

EEMRG: ENERGY IN EMERGENCIES, MITIGATING RISKS OF GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE UGANDA CASE STUDY



Above: Focus Group Discussions in Bidi Bidi, West Nile, Uganda

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Introduction

Energy is essential to survival, yet is a routinely neglected need in humanitarian response. There is a growing global consensus and body of literature arguing for more attention to and accommodation of energy needs in emergency contexts, including where energy needs and risks of gender-based violence (GBV) overlap. *The Energy in Emergencies, Mitigating Risks of Gender-based Violence (EEMRG)* The EEMRG program aims to improve safety and opportunities for women and girls through access to energy in emergencies. It will do so through the creation of training and technical resources on energy access, GBV, and gender for humanitarian practitioners.

The EEMRG program has produced a [draft global learning report](#) and two country case studies to assess the current state of knowledge and practice around energy access in emergencies, and to examine how access to energy impacts the safety and opportunities available to individuals living through emergencies. This Uganda case study explores the lived energy experiences of refugees in Uganda, as well as refugees' energy access through the lens of humanitarian actors. The report relies on a review of existing assessments and studies, combined with fieldwork carried out between February 26 and March 7, 2019, in Kampala and Uganda's West Nile region. In the course of this fieldwork, EEMRG consulted 94 refugees and hosts, and 16 market actors via focus group discussions (FGDs). EEMRG FGDs used interviews, participative ranking methodology, and images of energy uses. Fieldwork included consultation with ten humanitarian practitioners.

Findings from this report will inform EEMRG's training curriculum on energy access and GBV in emergencies. It will ensure that existing resources and knowledge are appropriately leveraged, and that EEMRG training materials and tools respond to the most important gaps in knowledge and practice. The audiences for the report are humanitarian energy and GBV experts, ***who we hope will confirm and challenge conclusions***, ensuring that the report lays an accurate foundation from which we can develop training materials and guidance around energy and GBV in emergencies.

Organization of Uganda's Humanitarian Energy Access Community of Practice

In Uganda, environmental and energy issues have been a high priority for the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the government, with energy and environment listed as one of six priority outcomes within the refugee response plan.¹ Uganda has an Energy and

¹<https://reliefweb.int/report/uganda/uganda-country-refugee-response-plan-integrated-response-plan-refugees-south-sudan>

Environment Technical Working Group, chaired by UNHCR, the Office of the Prime Minister (OPM), and UNDP, establishing a platform for these institutions to promote energy as a priority, but without providing a clear mandate or responsibility for provision of energy needs. The working group has a dedicated advisor in place to convene meetings and lead discussions around technical guidelines and harmonization.

Uganda's refugee response plan includes clear prioritization of energy and environment issues, and includes the following energy and environment objectives and indicators:

- OBJECTIVE: *Access to sufficient and sustainable basic energy services for lighting, power and cooking increased and climate change drivers mitigated with reduced reliance on wood and fossil fuels*
- INDICATOR: *# of targeted households that self-report using fuel-efficient cook-stove to cook the main meal*
- INDICATOR: *# of households using alternative and/or renewable energy (e.g. solar, biogas, ethanol, briquette, lpg [liquefied petroleum gas])*

Organization of Uganda's GBV Mitigation Community

The OPM and UNHCR lead coordination of GBV prevention, mitigation, and response. In November 2018, the Uganda humanitarian community held a workshop on Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) guidelines, and devised a national action plan on sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) mainstreaming.² Each sector has a specific action plan for GBV mitigation, and each sector lead is responsible for reporting on identified GBV risks and how they have been addressed.

CARE described the structure and organization around GBV as “very active and ideal,” with coordination at the village, zone, sub-country, and settlement levels. Within the settlements, CARE, the International Rescue Committee (IRC), the Danish Refugee Council (DRC), and UNHCR have coordinated case management support for GBV survivors and have discrete responsibilities for prevention and response. However, during EEMRG field visits, the GBV referral mechanisms for GBV survivors and those at risk were under review by UNHCR and OPM, and, in the face of funding gaps, there was a reduced presence of GBV actors within the settlements -- a repeated concern shared by settlement residents, refugees, and host community members.

CARE emphasized that energy must be considered as a “key input” for GBV prevention, mitigation, and response programming in order to improve the GBV protection environment in Uganda. However, **many organizations, including CARE, feel they lack the knowledge, skills, and expertise to address energy directly and indirectly.** CARE reported that gaps in livelihoods

² <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/download/63274>

programming must be addressed in order to effectively address GBV: “We are trying to reduce GBV cases overall, but with no significant progress on livelihoods or progress on fuel it is limited. We hear people asking us often ‘do you want us to take care of the trees or live?’” CARE sees potential promising interventions in tree-planting, scaling briquette and efficient stove-making, incorporating energy into the minimum expenditure basket (MEB), focusing on longer-term interventions, and better linking food aid and energy access.

