



## **Assessment of Peaceful Coexistence in Mahama Refugee Camp, Rwanda**

# **2017 FINAL REPORT**

Cover photo:

Mahama refugee camp hosts more than 54, 000 Burundian refugees. Building on strong links and growing integration with the host community services, it has the potential to be a model settlement that sets the standard for other camps in Rwanda as well as in other countries.

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## Acronyms

ABER	Association des Eglises Baptistes au Rwanda / Association of Baptist Churches in Rwanda
ADRA	Adventist Development and Relief Agency
AHA	Africa Humanitarian Action
ARC	American Refugee Committee
CNDD-FDD	Conseil National de la Défense de la Démocratie – Forces de Défense de la Démocratie
CPS/GIZ	Civil Peace Service of GIZ
GHDF	Global Humanitarian Development Foundation (former PAJER)
GIZ	German Development Cooperation
HI	Humanity and Inclusion (formerly Handicap International)
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross / Crescent
ID	Identity card
LAF	Legal Aid Forum
MIDIMAR	Ministry of Disaster Management and Refugees
NFI	Non-food items
PLAN	Plan International
PTA	Parent and Teacher Association
RRC	Rwanda Red Cross
SCI	Save the Children
SGBV	Sexual and gender-based violence
UNHCR	UN Refugee Agency
WFP	World Food Programme

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Murakoze cyane!

Sandra Rubli, International Peace Advisor UNHCR — CPS/GIZ

## Executive summary

This report presents the findings of an assessment regarding peaceful coexistence in and around the Mahama refugee camp in Rwanda. The assessment explores various dynamics of the relationships among refugees, between refugees and host communities, and with organizations working in the camp; it also analyses potential roots of conflict and conflict issues. The findings may be used to inform efforts to increase peaceful coexistence between various communities and to deliver services in a conflict-sensitive manner. The assessment identifies opportunities and connectors that can be strengthened as well as challenges, dividers and conflict issues that can be addressed.

Relationships between the two communities – Burundian refugees and their Rwandan host communities – appear to be quite good; both communities indicate having friends in the other, and would consider marrying a partner from the other community. Around 80 percent of the refugees as well as a slight majority of interviewed Rwandans living in villages around the Mahama camp state that there are no general differences between them; instead Burundians and Rwandans share very similar cultural traditions, language and customs. Mutually supporting each other can be considered to be part of these customs, and may also stem from a positive general feeling of empathy for the other community, in part linked to the fact that many people living in Rwanda were once refugees themselves.

“Dividers” are potential challenges to peaceful coexistence and they are found on the level of perceived inequality or unequal treatment. Though generalized images of the other community are largely positive, occasional negative personal encounters with an individual member of the other community may occur around individual incidents such as theft or assault. Such individual events can result in mistrust, a feeling of increased insecurity or even violent conflicts. Negative personal encounters are in some cases linked to perceived inequalities pertaining to differences in entitlements or access to services, and competition over scarce resources.

Generally, sources of potential conflict in the Mahama refugee camp manifest themselves in theft, including illegal wood cutting or theft of crops; conflicts around the distribution of food and non-food items (NFI); aggressive behaviour due to drug consumption or unemployment; and family conflicts, including extra-marital relationships, domestic violence and intimate partner violence (IPV). These conflicts may result in negative coping strategies such as survival sex and prostitution or in threats, harassment and beatings and may lead to generalized mistrust and fears that extends beyond the affected individuals.

Several conflict resolution structures exist in the camp, including the Government camp management, UNHCR which plays a coordinating role, other service providers (mainly other UN agencies and non-governmental partners), the Rwandan National Police, and refugee leaders. Refugees may turn to these entities in order to resolve a conflict with another refugee, a host community member or even with an organization working in the camp. However, solving such conflicts is not the primary role of most organizations (with the exception of the camp management and the police), and these roles and responsibilities need to be more clearly defined and communicated.

Refugees in Mahama perceive the relationships between themselves and the organizations working in the camp as good; refugees generally feel well-treated in terms of kindness, being listened to and communication. A majority say they are able to give feedback and provide suggestions. Conflict issues related to refugee response actors concern perceptions of quality of services, denial of services, unequal treatment when receiving services or an insufficient quantity of services. Thus, with the exception of the quantity of available services, the main conflict issues are linked to the modalities of service delivery.

## Recommendations

The following recommendations are informed by the assumption that Burundian refugees most likely will not be able to safely and voluntarily return to their country of origin in the near future due to the prevailing situation of insecurity, as well as by the premise of a long-term strategy of seeking “alternatives to camps”.<sup>1</sup>

### General recommendations

- Avoid the creation of parallel structures i.e. structures established either only for Rwandans, or only for refugees. Emphasis should be placed on integration of services, facilities, structures, etc. for both refugees and host communities, including aligning services in the camp with already-existing Rwandan structures such as the Abunzi mediators at the local administration level in Rwanda, which is similar to the Bashingantahe in Burundi.
- All interventions and projects should empower and engage refugees and host communities to be active participants in promoting peace, in living their lives with more independence and dignity, and with a view to decrease dependency over time on humanitarian and development organizations.

### Strengthen relationships between refugees and host communities

- All projects or activities, such as reforestation and community works including monthly “umuganda” (mandatory community service) should whenever possible systematically target and include both refugees and host communities together, in order to increase opportunities to meet members from the other community, promote positive encounters and enhance mutual support, and encourage links and a sense of community for the entire population of the refugee hosting area.
- Joint awareness-raising or educational activities outside or inside the camp or joint exchange and learning processes (based on the positive perceptions on diversity) can increase interactions and eventually result in more trust and empathy, in particular if such activities contain elements of peace education.

<sup>1</sup> UNHCR believes that camps should be the exception and only a temporary measure in response to forced displacement. The possible alternatives are diverse and affected by factors such as culture, legislation and national policies. Refugees might rent, own or occupy informally land and housing, or they may have private housing arrangements. See the UNHCR Policy on Alternatives to Camps (22 July 2014).

