1% were staying in Masaka while 11.5% were staying in Mubende districts. This actually is close to what is reported in most studies about the places where majority Rwandese migrants stay in Uganda.

economic activities of the Rwandese migrants, challenging preconceived notions about their predominant involvement in pastoralism. Crop farming emerges as a dominant occupation, reflecting the adaptive strategies of the community in the face of evolving socio-economic conditions. The study advocates for policies that address the nuanced complexities of land access and tenure security, emphasizing the need for inclusive approaches that consider the unique circumstances of vulnerable groups. As Uganda grapples with a growing population and evolving socio-economic dynamics, informed policies and programs are essential for ensuring equitable access to land resources. By recognizing and addressing the specific challenges faced by the Rwandan Diaspora and other vulnerable groups, Uganda can pave the way for sustainable development, poverty reduction, and enhanced social cohesion.

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CITE AS: Jason Kamusiime (2023). Issues of land accessibility and retention among the Rwandan Diaspora community in Uganda. IDOSR JOURNAL OF HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES 8(2): 69-73. <https://doi.org/10.59298/IDOSRJHSS/2023/12.1.5600>