Current Humanitarian Energy Access Initiatives - Uganda

Given the high number of humanitarian actors undertaking actions in Uganda’s refugee response, tracking activities and interventions is challenging, and no comprehensive summary of energy access initiatives currently exists. However, activity tracking is an identified need and priority of the Energy and Environment working group. Interviews and publicly available documentation identified the following types of programs and activities underway or recently concluded:

Cooking: Training of trainers for energy-saving stove construction; distribution/construction of energy-saving stoves; development of alternative briquette production (using fecal sludge and agricultural byproduct); production and distribution of heat-retaining cooking bags; promotion of energy-saving cooking techniques.

Lighting/Powering: Solar street light installation for public infrastructure by a number of organizations, and based on safety mapping under UNHCR’s Safe from the Start initiative;³ personal torches and lantern distributions (often with both lighting and powering capability); energy kiosks promoting market-based approaches to energy access with high-quality solar power and cooking products; a de-risking fund to incentivize entrance of pay-as-you-go solar energy providers to refugee camps (led by USAID’s Power Africa); and small-scale pilots of subsidized pay-as-you-go lighting access.

General: Tree planting and recovery, some initiatives to work on improving relationships with host community.

Current GBV Mitigation Initiatives & Links to Energy

UNHCR coordinates humanitarian actors to promote wide adoption of a protection lens, and to ensure that GBV is being addressed, including through referrals. UNHCR leads awareness campaigns with refugees and host community members about natural resource management and coexistence to manage competition over resources. As mentioned previously, UNHCR also

³ <https://www.unhcr.org/innovation/safe-start-fighting-sexual-gender-based-violence-bottom-innovation/>

established an Energy and Environment working group that meets with district focal points to address the linkages between energy and livelihoods, and advocates to humanitarian actors to take on energy-focused projects. Despite these efforts, there is a significant service gap around GBV mitigation and response.

Humanitarian Practitioner Views of Energy-GBV Programming

Through interviews with 10 humanitarian practitioners, a number of challenges and suggestions for improving the quality of energy access programming arose. Identified implementation pain points included: the difficulty of coordinating energy activities among a wide range of actors and approaches; the lack of clear methodology on MEB calculation (including energy cost calculations); lack of effective income-generating activities (further constrained by low cash transfer values that cover only basic needs); lack of alternative cooking fuel or provision of wood fuel; and lack of scaling interventions. In addition, some noted that too many years of in-kind donations have made transitions to market-based programming more challenging.

Practitioners shared many ideas for improvements in Uganda's GBV-energy programming: better, more robust energy programming, including wide distributions of energy solutions where they are deemed necessary/appropriate, as well as more focus on market-based approaches and solutions. One interviewee encouraged considering energy as an input for GBV programming, and energy support to survivors to promote recovery. Others suggested skills building in making briquettes for survivors to create a source of income and to reduce exposure to repeated risks by continuing to gather wood. Still others suggested improved coordination among GBV, energy, livelihoods, health, and shelter practitioners.

Many acknowledged that energy access skills and program design among practitioners is low and hinders the quality of programming. Specific capacity gaps included the lack of awareness of the regulatory environment around mini-grid installation, insufficient focus on market-based solutions, and a lack of acceptable cooking fuel solutions. Many interviewees listed GBV capacity-building resources and platforms, but did not think energy was sufficiently incorporated into those training materials. A multisectoral practitioner with substantial humanitarian experience in a number of contexts noted that, in Uganda, this is the first time she has paid attention to energy beyond charcoal or firewood.

General Energy Context in Response Area (Secondary Research)

Access to sustainable energy for cooking, lighting, and power remain key challenges in the refugee settlements, and throughout Uganda. Across the country, 89% of refugee households have unmet energy needs, and over 75% of refugees lack any renewable source of energy.⁴ Cash transfers are widely used, and Uganda is in the process of approving an MEB to establish cash transfer levels. The draft MEB calculations include energy expenditures, figures which were developed with support from the Energy and Environment Working Group and the Cash Technical Working Group.

Cooking: 93% of refugee and host community households depend on wood fuel for cooking, with only 45% of refugee and 20% of host community households reporting use of energy-saving stoves.⁵ Distributed stoves are often unused, and training is generally not provided to improve adoption. There is low adoption and availability of alternative cooking fuels such as briquettes and biogas; a study in Adjumani district reported only one out of 127 respondents interviewed used alternative cooking fuels.⁶ Refugee households use, on average, 22% of their income for energy, with women and children spending 12 to 24 hours a week on firewood collection. A study conducted by DRC in 2015 found that 33% (in Adjumani), 36% (in Arua), and 63% (in Koboko) of females acknowledged having been harassed while collecting wood fuel.⁷

Firewood consumption in northern Uganda averages between 2.5 and 4.5 kg per person per day, with host communities being on the higher end of that range. This means that at least 1.3 million tonnes of firewood are needed every year to meet the firewood consumption needs of over 1.36 million refugees, equating to a yearly demand of nearly 20 five-year-old fast growing trees per individual.⁸

Light and Power: On average, refugee households own less than one light source per family. Solar lanterns are inconsistently provided and some are sold to meet other needs.⁹ In Rhino and Imvepi, the main fuels used for lighting in households are solar and dry cells, with disposable dry cells being the most common. One survey found that 60% of energy products on the market were counterfeit, and markets contained a high number of donated products from humanitarian agencies.¹⁰

⁴ UNHCR (2018). [Uganda Joint Multi-Sector Needs Assessment](#).