- Planning should consider the implementation of a long-term strategy that includes a transformation of existing camps into mixed villages or settlements, and an integration of refugees and host communities using the same services. In the long run, the refugee camp should become more accessible (e.g. through markets, joint activities, use of facilities in the camp, etc.) for Rwandans living in the surrounding villages. Host populations are already proven<sup>2</sup> to benefit from the presence of a refugee camp in their immediate neighborhood through, for example, increased business opportunities and improved infrastructure. As part of the long-term strategy, make all services (inside and outside the camp) accessible for all – without distinguishing between members of the refugees and host communities. This includes access to schools, markets, health services, health insurance (Mutuelle de Santé) and documents and certificates such as ID cards—building on integration steps already taken in line with the Government of Rwanda Commitments made at the 2016 Leaders’ Summit on Refugees convened by U.S. President Barack Obama.<sup>3</sup> More integrated and equal access to services can alleviate perceived inequalities and unequal treatment and promote and foster peaceful coexistence.
- In line with the 2030 Development Agenda and principle of bridging the humanitarian-development divide, projects should target refugee hosting areas, rather than specific projects targeting either the camp, or the surrounding villages. Refugee hosting areas should be targeted to ensure that all people in the area benefit from services in a more equal manner in order to improve livelihood conditions for all. Water provision to the host communities is an example that can be extended to other services such as electricity or other sources of energy (e.g. firewood and solar lamps); roads and transport systems; production of food (e.g. seeds, farming tools and fertilizers); and sports, social and cultural facilities for youth. And complementarily, projects designed to ensure basic life-saving services to refugees, such as water treatment and distribution systems, can through partnership with development actors be extended to the vicinity host community.

#### Address potential conflicts among refugees and between refugees and host communities

- Invest in trust-building and accompanied exchanges between different groups to alleviate feelings of insecurity, increase trust between different groups and eventually enhance peaceful coexistence. Groups may include refugees from different regions or origins, youth and other refugees, refugees and members of host communities.

<sup>2</sup> *Economic impact of refugees*, J. Edward Taylor, Mateusz J. Filipski, Mohamad Alloush, Anubhab Gupta, Ruben Irvin Rojas Valdes, and Ernesto Gonzalez-Estrada, PNAS July 5, 2016. 113 (27) 7449-7453; published ahead of print June 20, 2016. <https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.1604566113>, Edited by Prabhu L. Pingali, Cornell University, Ithaca, NY, and approved May 12, 2016 (received for review March 18, 2016), *summary available at* <http://www.pnas.org/content/113/27/7449>. See also *Considering the benefits of hosting refugees: Evidence of refugee camps influencing local labor market activity and economic welfare in Rwanda*, Craig Loschmann, Özge Bilgili & Melissa Siegela, Maastricht Graduate School of Governance | UNU-MERIT, Maastricht University Utrecht University, *summary available at* [https://www.wider.unu.edu/sites/default/files/LOSCHMANN%20et%20al\\_paper.pdf](https://www.wider.unu.edu/sites/default/files/LOSCHMANN%20et%20al_paper.pdf).

<sup>3</sup> See “Commitments of Rwanda at the Leaders’ Summit on Refugees” *available at* <http://www.unhcr.org/rw/12219-commitments-rwanda-leaders-summit-refugees.html>.



- Build capacities for peaceful conflict transformation. Develop skills around mediation and facilitation, non-violent communication, alternatives to violence, peace education and conflict-sensitive journalism and increase leadership skills. This allows people to address minor (interpersonal) conflicts during their stay in the camp, but equally importantly will be extremely beneficial when refugees return to Burundi one day, where they could apply their skills and continue to be “peace agents” or “peace ambassadors” as they are rebuilding their home country.<sup>4</sup>
- Set up regular (and institutionalized) fora in order to directly discuss conflict issues and to find common and consensual solutions. This may include dialogues between actors involved in provision of security and solving conflicts, peace clubs and other peace education opportunities. Such fora should be sure to include perceived drug abusers and others viewed as “trouble makers”.
- Establish a camp mediation structure modeled on the Abunzi (Rwandan) and Bashingantahe (Burundian) structures. It is likely that many conflict issues in the camp and with host communities can be resolved through mediatory approaches.<sup>5</sup> This would also diminish the caseload of the police or burden on other organizations working in the camp which are not always best placed to resolve conflict issues which arise.
- To support a mediation structure, conduct a thorough conflict-sensitivity or do-no-harm analysis. Also, conduct outreach measures to raise awareness and ensure that refugees consider mediators as credible, legitimate and accessible (in particular for persons with special needs) and will eventually turn to them to resolve conflicts.
- Define the roles and responsibilities of existing and newly-established conflict resolution actors. This will help to avoid confusion and potential role conflicts between mediators and refugee leaders. Embed these roles in an overall conflict resolution system that will clarify the hierarchical relations to the police and courts. Create a referral system linking different conflict issues to appropriate structures, e.g. building on community mobilizers and the Legal Aid Forum (LAF) which is supporting in the refugee response to ensure legal assistance and access to justice.

### Recommendations regarding service provision

- Develop community radio, camp magazines and other existing communications channels to facilitate provision of information on complex topics such as promotion of peace education – not only for announcements on the date of food distribution, for example. Include community mobilizers from various organizations and refugees engaged in the particular fields of interests such as journalists, nurses and doctors, business entrepreneurs and teachers. Recognize and strengthen existing capacities and knowledge.

<sup>4</sup> The term “peace ambassador” is used in the Kigeme refugee camp to describe persons who develop and share conflict resolution skills.

<sup>5</sup> Domestic violence, intimate partner violence, and sexual and gender-based violence and other crimes are not addressed through mediation.

- Ensure that staff of organizations working in the camp, employed refugees and contracted companies strictly respect the codes of conduct in order to avoid conflicts linked to the modalities of delivering services. This includes ensuring that there are adequate measures for refugees to complain and provide feedback, training regularly and broadly on code of conduct and prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse, accountability to affected populations, anti-fraud measures, etc.
- Use conflict-sensitivity or do-no-harm analysis when reviewing projects. This includes reflections on power imbalances, unintended negative effects, and implicit messages conveyed through project-related communication and activities. This can help to prevent and address potential conflicts between refugees and service providers, in particular around allegations of bribes, favouritism or discrimination.

## 1. Background of the assessment

The Civil Peace Service of the GIZ (CPS/GIZ) has worked in Rwanda with local partners in peace education, psychosocial support and conflict-sensitive media projects since 2001. The aim of the programme is to strengthen peace by empowering people in Rwanda and the Great Lakes Region to live together in constructive harmony. The Refugee Component of CPS/GIZ promotes social cohesion and peaceful coexistence both within and outside refugee camps, with refugees and host communities, in particular by empowering youth. Since 2015, much of this work has focused on Kigeme refugee camp, which is hosting close to 20,000 refugees from the Democratic Republic of Congo. In 2017, CPS/GIZ extended its projects and activities to the camp in Mahama, in response to the massive influx of Burundians who fled to Rwanda (and other countries) due to election-related violence that erupted in March 2015.

An assessment was initiated in Mahama in order to inform the development of projects and activities that respond to the needs of refugees and members of their host communities. CPS/GIZ in collaboration with UNHCR conducted the assessment to explore the relationships and map the dynamics among refugees and between refugees, host communities and service providers in order to identify potential risks for conflict. The assessment identified existing formal and informal structures and initiatives to address conflicts and disagreement.

