

Mapping UNSW Impact Global Development

Primary SDG	11: SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND COMMUNITIES
Broad theme	Refugees and land conflict
Research	Determine the impact of refugees, and causes of land conflict and potential solutions
Impact region	Kenya, Uganda
Faculty	Business
School/Institute	Economics
Academics	Dr Sarah Waker, Associate Professor Anne Bartlett (A&SS), Dr Paul Munro (A&SS)
Project partners	Refugees: World Bank
	Deforestation: ARC (applied for funding of \$1.5 million), Gulu University, HANDLE (Uganda)
Related SDGs	13: Climate Action
	1: No Poverty

Elevator pitch

Having determined the positive impact refugees have on the local population in Kenya, Sarah is now working with Anne Bartlett on ways for Ugandan locals to reduce the number of trees used in charcoal production, helping to limit deforestation and promote a healthier relationship between locals and their land.

The Challenge: Do refugee camps hurt host communities? What causes land conflict?

Kenya shares its borders with South Sudan. Nearly 480,000 refugees fleeing conflict in South Sudan have ended up in two refugee camps in Kenya's north near Kakuma. Uncertain of the impact of these refugees, the Kenyan Government was considering closing down both camps which have been in existence for over 20 years. Is this the right solution?

In Northern Uganda, civil war raged for over 20 years until 2006. Once the fighting was over, people who were internally displaced returned to their land to find people living and working on it without clearly defined property rights. This resulted in displacement for some and tension among community members. Does this tension still exist and what are the causes and potential solutions?

UNSW's solution: Research impact of refugees and reasons for land conflict,

In response to the Kenyan Government's potential closing of the refugee camps, Sarah and Anne Bartlett (A&SS) were hired as consultants by the World Bank to assess the long-run impact of refugees on the local community in Kakuma. Their research demonstrated the refugees were positive for the local economy, with local cattle herders enjoying increased demand for cattle and higher revenue. While undertaking research, the researchers noticed children working in the camps for money performing menial tasks such as carrying

firewood and water, and cleaning. With UNSW Business School funding Sarah and Anne surveyed 150 of these children about their work. They discovered many of the children had chosen to work in the camps because herding cattle was a higher risk option due to climate shocks and tribal violence. The children, aged five to 15 years old, felt school and education offered them little else.

To assess drivers of land conflict in Northern Uganda, Sarah, Anne and students from UNSW and Gulu University surveyed more than 500 households. Sarah and Anne were teaching UNSW and Gulu students about qualitative and quantitative research methods at the time in a project funded by UNSW's Institute for Global Development. Survey results revealed deforestation in the region was a major concern among locals. Land owners were selling their trees to middle men who were travelling up from the south of the country to buy and burn the trees to turn them into charcoal. Charcoal is used by households in Uganda as cooking fuel. To limit forestation, Sarah and Anne are now looking to pay landowners not to sell the trees (they have applied for an ARC grant for this 'payment for ecosystem services' strategy), and they have teamed up with Paul Munro (A&SS) and HANDLE (NGO in Uganda) to pilot high efficiency kilns that can produce the same amount of charcoal from less input. Both projects get underway in the second half of 2018.

The Impact: Retain refugee camps, reduce deforestation levels and promote conservation

Sarah and Anne presented their refugee research findings to the Kenyan government. Their efforts helped to ensure the two refugee camps remain in existence for over 400,000 refugees. Their research on child labour in the camps is helping policy makers, academics and NGOs to focus on children instead of parents in programs that target child labour. Some potential solutions include offering meal programs and more technical skills courses at school that will encourage kids to stay in school and find a trade after they graduate. Academics, NGOs and governments around the world working on child labour can learn from these findings and alternatives.

The work to reduce deforestation rates in northern Uganda with cash payments and kiln projects will help to maintain a healthy level of vegetation in the area. Locals will be compensated for the opportunity costs they face in choosing between conservation and deforestation. The efficiency of the kilns could help landowners to make more money than they currently do, and conserving more trees means a healthier ecosystem and climate in the region with flow-on benefits for the health of the population, and flora and fauna.

Researcher

Sarah Walker is a Lecturer in the School of Economics at UNSW. She completed her PhD in Agricultural and Applied Economics at the University of Wisconsin-Madison before joining UNSW in 2015. Sarah is passionate about determining whether programs for the poor are effective, and helping to reduce the stigma the poor face by highlighting the rationale behind their decisions and behaviour.

Ben Falkenmire 08.05.18