⁵ 2018 Uganda MSNA

⁶ Source – DRC Environmental baseline assessment report 2015 - including interviews with 611 HHs in 2015

⁷ Ibid

⁸ Uganda Refugee Response Plan Jan 2019 - Dec 2020

⁹ MSNA <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/65982>

¹⁰ Energy Survey Report (A Survey of Energy Access in the Refugee Context in Uganda) Imvepi and Rhino Camp Settlements Endev Uganda – June 2018

Findings from Field Research

Field Methodology

From February 26 to March 7, 2019, Mercy Corps and Women’s Refugee Commission (WRC) technical staff conducted a field assessment in West Nile, Uganda, to assess energy access and associated GBV risks for refugee and host communities in Bidibidi and Rhino settlements. Bidibidi (and specifically the villages of Ofua 3 and Ofua 5) and Rhino settlements (Zones 3 and 4) were selected based on Mercy Corps’ previous energy assessments in West Nile, the presence of Mercy Corps operations, and their status as future targeted areas for energy-focused interventions.

Ten FGDs and ten household interviews were conducted over four days with 94 refugees and hosts and 16 market actors. Interviewers used the draft EEMRG Refugee/Host FGD tool using participative ranking methodology, the Refugee/Host KII, Community KII, and Markets KII tools. These tools did not ask about incidents of GBV, but addressed the linkages between energy access and GBV risks as well as community-based risk mitigation mechanisms. Facilitation discouraged participants from sharing personal experiences of GBV. Consultations focused on energy needs and priorities and GBV risks. In accordance with the IASC *Guidelines for Integrating Gender-Based Violence Interventions in Humanitarian Action*,¹¹ consultations took place separately with women, men, adolescent girls, and boys. Mercy Corps and WRC technical staff facilitated conversations, with the support of Mercy Corps Uganda staff and community mobilizers who served as translators.¹² Daily debrief sessions were undertaken with the data collection team to capture adaptations of the tool to improve utility, usability, and comprehension by respondents. Based on these recommended adaptations, an updated version of the tool was used in the following day’s consultations. [11] [SEP]

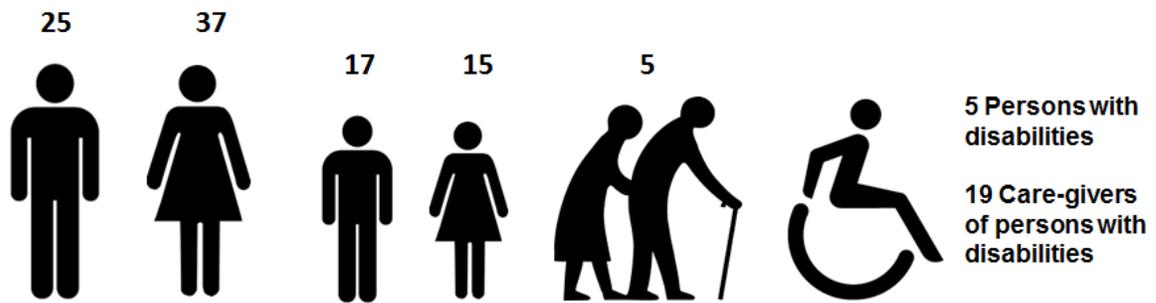
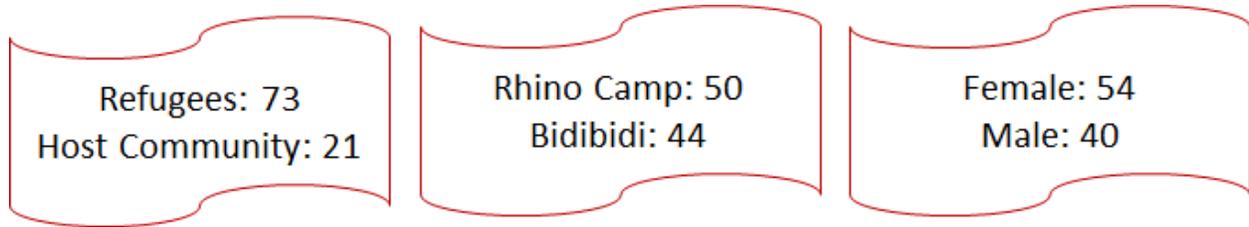
Convenience sampling was completed by Mercy Corps staff, community mobilizers, community leaders, and a primary/secondary school principal, with ninety-four individuals participating. Disability inclusion was targeted at 20%, aiming for representation of both persons living with disabilities and their caregivers. The demographic breakdown of respondents is represented visually in the following graphic.

Individuals & Communities Consulted

As part of this research, Mercy Corps and WRC consulted with 94 individuals in Uganda’s West Nile region through ten FGDs and ten household discussions, as outlined below. A full count of individuals consulted is available in Annex 1.

¹¹https://gbvguidelines.org/wp/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/2015-IASC-Gender-based-Violence-Guidelines_lo-res.pdf

¹² Mercy Corps and WRC staff had previously received training on gender, GBV, cash and markets, ethical data collection, focus group and interview facilitation, as well as note taking. Mercy Corps Uganda staff and community mobilizers were familiar with gender, GBV and focus group and interview facilitation.