This report of the assessment serves to:

- Inform the further development of the protection sector strategy<sup>6</sup> regarding aspects of peaceful coexistence as well as inclusion and integration of refugees in host communities;
- Provide an analysis of potential conflict issues and dynamics that constitute a basis for the extension of the Refugee Component of CPS/GIZ in the Mahama refugee camp;
- Capture baseline data for monitoring and evaluating the peaceful coexistence project in Mahama, which is carried out by the Refugee Component of CPS/GIZ.

CPS/GIZ has sound experience in conducting conflict analysis or assessments of potential conflicts using various methods and tools including systemic conflict analysis; positions, interests and needs analysis; and connectors and dividers analysis. CPS/GIZ adopts a broad understanding of the term “conflict” that goes beyond physical violence or violent conflict to also include disagreements, tensions and problems as well as structural violence (i.e. discriminatory or exclusionary practices and structures).

CPS/GIZ takes a conflict transformation perspective. Conflicts are an integral part of our lives and interactions because people have different understandings, interests, needs and wishes that may contradict or oppose, thus which are conflicting. However, the important point is how people deal with and address such conflicting understandings, interests, needs and wishes in order to guarantee that areas of potential conflict do not result in violent confrontation, action and behaviour, but can be accommodated or resolved in a non-violent way. An understanding of the diversity in opinions and

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<sup>6</sup> UNHCR and the Government of Rwanda are developing a Multi-Year Multi-Partner Protection and Solutions Strategy.

perceptions can be constructive and enriching as it provides the ground for finding new and creative solutions that are beneficial for all.

### **Methodology**

The assessment adopted a mixed-method design consisting of a representative survey with 394 refugee respondents from the camp; 51 interviews with persons living in the villages of Munini and Kabeza (Munini Cell), Rugarama (Rugarama Cell), Buhaga (Mwoga Cell) and Cyanika (Mwoga Cell); and semi-structured interviews with cell authorities, teachers and school administrators and representatives of service providers.

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*394 refugees responded to the survey questionnaire*

*51 host community members provided interviews*

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Due to time constraints, the author could not talk to representatives of all service providers implementing projects in the Mahama refugee camp. In addition to formal interviews, information was gathered from informal conversations with representatives from MIDIMAR and colleagues from UNHCR as well as from desk research and existing reports and documents. The analysis presented in this report has been enriched through the feedback collected during the presentation of preliminary findings at a Town Hall Meeting with refugee leaders and representatives of MIDIMAR, UNHCR and implementing partners.

## PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

## 2. Findings on relationships

### 2.1 Findings on relationships between refugees and host communities

Peaceful coexistence among refugees and between refugees and host communities can be threatened or complicated through general animosities, including generalized images or stereotypes of the “others”. In contrast, personal contacts, including friendship or positive personal encounters at the market or school, generally increase peaceful coexistence. In the assessment, refugees as well as host community respondents were asked questions about their relationships with the other group, including perceptions, attitudes and behaviours.

#### Spaces of interaction between refugees and host communities

General animosities and stereotypes towards particular groups are more likely to develop when there are no direct interactions or places to meet with “others”. This leaves room for rumour, hearsay and stereotypes – all unsubstantiated assumptions. Spaces where direct interactions take place between refugees and host communities were identified by the assessment in and around the Mahama camp.

Interactions between refugees and Rwandans mainly take place around the market, church and workplace. Cultural, social and sports activities inside or outside the camp, such as football games, weddings or dance clubs, do not seem to be a place where frequent (social) interactions between refugees and Rwandans happen. As a place of interaction, no Rwandan respondents mention events and only 8 percent of refugees mention activities and events inside or outside the camp.

Friendship, romantic relationships and mutual support are good indicators for assessment of interactions and relationships between members of different groups. Both refugees and host community respondents were asked whether they have friends who live outside or inside the camp, whether they would consider marrying a partner from the other community (if not yet married) and whether they have received support from or given support to members of the other community.

Regarding friendship, 75 percent of refugees say that they have friends who live in the villages outside the camp, and 64 percent of respondents from the host communities say that they have friends who live in the camp. Both groups (96 percent of refugees and 84 percent of interviewed Rwandans) wish to have more contacts and friends among the other group.

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*96 percent of refugees and 84 percent of interviewed Rwandans say they wish to have more contacts and friends among the other group*

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Mutual support between people living in the camp and those in neighboring villages is evident: 50 percent of the refugees have supported Rwandans and 44 percent have also received support from Rwandans, primarily from Rwandans living in neighboring villages (76 percent). In the host communities, 82 percent of respondents have supported refugees and 25 percent have also received support from refugees.

### **Differences between refugees and host communities**

Regarding differences between Burundian refugees and Rwandans of the host communities, around 80 percent of refugees living in the camp as well as a slight majority of respondents living in the villages around the camp say that there are no differences. Refugees who see differences describe them in terms of respect towards others (18 percent), living conditions (18 percent), sense of family (15 percent), working attitudes (13 percent), sociability (8 percent), professional skills (7 percent), foreign language skills (5 percent) and personal experiences due to the flight or violent conflict (5 percent). Refugees also cite differences in culture and with regards to women's empowerment and gender equality as well as the age of marriage. Rwandans who see differences describe them in terms of behaviours by refugees, including aggressive behaviour due to excessive alcohol consumption, language, women's empowerment and age of marriage and other factors.

### **Differences in treatment of members of refugees and host communities**

Unequal treatment constitutes a potential divider or cause of conflict. Refugees and Rwandans living in the neighboring villages were asked whether they feel equally treated. Refugees mainly see an unequal treatment when it comes to salaries: 73 percent believe refugees receive lower salaries compared with members of the Rwandan host communities; likewise, 25 percent of host community respondents share this perception. Unequal treatment in employment and job opportunities is present both inside the camp and outside the camp, according to 46 and 48 percent of refugees, respectively. While the respondents were specifically asked about the reasons behind the unequal treatment, some say they lack documents required for employment and others note that Rwandans would always be the employers while refugees would "only" be the employees. Unequal treatment is described by 48 percent of the refugees regarding official documents, in particular a driver's license, and other issues such as the costly procedures to obtain diploma equivalency and the lack of a national ID; only 8 percent of the Rwandan respondents consider the treatment unequal. The national ID is often requested in order to access certain services (outside the camp) or to be considered by some employers.