*Elderly participants counted as men/women, and separately.

Findings: Energy Priorities

Findings are presented as ranked priorities (1st, 2nd, and 3rd), unless noted. In cases where findings are not ranked, this was either due to unsuccessful facilitation, or because participants could not identify and rank unavailable (hypothetical) alternatives; for example, in many discussions, ranking energy-dependent livelihoods was difficult because few such activities were available.

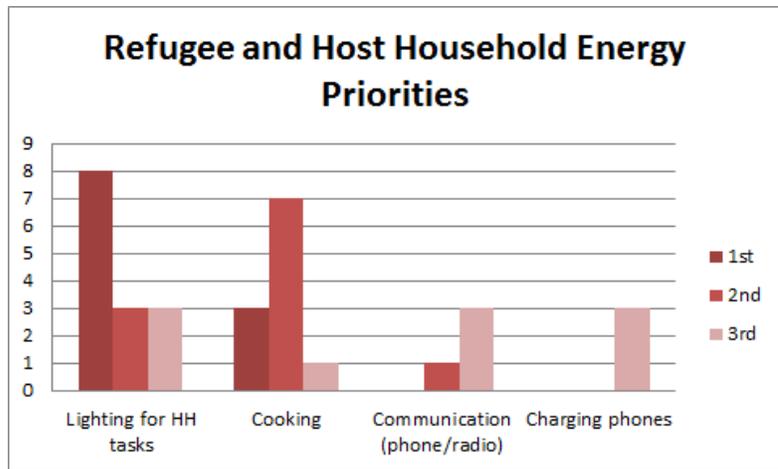
Charts presented below are composite findings across populations (refugee and host) and sub-populations (women, men, adolescent girls, and adolescent boys). To analyze and visualize energy priorities and threat rankings, the top three priorities from each focus group discussion were listed, grouped, and counted into a maximum of eight broader categories per focus group question.

Refugee and host community members consulted in this research struggled with unreliable, expensive, and polluting energy sources across all energy spheres (home, productive, and public). Consequences of this energy poverty affect nearly all aspects of daily life. As a male refugee in Rhino camp stated: “Energy drives life – where you limit energy, you limit life.”

Energy needs in the home

All groups ranked lighting and cooking as top energy priorities, with slight variations in prioritization and associated risks among groups.

Research participants nearly universally shared their struggle with the **unaffordability of lighting products** (refugee respondents noted that they did not receive distributions of solar lanterns). While host communities reported greater access to battery-powered torches compared to refugees, the lack of electric lighting at home forces many households to light small, short fires, or to rely on candles to complete basic tasks such as preparing beds and caring for children at night. The lack of light also increases risks of assault while performing tasks outside of the home (including collecting water and visiting latrines), and limits opportunities for studying and socializing after dark. Refugees reported that boys and men were more likely to purchase torches and batteries from casual labor earnings, while women and girls were more likely to sell rations to purchase candles, torches, and batteries (due to the lack of access to casual labor). Solar energy and lighting solutions (especially lamps, which were distributed to a small portion of households in consulted areas) were widely requested of humanitarian actors.



Women and girls are primarily responsible for **firewood collection**, which poses a time burden and is linked to risks of conflict and physical and sexual assault. The length of journeys to collect fuelwood varied by location, with the longest reported time spent being up to eight hours, three times per week (in Rhino Camp, Arua 6). In areas where firewood was difficult to access, refugees reported selling rations to purchase charcoal at a rate of 30 scoops of maize per bag of charcoal, and 12 scoops for a bundle of firewood. Refugee women and girls reported fears and incidents of assault and tension with the host community. However, despite these fears, some women and girls also discussed firewood as a **valuable asset**, one of the few resources they could freely access for both household use and occasional reselling. Access to fuel-efficient stoves and fuel sources were reported as widely needed.

Phones and radios were also reported to be unaffordable and scarcely available within the camp. In rare cases where women in the community were reported to have access to phones or radios, they were acquired in Arua by soliciting a trader to procure them. Households with phones generally reported owning one phone to share among members, and reported tension and competition within the household for use of phones for lighting and communication purposes, with male household members generally having primary ownership. Charging phones was repeatedly mentioned as a priority and a challenge due to cost (around 500 UGX (\$US .14) per charge at solar-powered

kiosks).

While access and consequences of the lack of access across groups were similar, a number of notable differences between populations exist. Refugees face greater difficulties and risks accessing firewood than host community members (who have more claim to land, and whose access is less often challenged). Men, women, boy, and girl refugees were aware of and concerned about the risks of firewood collection (even when not directly engaged in its collection). By contrast, male host community members characterized fuelwood access as “easy.” Specific priorities per population and subpopulation are outlined below.

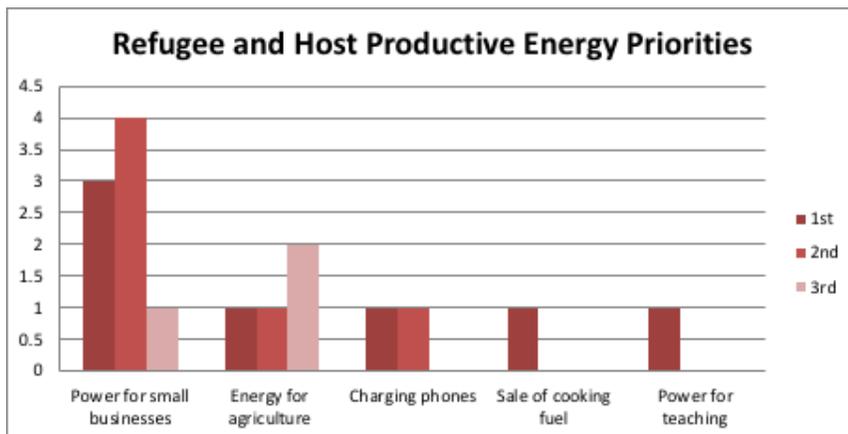
HOUSEHOLD ENERGY PRIORITIES				
Population	Location	P1	P2	P3
Refugee girls	Bidibidi	Cooking	Light for studying	Portable light (water collection)
Refugee girls	Rhino	Light for studying	Cooking	Charging phones
Host women	Rhino	Light for studying	Cooking	Charging phones
Host men	Rhino	Lighting for outdoor HH tasks	Cooking	Lighting inside
Refugee boys	Bidibidi	Lighting via lamps	Radio	Cooking
Refugee men	Rhino	Lighting at home	Cooking	Not reported
Refugee women	Rhino	Lighting	Cooking	Communication
Refugee women	Bidibidi	Cooking	Light for studying	Phone
Refugee male	Bidibidi	Cooking	Light for studying	Radio

Energy access, income generation, and productive space opportunities

Energy access was one among many challenges inhibiting income generation in Bidibidi and Rhino settlements. Access to capital and transportation to markets and jobs were additional constraints. As one male refugee stated, “There isn’t enough info about market and info about quality products.” Another stated, “People also need business skills and to be able to afford transport.” Energy was seen as both an enabler for a wide variety of livelihoods (from agriculture to shopkeeping and baking) and also a potential source of employment (through income generation opportunities of

charging phones and selling energy products such as fuel). One refugee man stated, “It would be great if people can learn how to produce energy products like candles, briquettes, and stoves.” Another said, “If we had enough capital, we would have started energy businesses already.”

The lack of existing opportunities in energy-based income generation made it difficult for women and girls in

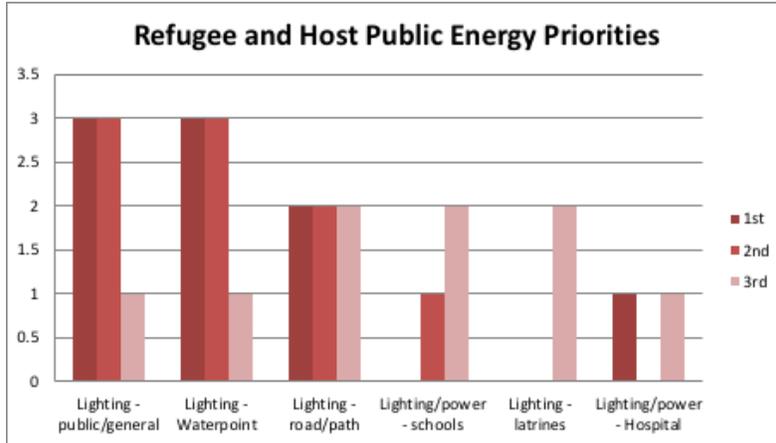


particular to rank or envision energy priorities in the productive realm. Some respondents did mention tailoring and hair salons as examples of small businesses enabled through energy access. Detailed results of priority rankings per population and subpopulation are listed below.

Population	Location	PRODUCTIVE REALM ENERGY PRIORITIES		
		P1	P2	P3
Refugee girls	Bidibidi	Powered schools (for teaching)	Firewood for bakery	NONE REPORTED
Refugee girls	Rhino	NONE REPORTED	NONE	NONE REPORTED
Host women	Rhino	Light for shops at night	NONE	NONE REPORTED
Host men	Rhino	Power for irrigation	Light for businesses	NONE REPORTED
Refugee boys	Bidibidi	Cooking fuel (to sell)	Charging phones	NONE REPORTED
Refugee men	Rhino	Charging phones	Fuel for boda drivers	Support for agriculture
Refugee women	Rhino	Power for small biz	Light for sales at night	Support for agriculture
Refugee women	Bidibidi	NONE REPORTED	NONE	NONE REPORTED
Refugee male	Bidibidi	Power for small businesses	Incubation for poultry	Power tools / carpentry

Public Energy Needs

Across locations and populations, lighting was overwhelmingly highlighted as the top energy priority in the public space. Consequences of a lack of public lighting are widespread. As water is often delivered late, collecting water in the dark is necessary but risky for women and girls, who take



primary responsibility for the task. Unlit pathways and roads were reported as unsafe for travel to waterpoints, hospitals, and schools. Markets do not operate (or are not considered to be safe) after daylight hours. Children have less opportunity to study. Unpowered schools, hospitals, and churches limit opportunities for quality service delivery. Public energy priorities identified by location and group are listed below.