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*73 percent of refugees believe they receive lower salaries compared with members of the Rwandan host communities*

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### **Conclusions and recommendations**

Relationships between refugees and members of host communities are generally quite smooth; Burundian refugees and Rwandans living in the villages around the camp speak the same language and have very similar traditions, including in dance and music. Moreover, both communities are willing to

mutually support each other, which can be considered to be part of local customs, but can also stem from a general feeling of empathy towards the other community.

These good relationships provide an excellent opportunity or “connector” to be further strengthened. Activities might include joint projects that include both communities such as planting trees together or joint community works. When interviewees value diversity positively (e.g. seeing the potential for learning from others and not as a source of conflict), this could be used as a basis for activities designed to further strengthen interactions and social cohesion. Both communities could participate in joint awareness-raising and educational activities inside or outside the camp. Joint exchange and learning processes (based on the positive perceptions on diversity) could be arranged. Such activities would increase opportunities to meet people from the other community, increase interaction and eventually result in more trust and empathy, in particular if such activities and projects contain elements of peace education.

“Dividers” that pose potential challenges for peaceful coexistence are found on the level of perceived inequality or unequal treatment; they are not linked to generalized negative images of the other community. Negative personal encounters with a member of the other community sometimes occur such encounters around the theft of crops or firewood or physical violence (beatings) and can result in mistrust, a feeling of increased insecurity and even violent conflict.

Perceived inequalities and negative personal encounters seem to be caused by differences in entitlements or access to services as well as to competition over scarce resources. This strain can be alleviated by making accessible all services (inside and outside the camp) for all people, without distinguishing between members of the refugees and host communities. Efforts should continue to reduce unequal treatment on the structural level, including for example equivalency of documents and certificates, access to the Rwandan health system or health insurance (Mutuelle de Santé), and reducing or eliminating the restrictions refugees face when seeking to move freely out of the camp. Particular attention should be paid to salaries, livelihood opportunities and development projects, which should be equally accessible and beneficial for refugees and host communities alike in order to not unintentionally create or strengthen a potential divider.

## 2.2 Relationships between refugees and MIDIMAR, UNHCR and service providers

This section will provide a closer look into relationships between refugees and organizations working in the camp in order to identify opportunities and potential challenges. Daily encounters between the staff of organizations working in the camp and refugees shape their relationships and have an impact on the provision of services. Misunderstandings, tensions or even conflicts can arise from a lack of information regarding available services and the requirements specifying who is entitled to obtain them.

Due to time constraints, interviews could not be conducted with all service providers. For this reason, the following section depicts the views and perceptions of refugees regarding their relationships with MIDIMAR, UNHCR and implementing partners.

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*Misunderstandings, tensions or even conflicts arise from a lack of information about services and who is entitled to obtain them.*

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Refugees in Mahama camp perceive the relationships between themselves and the organizations working in the camp as good; refugees generally feel well-treated in terms of kindness, being listened to and communication. It is important that staff of these organizations, employed refugees and contracted companies continue to strictly follow their codes of conduct, including respecting refugees, showing compassion and granting enough time during encounters. The way these people approach refugees can be strengthened by applying communication skills reflecting principles of non-violence and peace education. Conducting a conflict-sensitivity or do-no-harm analysis could identify potential unintended negative effects. For example, hiring refugees can unintentionally lead to the creation or reinforcement of power imbalances, as refugee workers then may have more income than other refugees.

Communication and information are very important elements in the prevention of conflicts, tensions and misunderstandings as well as in empowerment of rights holders and beneficiaries. Additional communication and information channels between service providers and refugees in the Mahama camp should be considered, in particular for topics that are more complex than announcements about events and dates (e.g. for distribution of food or non-food items). A community radio station<sup>7</sup> or a camp magazine would help provide more detailed information, increase education on particular issues such as peace education and WASH, and help raise awareness on specific topics. To build upon existing capacities and knowledge, include community mobilizers from various organizations and refugees who have expertise in the particular fields of interests, such as journalists, nurses and doctors, business entrepreneurs and teachers. Further capacity building, such as conflict-sensitive journalism or peace education, would be beneficial when refugees return to Burundi one day, where they could apply their skills and continue to be peace agents or peace ambassadors.

The fact that refugees receive assistance as well as the (real or perceived) lack of availability of these services for host communities represents a potential cause for conflict. When conceiving services for refugees, including livelihood projects, the needs of host communities should be included and projects with beneficiaries of both refugees and host communities should be designed. This would contribute to enhancing peaceful coexistence between refugees and host communities by addressing the divider or potential cause of conflict that is constituted by the provision of assistance from which only one group can benefit.

The provision of water to host communities by the refugee camp is a positive example of a benefit shared by everyone. Development projects can focus on services that have been identified as lacking in the host communities as well as the camp, such as electricity or other sources of energy (e.g. firewood and solar lamps); roads and transport systems; production of food (e.g. seeds, farming tools and fertilizers); and sports, social or cultural facilities, in particular for youth. Such regional development projects target the camp and surrounding villages in an equal manner and would further strengthen some of the opportunities afforded by having a camp in Mahama that host community

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<sup>7</sup> The geographic disposition of the Mahama refugee camp is favourable to the installation of a community radio station.



members have identified, such as progress, businesses and infrastructure. Eventually, this would improve livelihood conditions for the region. This would also contribute to the integration of refugees into host communities as well as a transformation of existing camps into mixed villages or settlements in the framework of the “alternatives to camps” policy.

### 3. Findings on potential conflicts

Research in the past has tended to categorize refugees and host communities as monolithic groups; in contrast, current research emphasizes the importance of not only paying attention to the dynamics between refugees and host communities but also to considering intra-relationships in both communities.<sup>8</sup> This means that interpersonal and inter-group animosities that can manifest themselves in conflicts, tensions and disagreements need to be considered. Some of the issues might be specific to the context of refugee camps, such as suddenly living in a tight and close neighbourhood with people who were not known before. Some animosities reflect those prevalent in the country of origin, as Jacob suggests: “People bring with them the conflicts that exist in their native countries [...] they don’t leave them behind at the border”.<sup>9</sup>

#### 3.1 Conflicts among refugees and between refugees and host communities

##### Parties involved in conflicts

When asked about conflicts they have observed, both male and female respondents identify many conflicts between neighbours as well as between husbands and wives. In the camp, many persons share a house and the houses are located in close proximity; persons who live physically close to each other have more interaction, some of which may be conflictive. At the time of the assessment, many refugees lived in communal hangars, which were overcrowded and characterized by a lack of privacy and promiscuity, however today all refugees live in family shelters. Some respondents specify that conflicts between neighbours are more frequent between refugees who still live in the hangars or between neighbours coming from different regions in Burundi. Moreover, they are more frequent during the distribution of food or NFI, and are often caused by theft. Some respondents note that conflicts between husbands and wives may happen after food distribution, as some spouses may sell food to buy alcohol. Alcohol is also mentioned as a cause of conflict between husbands and wives beyond the context of distribution, as well as extra-marital relationships. Similar explanations are given for conflicts between parents and children. In addition, refusal to go to school, either by the parents or the children, constitutes another source of conflict.