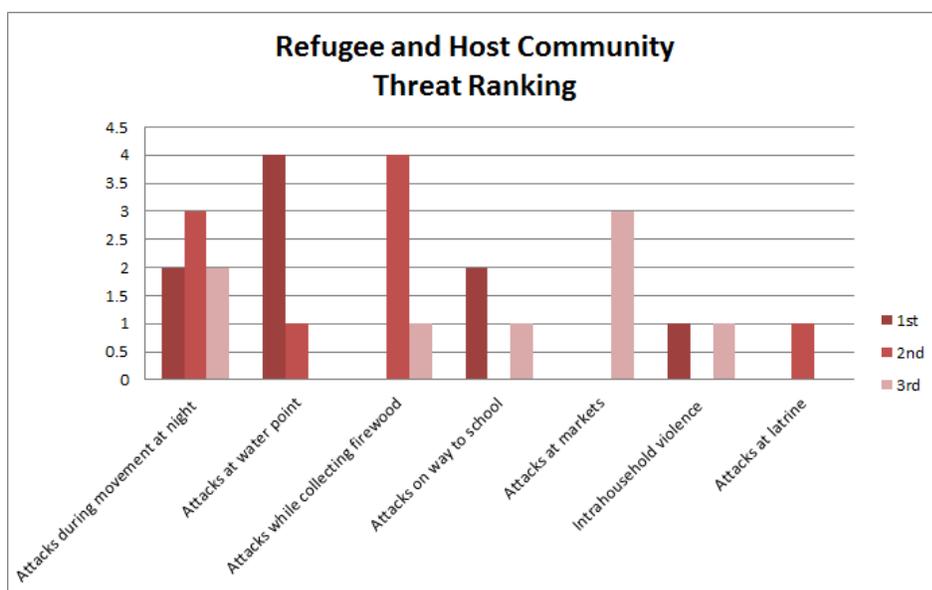
Population	Location	PUBLIC ENERGY PRIORITIES		
		P1	P2	P3
Refugee girls	Bidibidi	Power at hospital	Lighting paths	Lighting water points
Refugee girls	Rhino	Lighting at water points	Lighting at water points	Hospitals (generator)
Host women	Rhino	Lighting at markets	Lighting at church	Lighting at schools
Host men	Rhino	Lighting of roads/paths	Lighting at water points	Lighting of latrines
Refugee boys	Bidibidi	Lighting for all public infrastructure	Lighting	Lighting
Refugee men	Rhino	Lighting at water points	Energy at schools	Lighting streets/paths
Refugee women	Rhino	Lighting public spaces	Lighting / public	Torches to use while walking
Refugee women	Bidibidi	Lighting of water points	Lighting paths	Lighting latrines
Refugee male	Bidibidi	Lighting roads	Lighting water points	Lighting schools

Findings: Energy Access and GBV Risks

Consultations on risks and fears in all spaces and activities revealed high degrees of fear and reported incidents of violence related to energy collection and use both in public spaces and in the household. Scarcity of energy resources (and economic pressure around how to prioritize energy use) forces households into awful decision-making scenarios affecting women and girls — risk assault or rape, or go without water or cooked food.

Fear of violence and attacks while traveling in darkness was the most frequently ranked threat, and was closely associated with the lack of public and portable lighting. Refugees and host community members across sub-populations reported linkages between insufficient access to lighting and GBV in public places. Water kiosks, latrines, markets, schools, and pathways were all used or traveled to in darkness, and reported incidents and fears of GBV were common.

Collecting firewood was the third highest ranked risk due to the remote location and tension with host communities. The risk is increasing as woodfuel sources are depleted. A female community leader in Rhino camp said, “In the last year people have been finding it [firewood collection] more difficult. Areas that were OK before are now not OK. Landlords are upset.” Focus group participants frequently mentioned the risk of “getting chased” while collecting firewood and performing other tasks in remote and dark areas, which implied the risk of physical or sexual assault.



The risk of “getting chased” was raised in the context of both boys and girls **traveling long distances to school in the dark** (the fourth highest ranked specific risk). Rape and groping in the **marketplace after dark** and attacks at latrines were mentioned as additional risks; however, many consulted populations had latrines close to home that were shared with a small number of neighbors, so this risk was lower than it may have been in other settings. Robbery was also mentioned as a risk factor while traveling in the dark. In general, **unlit public spaces and roads/walkways were perceived as high risk and frightening areas for all groups.**

Water collection at night was the next most frequently cited specific risk factor. Women and girls often have no choice but to collect water in dark and tense settings, where they experience increased risk to rape and sexual assault. A refugee girl from Rhino camp reported: “Someone might force you to have sex at the waterpoint.” In addition, competition for the limited water resource is high, and respondents report conflicts breaking out at collection points.

Within the household, **tension, GBV risks, and incidents of physical and verbal violence were reported in part linked to household energy resources**. Refugee women reported domestic violence resulting from “the state of affairs” (meaning low ability to meet the basic needs of the household, including cooking). They reported tensions in negotiating with men around household expenditures and how to trade rations to meet basic needs. One refugee woman reported having to “ask the man for funds to purchase a torch or a candle, and this is a big problem.”

Many households have only one cell phone, which is controlled by a male in the house, with use highly rationed due to the cost of charging phones at solar kiosks. Informants reported household conflicts and risks of violence over this limited **phone access and use**. Women and girls have the least access to communication and light-dependent activities enabled by phones. Some women reported facing scrutiny about their use of phones. One refugee woman stated: “There can be misunderstandings and the husband can think that the wife is calling someone else when she is getting in touch with her relatives.” In addition, the lack of access to communication tools to report emergencies (for example, women going into labor, or severe illness) was a reported risk factor.

Refugee Coping Mechanisms and Attitudes around GBV - Energy Access

Refugees report they feel frustrated with and resigned to the energy deficits they face in the settlements. Women and girls, and the men and boys in their lives, expressed wishes that the time burden and GBV risks were not built into necessary daily responsibilities, such as gathering water and fuel. Proposed solutions by refugee communities include increasing the refugee community’s knowledge of renewable energy and financing options to facilitate access and affordability (in particular, for women and girls, of products such as solar-powered personal torches); ensuring that each person in the household has her own light); increasing access to solar lamps and solar panels; training women and older adolescent girls on efficient stove production and preparation and sale of fuel alternatives; supporting refugee livelihoods and leveraging the relatively strong enabling legal environment; installing lights proportional to the number of existing water points and latrines; ensuring continuity of GBV services within the settlement; and increasing food rations if refugees must continue to sell a portion to afford fuel so that their food security is not jeopardized.

Refugees and host community members are using a wide range of risk mitigation strategies to reduce exposure to risks of GBV associated with energy access. Listed strategies include:

- Use personal torches whenever possible
- Travel in groups

- Avoid traveling at night and, where possible, limit distances traveled (nearly impossible for women and girls)
- Communicate with the host population through community leaders to discuss deforestation permission of refugees to collect firewood, and mutual advocacy with humanitarian actors
- Directly request permission from host community to gather firewood
- Report risks to community leaders and to IRC (current GBV focal point)
- Demonstrate an aggressive attitude to deter potential attackers
- Respect firewood collection boundaries
- Leave the market early and stay alert to threats
- Have refugee men sell rations to buy firewood instead of having women travel to collect it
- Purchase torches for their children
- Whenever possible, collect water in the morning, and
- Meet with community leaders to discuss energy and GBV issues and sensitize the community about issues

Market Availability

Market visits and interviews with 16 market actors revealed that within refugee settlements, energy products are limited to basic hand-held torches for lighting and charcoal for cooking. The only exception was in the international donor-supported “energy kiosks” in Rhino and Impevi camps, where fuel-efficient stoves, a variety of solar systems and products, and rechargeable batteries are available for sale. However, many interviewees within the settlement noted that energy products could be procured by either visiting markets in neighboring towns or by asking a merchant within the settlement to purchase something on behalf of the settlement resident (for an upcharge).

In town markets of neighboring settlements, including Yumbe and Arua, a wide array of lighting, power, and cooking fuels were available for purchase. In addition, these towns are home to a number of national and international branded solar energy providers offering product warranties, including Village Power, Solar Now, Fenix (ReadyPay), and Green Light Planet (SunKing).

Gaps in Support Provided by the Humanitarian Community

Across the settlements in West Nile where this research was undertaken, lighting and fuel needs are inadequately considered or addressed by the humanitarian community. Refugee communities are resorting to risky coping strategies. Firewood collection heightens women and girls’ risks of GBV. Refugees report selling food rations in exchange for fuel and lighting, which worsens food insecurity for an already food insecure population. Inequitable distributions of non-food items (NFIs) such as solar lamps and personal torches have given earlier arrivals an advantage over later arrivals. For example, refugees who arrived at the beginning of 2016 compared to later in the year have more access to energy, as later arrivals came with fewer assets and then received fewer NFIs, resulting in energy deficits and related protection issues, including GBV. This trend is presumably linked to decreased funding levels of humanitarian operations and programming since 2016.

Similarly, settlement water points and latrines installed in later-established zones had either a lower ratio of, or no, lighting installations. The few refugees who are able to afford torches buy them locally. However, a majority of refugees cannot afford the few torches available in marketplaces. Research finds a lack of support for livelihood activities, including energy inputs. This is in part due to the absence of market linkages between settlements and host communities, and often forces refugees to remain dependent on humanitarian assistance.

Recommendations from Refugee and Host Communities for Humanitarian Agencies

All groups consulted recommended increasing access to or provision of personal or public lighting. No substantial differences in recommendations were documented between host and refugee sub-populations. Priority recommendations beyond lighting, however, varied somewhat between women, men, boys, and girls. Specific recommendations include:

Women	Ensure access to light at home and in public; provide alternative cooking fuels; improve cell phone charging options; increase income-generating activities (training, skills, and market assessment); educate community about solar products and systems (host community women).
Men	Move the health center closer to the villages and have daily operating hours; move the schools closer to the villages; support livelihoods to improve purchasing power for charcoal from the host community; install solar lights at water points; implement efficient stove products.
Girls	Improve access to better stoves and fuel sources; provide access to personal lights for every individual to navigate roads and pathways; install additional lamp posts proportional to the number of water points and latrines; build schools closer to the villages (in particular secondary schools for which attendance is already an obstacle for girls and requires traveling long distances).
Boys	Install lamps at school; improve relations with the host community so that they stop chasing refugees who are collecting firewood.