##### Conflict issues from the country of origin

<sup>8</sup> Yamazaki, Nobuko (2013): A Research on Co-existence and Conflicts among Refugees and their Host Populations: A Case Study of Northwest Uganda.

<sup>9</sup> Simon Jacob of the Central Council for Oriental Christians (ZOCD) in Germany, cited in: Breitenbach, Dagmar (2015): ‘Refugees don’t leave their conflicts behind’, Deutsche Welle. Available at: <http://p.dw.com/p/1Gen8> (accessed 22 August 2018).

The survey asked whether refugees observe the same conflicts that they observed when they were still in Burundi, in order to determine if refugees bring the conflicts they experienced in their home countries to the host country: 40 percent of refugees observe the same old conflicts in the camp as they observed or even experienced in Burundi. Most of the respondents mention conflicts specific to Burundi (their country of origin), though a few mention classical causes of conflicts such as extra-marital relationships, drug abuse, divergent religious beliefs or conflicts between husband and wives or parents and children. Among the refugees who observe the same old conflicts in the camp as in Burundi, half say that “different places of origin” is at the base of such conflicts. This also manifests at school between students from different regions. The majority of refugees in Mahama come from one of two regions: the province of Kirundo in northern Burundi or the province of Bujumbura Mairie, which includes the capital city of Bujumbura. Regional conflicts mainly manifest themselves between these two groups and are often based on generalized ascription of statements around who is a “real” refugee<sup>10</sup>, responsibilities of the current situation<sup>11</sup>, economic disparities<sup>12</sup> or favouritism<sup>13</sup>. Some of these generalized ascriptions to persons are inaccurate (e.g. there was no resettlement programme for the refugees in the Mahama camp). These generalized images of whole groups, whether they are based on facts or not, are potential causes of inter-group conflicts.

### Sources of potential conflicts

Generally, sources of potential conflicts include perceived injustices, inequalities (including favouritism and bribes), scarce resources (including competition over assistance) or generalized mistrust and animosities against other groups. In the Mahama camp, conflicts arise around theft, including illegal wood cutting or theft of crops, distribution of food and NFI, aggressive behaviour due to drug consumption or unemployment, and a range of family conflicts including extra-marital relationships and domestic violence or intimate partner violence. Conflicts may result in resorting to negative coping strategies such as survival sex<sup>14</sup> and prostitution or in threats, harassment and beatings; conflicts also lead to mistrust and fears as in the case of conflicts between different regions or origin.

Since the overall level of actual physical security in the camp appears to be good, with security ensured by the Government, measures to increase peaceful coexistence should focus on addressing the root causes of conflicts, and deal directly with the dividers or challenges that have been mentioned. For example, in regular fora such as dialogues, peace clubs, round tables and other institutionalized forums, stakeholders can discuss potential conflict issues, identify connectors and opportunities to be strengthened, and work together to find consensus on mutual solutions. These fora must be inclusive; thus, also perceived “troublemakers” such as drug users should be included. At the same time, implement measures to address the perceptions and feelings of fear or insecurity, such as trust

<sup>10</sup> The perception is that persons from Kirundo would only have fled because of hunger and not political issues, while only persons from Bujumbura Mairie would be “real” refugees.

<sup>11</sup> The perception is that persons from Bujumbura Mairie would have caused the socio-political crisis in Burundi that forced the refugees to leave their country, while persons from Kirundo would have stopped the resettlement programme (which did not exist).

<sup>12</sup> The perception is that persons from Bujumbura would have come to the camp without anything, while persons from Kirundo would have arrived with a lot of things.

<sup>13</sup> The perception is that refugees would get a job according to their region of origin and that refugee leaders would favour persons who are from the same region as they are. Also, that only persons from Kirundo would have received money from one service provider.

<sup>14</sup> Survival sex is sex in exchange for money, goods, services or any other advantages.

building and accompanied exchanges between different groups (e.g. refugees from different regions or origins, youth and other refugees, refugees and host communities). This would enhance mutual understanding, empathy and support among communities, different groups and neighbours, thereby eventually increasing the feeling of safety and peace.

Many conflicts can be addressed through mediation or other approaches of peaceful conflict transformation, including facilitation, non-violent communication, alternatives to violence, peace education and by increasing leadership skills. Mediation is generally conducted by mediators who facilitate conflict parties to work together to identify the problems, find interests and needs underneath the expressed opinions, and come up with joint solutions. Mediators may also advise conflict parties to evaluate and present their cases with regard to a more arbitrated solution (e.g. shuttle mediation or mediation support) or induce trust-building measure and apply techniques to restore relationships.<sup>15</sup> Thus, a mediatory approach can address some of the prevailing conflict issues in the context of the Mahama camp, and also more generally contribute to peaceful coexistence.

### 3.2 Potential conflict issues with organizations working in the camp

The survey examined potential conflict issues between organizations working in the camp and refugees. Due to time constraints, interviews could not be conducted with all service providers. For this reason, the following section depicts the views and perceptions of refugees.

The main conflict issues between organizations working in the camp and refugees concern the quality of services, denial of services, unequal treatment when receiving services or an insufficient quantity of services. With the exception of the quantity of services available, the main conflict issues are linked to the modalities of service delivery; thus, it is important that codes of conduct are strictly respected, which can only be ensured if all actors in the camp are regularly refreshed on the code of conduct, accountability, prevention of sexual abuse and exploitation, and anti-fraud measures.

The assessment's finding underscore the crucial importance of good communication, in particular when explaining why particular services are given to specific groups of refugees or why certain services are no longer available. In regard to the funds for starting a business, one refugee<sup>16</sup> said "they have to tell us why" certain refugees receive money and others not. In order to prevent conflicts between refugees and organizations working in the camp, the organizations should reflect on how their interventions, in particular the modalities of delivering services, might be perceived by their beneficiaries and other refugees. It is important to make sure that the same (small) group of refugees does not always benefit from the same programme; rather, there should be a rotation so that everyone can benefit over time.<sup>17</sup>

All interventions and new projects should undergo a conflict-sensitivity or do-no-harm analysis, including reflections on the selection of beneficiaries. Such analysis helps planners to be aware of a) the potential unintended negative impacts on peaceful coexistence inside and outside the camp; b) potential reinforcement of existing power imbalances; and c) if they are sending any implicit (hidden)

<sup>15</sup> See for example: [www.mediate.com/articles/zumeta.cfm](http://www.mediate.com/articles/zumeta.cfm) or [www.keepoutofcourt.com/mediation-styles](http://www.keepoutofcourt.com/mediation-styles) (accessed 14 September 2017).

<sup>16</sup> Refugee, camp Mahama, July 2017.

<sup>17</sup> Comment from UNHCR colleague.

messages through their communication. The findings of rigorous do-no-harm analysis provide the basis for taking appropriate measures or adjustments, such as explaining (again) the requirements to be considered for services; ultimately, this will contribute to the prevention of conflicts.

## 4. Existing conflict resolution mechanisms

Conflicts (understood broadly to include disagreements, tensions, divergent understandings and problems) are an integral part of our lives. The aim of conflict transformation, including enhancing peaceful coexistence, is not to have a world without any conflicts. Rather, conflict transformation focuses on solving conflict issues in a non-violent way and addressing the underlying causes of conflict so that they do not provide the grounds for physical, verbal and structural violence. Against this background, interviewees from both host and refugee communities were asked to whom they would turn in a case of conflict in order to resolve it. Their answers point to existing formal as well as informal conflict resolution mechanisms that exist on the political, social, cultural and religious levels.

### 4.1 Conflict resolution mechanisms for conflicts among refugees and conflicts between refugees and host communities

In a case of conflict with another refugee or host community member, 76 percent of the interviewed refugees would turn to MIDIMAR, 70 percent to UNHCR and 70 percent to other service providers in order to resolve the conflict. They would consult MIDIMAR, UNHCR and other service providers for the same types of conflicts, including those related to the distribution of food and NFI; assistance for refugees; wood cutting and deforestation (collecting firewood)<sup>18</sup>; lack of respect for public or private property (vandalism); unemployment and competition for jobs.

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*More than 70 percent of refugees would turn to MIDIMAR, UNHCR and other service providers to resolve a conflict with a refugee or host community member.*

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Organizations working in the camp are considered by refugees to be adequate actors in conflict resolution – despite the fact that these organizations are not explicit mechanisms to deal with conflict. Refugees turn to them to resolve conflict issues that arise in the context of living in the camp or which are linked to the work and responsibilities of these organizations. This provides quite favourable ground for the organizations working in the camp to take up a mediator’s role to jointly seek solutions.

#### Formal conflict resolution mechanisms

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<sup>18</sup> In addition to MIDIMAR, UNHCR and service providers, 12 percent of the refugees would also turn to the police to solve problems related to wood cutting and deforestation, which include collecting firewood. For conflicts around vandalism of public or private property, 8 percent of refugees would turn to the police.

Among refugees interviewed in the assessment, 73 percent say they would turn to the Rwandan National Police for specific cases of conflict: cases related to theft (57 percent); aggressive behavior due to drug abuse (44 percent); domestic violence, intimate partner violence and sexual and gender-based violence (42 percent); debts and loans (35 percent), polygamy and additional extra-marital relationships (27 percent); limited livelihood opportunities (20 percent); survival sex or prostitution (19 percent); wood cutting, deforestation and collecting firewood (12 percent); and disturbances by others' behaviour including noise from bars or the lack of privacy (11 percent). Some of these conflict issues imply a criminal act (e.g. physical harm, theft or questions related to civil status). However, the large number of issues for which refugees turn to the police also suggests that they are trusted and viewed as competent in resolving these conflict issues.

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*73 percent of refugees would turn to the Rwandan National Police to resolve specific cases of conflict, including theft and aggressive behaviour*

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Among Rwandans living in the neighboring villages, 71 percent of those interviewed say they would address themselves first to the police to resolve a conflict with a refugee, and 27 percent would address the local authorities at the cell or district level. It seems that they do not consider MIDIMAR as a conflict resolution mechanism, despite the Government's guidance in 2016 that "any disputes arising between refugees and local residents shall be resolved by the camp management in collaboration with local authorities".<sup>19</sup> However, some respondents explain that the police or the local authorities inform and report the cases to MIDIMAR and UNHCR. Other existing conflict resolution structures available to Rwandans in host communities, such as the Abunzi, Rwandan Courts or local authorities, would not be in charge of solving cases where refugees are involved. Some Rwandan respondents (18 percent) say their problems with refugees are not solved or they do not receive any feedback about the cases they report.

Relatively few refugees consider Rwandan courts or cell and district authorities as structures to resolve conflicts among refugees or between refugees and host communities; less than 30 percent of the interviewed refugees would turn to Rwandan courts or cell and district authorities in a case of conflict; of this number, they would do so for aggressive behaviour due to drug abuse (13 percent) and theft (11 percent). Rwandan Courts are the ninth most-often mentioned structure to which refugees would turn in case of aggressive behaviour due to drug abuse or theft. Refugees cite several reasons for not addressing the courts, namely refugees feel that they are not allowed to do so, that these structures cannot help them or that the courts are not in charge of solving conflicts. However, 2 percent of refugees say that they should actually go to the courts, which may suggest that many refugees are not aware that they can address a conflict issue to the Rwandan justice system.

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<sup>19</sup> See: [http://midimar.gov.rw/uploads/tx\\_download/MINISTERIAL\\_INSTRUCTION\\_N.\\_02-2016\\_OF\\_01-06-2016\\_DETERMINING\\_THE\\_MANAGEMENT\\_OF\\_REFUGEES\\_AND\\_REFUGEE\\_CAMPS.pdf](http://midimar.gov.rw/uploads/tx_download/MINISTERIAL_INSTRUCTION_N._02-2016_OF_01-06-2016_DETERMINING_THE_MANAGEMENT_OF_REFUGEES_AND_REFUGEE_CAMPS.pdf)

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*Less than 30 percent of refugees would turn to Rwandan courts or local authorities in a case of conflict.*

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### **Traditional conflict resolution mechanisms**

Bashingantahe and Abunzi are so-called “traditional” conflict resolution mechanisms. Some 59 percent of refugees say they would turn to Bashingantahe, a system present in Burundi. Some 22 percent of refugees would turn to Abunzi, a system present in Rwanda. Both mechanisms work in a very similar way.<sup>20</sup> Bashingantahe or Abunzi are elected members of the community who listen to all parties involved in a conflict to find a solution that is restorative (rather than punishing) in nature.<sup>21</sup> At the time of this assessment, no Abunzi mediators were present in the Mahama camp, though a related initiative is in progress.<sup>22</sup> This might explain the low number (22 percent) of refugees who would turn to Abunzi, since the system is not (yet) known to the Burundian refugees: 70 percent of the interviewed refugees report that they do not know Abunzi.

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*70 percent of refugees do not know about Abunzi, a traditional Rwandan conflict mediation mechanism.*

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### **Social, religious or other informal conflict resolution mechanisms**

A variety of social, religious and other informal conflict resolution mechanisms are available, though use of community mobilizers or churches is relatively low compared with formal mechanisms.

Community mobilizers are chosen by only 21 percent of the refugees to support them in solving a conflict; of this number, they do so in cases of theft (7 percent); domestic violence, intimate partner violence or sexual and gender-based violence (6 percent); aggressive behaviour due to drug abuse (6 percent); or limited livelihood opportunities (6 percent). Considering these findings, community mobilizers do not play a significant role in resolving conflicts. If they play a more active role in conflict resolution in the future, it is recommended that their role be thoroughly analyzed in advance, including questions of credibility and neutrality.

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<sup>20</sup> On Abunzi, see for example: LAW No37/2016 OF 08/09/2016, determining organization, jurisdiction, competence and function of Abunzi, published in the official Gazette n 37 or De Winnie, Ruben and Anne-Aël Puhu (2015): Mediation in Rwanda: Conceptions and realities of Abunzi Justice (2011-2014). RCN Justice et Démocratie. On Bashingantahe, see for example: Ingelaere, Bert and Dominik Kohlhagen (2012), Situating Social Imaginaries in Transitional Justice: The Bashingantahe in Burundi, in the International Journal of Transitional Justice, 6, 1, pp. 40-59. Barancira, Sylvestre (2006): La justice de proximité au Burundi: Réalités et perspectives. RCN Justice et Démocratie. Dexter, Tracy and Philippe Ntahombaye (2005): The Role of Informal Justice Systems in Fostering the Rule of Law in Post-Conflict Situations, Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue.

<sup>21</sup> A participant to the Town Hall Meeting on 12 September 2017 proposed to recruit (former) Bashingantahe as Abunzi in the camp given the importance and respect that Abunzi and Bashingantahe enjoy in their communities.

<sup>22</sup> A current initiative by the Legal Aid Foundation (LAF) is being carried out to establish a conflict resolution structure in the camp in the future that largely corresponds to the model of Abunzi.

Church representatives are chosen by only 22 percent of the refugees to support them in solving a conflict; of this number, they do so in cases of conflicts regarding limited livelihood opportunities (48 percent); theft (22 percent); aggressive behaviour due to drug abuse (20 percent); conflicts involving family members such as polygamy or extra-marital relationships (27 percent), domestic violence/intimate partner violence (16 percent), and conflicts with family members (5 percent). Among the 22 percent of refugees who say they would turn to church representatives, some also mention that they would turn to church representatives in case of religious conflicts or when conflict parties are from the same church (8 percent). Some 48 percent of refugees say they would not turn to church representatives.<sup>23</sup> Considering these results, church representatives seem to be involved in conflict resolution for minor conflicts and for those involving family members. It is recommended that church representatives be sensitized about existing mechanisms available to handle cases of domestic violence, intimate partner violence and particularly sexual and gender-based violence, in order to refer survivors to appropriate services.

### **Some reflections on the adequacy, credibility and legitimacy of existing conflict resolution mechanisms**

The assessment explored perceptions of the existing conflict resolution mechanisms – are they viewed as adequate, credible and legitimate? These findings point to issues that should be addressed when strengthening existing mechanisms or establishing new ones.

Some 3 percent of refugees say that several of the proposed actors (i.e. UNHCR, MIDIMAR, Rwandan cell or district authorities) would be “too high level” to address their conflicts. The roles and responsibilities, fields of competence and approach to solving conflicts need to be clearly communicated to refugees; in other words, refugees need to be sensitized about existing conflict resolution structures.

Refugees who say that they would **not** turn to a particular conflict resolution mechanism were asked why they would not do so. Across all actors and reasons, the reasons most cited are: “they cannot help me”, “I am not allowed” and “they don't have influence or power to resolve my case (because they only issue recommendations or they are not in charge of me)”.

These findings call for an information and sensitization campaign to explain existing conflict resolution structures, in particular regarding their capacity to resolve specific kinds of conflicts. This becomes even more relevant when trying to integrate refugees into host communities and in the context of the “alternatives to camps” policy. Ultimately, if refugees are to be fully integrated into the Rwandan judiciary system (which includes courts and Abunzi), the various structures need to be well-known so that refugees utilize them. Yet 24 percent of refugees state that Rwandan Courts either cannot help them, or are not in charge (of refugees) or that refugees are not allowed to report to them. Work is already underway to develop conflict resolutions mechanisms in the camps based on the Abunzi system, but this would need to be rolled out in all refugee locations and a system for interaction between refugee and host community “abunzi” committees set up.

<sup>23</sup> It should be noted that 27 percent of the interviewed refugees did not respond to this question.

Looking more closely at the “other reasons” for **not** using certain mechanisms, analysis shows that half of the respondents who indicate “other reasons” mention that in a case of a conflict they need first to address the issue with the refugee leaders.<sup>24</sup> If the procedure is that a conflict needs first to be addressed to the refugee leaders, this may be a factor in the answers of those who say “I am not allowed” to turn to another particular actor to resolve a conflict. These results suggest that conflicts are first addressed to refugee leaders in the camp and then most likely referred by the leaders to other conflict resolution structures, if not directly dealt by the leaders themselves. However, findings show that refugee leaders are not the most popular choice among those who say they would turn to a particular state actor, which suggests that it may not be true that a conflict needs first to be addressed by refugee leaders. Only 9 percent of all those who would turn to a particular actor state that they would turn to refugee leaders, while other actors are more popular: 12 percent would go to MIDIMAR, 12 percent would go to the police, 11 percent would go to UNHCR, 11 percent would go to service providers and 10 percent would go to Bashingantahe. Further, almost half of the respondents who say that they would not turn to the refugee leaders explain that they cannot help them (46 percent).

The role that refugee leaders played in conflict resolution, even if less than other actors at present, must be taken into account in order to avoid role confusion or even conflicts between them and the new/other structure, as refugee leaders in the camp might fear a loss of power and influence.<sup>25</sup> This is important when designing or installing new conflict resolution mechanisms, such as Abunzi in the camp. The reasons given above are primarily structural, but the assessment also asked about more functional aspects of existing conflict resolution mechanisms. The functional aspects were not cited as frequently.

Time and distance are cited by 20 percent of refugees as reasons for not turning to a particular actor or actors. The issue of being too far away suggests a technical solution such as decentralized offices or support for transport, especially for persons with disabilities, to reach Rwandan Courts, district and cell authorities or UNHCR staff.

Among all the reasons cited for not turning to a particular actor, 5 percent concern the legitimacy of an actor (biased, not trustworthy, linked to politics not keep information confidential). About 8 percent do not turn to one or several actors because they consider them to be biased, not trustworthy, linked to politics or not keeping information confidential. This finding raises issues of credibility and legitimacy regarding the conflict resolution mechanisms in question. Trust, neutrality, objectivity and credibility are key aspects for the success of conflict resolution. For this reason, the analysis looks more closely at the finding though they come from only 8 percent of the interviewed refugees. Comparing the different actors proposed in the assessment, issues of objectivity, trust, credibility and legitimacy are most questioned for refugee leaders, followed by community leaders (18 percent of those who do not turn to refugee leaders cite these reasons for not doing so and 10 percent for community mobilizers). Also, 28 percent of these respondents mention that they would not do so because refugee leaders are biased. In addition, weak leadership (leaders who do not fulfill their role or attend meetings) or leaders’ committees that do not function well are mentioned by refugee leaders

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<sup>24</sup> The camp is structured into different quarters and villages. Each level has refugee leaders. In this paper “refugee leaders” refers to those within the Mahama refugee camp.

<sup>25</sup> See also: De Winnie, Ruben and Anne-Aël Pöhu (2015): *Mediation in Rwanda: Conceptions and realities of Abunzi Justice (2011-2014)*. RCN Justice et Démocratie.



themselves.<sup>26</sup> Refugee leaders in the camp play an important role in conflict resolution, and some refugees consider them as the first to be addressed in a case of conflict (as discussed above). Interventions should focus on increasing trust, neutrality, objectivity and credibility so that refugee leaders can fulfil their important role in resolving conflicts. Finally, 1 percent of the respondents would not turn to a particular actor due its approach to resolving conflicts (e.g. punishment and fining).

### Conclusions and recommendations

A variety of conflict resolution structures exist inside and outside the Mahama refugee camp and are available to members of the refugee and host communities. A clarification of each actor's role, competencies and responsibilities with regards to conflict resolution should be carried out, and this information should be explained and communicated to refugees. The risk is that, lacking clear information, refugees might address themselves to structures that are not adequate for solving their issues. Some structures may even resolve conflicts in a non-peaceful way, as when thieves are "punished" by beatings with no due process. This might cause frustration and anger or even lead to violent conflicts. The clarification of roles is also very important for the accountability of conflict resolution structures.

Potentially, most of the prevailing conflicts in the camp or with host communities can be resolved through mediatory approaches.<sup>27</sup> Many conflicts could be settled through mediation, which would also diminish the case load of the police and other organizations working in the camp. A mediation structure should be set up along the lines of a camp Abunzi or Bashingantahe. This (new) mediation structure in the camp must be aligned with already-existing Rwandan structures in order to avoid double structures. Over time, this will support implementation of the "alternatives to camps" policy. A (new) mediation structure in the camp should be well-defined with clear roles and responsibilities and embedded in an overall conflict resolution system, with clear hierarchical relations to other actors such as police and courts. There should be possibilities for appeals, and a referral system for different conflict issues to adequate structures (e.g. building up and collaborating with community mobilizers and the Legal Aid Forum).

To establish and introduce a (new) mediation structure in the camp, a thorough conflict-sensitivity or do-no-harm analysis should be conducted in order to avoid potential role conflicts (e.g. between mediators and refugee leaders) and to ensure that refugees will consider mediators as credible, legitimate and accessible, in particular for persons with special needs. Outreach measures to raise awareness should be designed and implemented.

Finally, it seems that a joint mechanism to address potential conflict issues between refugees and members of host communities is lacking. In order to establish such a mechanism, other camps might provide inspiration. In the Kigeme camp, for example, refugee leaders, local authorities, representatives of MIDIMAR, Abunzi and other mediators meet in monthly "peace dialogues" to discuss issues of concern to both refugees and host communities in order to find joint solutions.<sup>28</sup> Such a joint conflict resolution forum may become particularly relevant to the "alternatives to camps" policy as one of the first aspects of integrating refugees into host communities.

<sup>26</sup> This finding is from the Town Hall Meeting on 12 September 2017.

<sup>27</sup> Domestic violence, intimate partner violence, SGBV and other crimes are not addressed through mediation.

<sup>28</sup> This project has been supported by a partner of CPS/GIZ.

## 4.2 Conflict resolution mechanisms for conflict between refugees and service providers

How do refugees resolve a conflict with an organization working in the camp? Refugees say they would turn to MIDIMAR (79 percent), UNHCR (79 percent), directly to the service provider who is involved in the conflict (68 percent), to other service providers who are not involved in the conflict (64 percent), to refugee leaders (57 percent) and to family and friends (50 percent) in order to resolve conflicts with a service provider.

For conflicts between refugees and service providers, 76 percent do not turn to representatives of churches, 67 percent to Rwandan Courts, 64 percent to Rwandan cell or district authorities, or 52 percent to community mobilizers. Several reasons for not turning to one of the Rwandan structures are given, including that these structures cannot help them (cited by 31 percent of refugees for local authorities and by 15 percent for Rwandan courts) or that they do not have the influence or are not in charge of refugees (cited by 21 percent for local authorities and 9 percent for Rwandan courts). Moreover, 13 percent of the interviewed refugees say that these structures are too far away to reach them. Regarding community mobilizers, 65 percent of refugees who do not turn to community mobilizers say that they cannot help them and 42 percent say they do not have the necessary influence to resolve a conflict with a service provider.<sup>29</sup> Overall, the reasons cited most for all structures are that a particular actor is not able to help refugees to resolve conflicts with service providers (cited by 58 percent of all refugees for one or several actors) or that a particular actor does not have the necessary influence or is not in charge of solving such a conflict (cited by 23 percent for one or several actors).

### Conclusions and recommendations

The findings on service providers largely correspond to the findings regarding the resolution of conflicts among refugees or between members of refugees and host communities. This presents an opportunity to design comprehensive conflict resolution mechanisms that could also ensure resolution for conflicts involving host community members or organizations working in the camp.

With regard to conflict prevention with service providers, existing feedback mechanisms should be used to identify potential conflict issues between refugees and organizations working in the camp. These mechanisms include individual counseling sessions, complaint or suggestion boxes, and direct communication channels such as the UNHCR phone number or e-mail address ([tubivuge@unhcr.org](mailto:tubivuge@unhcr.org)). Inclusion of the opinions, perceptions and suggestions of refugees in decisions that may affect their lives will serve to address and avoid potential conflicts. The importance of service providers developing and finding solutions together with refugees was emphasized in discussions during the Town Hall Meeting on 12 September 2017.

<sup>29</sup> For representatives of churches, the question why refugees would not turn to them was not asked in the survey.