Potential Impact of Improved Energy-GBV Interventions

Refugee and host communities alike agree that resolving energy-related GBV risks would impact their lives in a variety of ways.

In Rhino, refugee girls shared that improving access to energy would improve their school attendance and retention rates -- girls would not be taken out of school regularly by their families to collect firewood and perform other care work. Improved attendance would enable them to gain a better education and better jobs in the future, they said. In Bidibidi, refugee girls said that access to energy, and in particular lighting in the form of personal torches, would increase their freedom of movement, their physical safety from accident or injury, and increase their ability to study more (into the evening hours). They drew direct linkages between improving their performance in school and an increase in opportunities critical to their improved future chances at success. They also saw increased access to energy and lighting as increasing their freedom from risks and violence.

Host women in Rhino reported that if they had better knowledge about energy products (i.e. types of products and associated costs) and the market (i.e. where energy products may be purchased in the settlements or towns and cities of West Nile), they would be better equipped to improve their safety. Host men in Rhino shared that if there were more than one personal torch per family, intra-household conflict between women and girls would be reduced. Girls would be able to study more, and women would be able to fetch water safely at night (when water arrives late at the water kiosks). In addition, host men reported that personal lights would also mean safer access to the market and better outcomes for everyone in the household, because they would be less susceptible to insect bites.

In Rhino, host men articulated the connection between poverty and conflict/violence within the household, and recommended improving access to food. A male refugee community leader highlighted that, while food is being addressed by humanitarian actors through food distributions, refugees routinely sell a portion of their food rations. From these sales, they purchase primarily firewood, and secondarily, charcoal in order to cook their food, as well as to reduce the time taken, distance traveled, and protection risks faced by women and girls associated with firewood collection. He also recommended that the responsibility to collect firewood should be shared by men and women, or, given current realities, that men accompany women and girls during collection to decrease the risks they faced. Lastly, he shared that lighting within the home would improve comfort and reduce routine injuries from wild animals.

Capacity Needs: Humanitarian Teams

Interviews with ten humanitarian practitioners working in West Nile and Kampala revealed the following capacity gaps that contribute to the challenge of designing and implementing successful energy-GBV activities:

- **General lack of awareness of GBV/gender concepts.** As one practitioner stated, “Many times I have to work with colleagues who are totally unprepared on gender-sensitive concepts and approaches. The first thing I would do is train all staff on gender-sensitive programming.” Interviewees also noted that due to a lack of basic awareness among some staff, any training on energy-specific needs should begin with an introduction to fundamental gender and GBV concepts.
- **A lack of resources on “durable solutions” that engage local markets.** Some interviewees reported tapping into the private sector, as well as closer partnerships with development organizations and actors, to fill that capacity gap.
- **A need for clear standards for energy programs and service delivery.** Some interviewees felt that clear standards would facilitate improved cooperation between the host government and a range of humanitarian actors, to address energy access and GBV risk mitigation.
- **Capacity-building support and materials.** Several practitioners noted that some of their most productive learning moments included visits from regional/global technical advisors and regional learning exchanges, but acknowledged that advisors are often overstretched, and these types of events can be expensive and difficult to maintain. Modular training materials that could be rolled out by field-level staff are crucial to address capacity needs and to promote collaboration among stakeholders.

Conclusion

Consultations with affected populations across West Nile revealed critical deficits in humanitarian funding and response to adequately address energy access and GBV risk mitigation. EEMRG hopes that this case study can be leveraged by stakeholders to garner support for enhanced programming to bridge gaps.

Consultations with humanitarian practitioners in Uganda revealed that most practitioners were unsure about where to look for energy-gender capacity-building resources and programming tools, and unclear about best practices. Nearly all struggled to implement systemic, scaleable responses. At a global level, many leading standard humanitarian assessment and design tools insufficiently address energy-gender issues.

EEMRG is currently working through the Global Plan of Action's Technical Expertise and Capacity Building Working Group, as well as a smaller advisory group of leading humanitarian agencies, to begin to address these humanitarian-energy-gender capacity gaps. We see clear opportunities for transformative impact for communities living through emergencies, especially for women and girls. The findings and conclusions from the Uganda and Jordan Case Studies, together with global practitioner input, will complement research from the broader EEMRG Global Learning Report. Together, summary findings and feedback from sector specialists will define a foundation for a universal humanitarian-energy-GBV curriculum, training program, and ultimately, uniform standards for assessment, interventions, and monitoring.

Annex 1: Individuals Consulted

Rhino:								
Group	Men	Women	Girls	Boys	Elderly (55+ included in men and women)	Persons with disabilities, included in men, women, girls, and boys	Family member with disability, including in men, women, girls, and boys	Total individuals
Refugee	4	13	8	7	3	2	8	32
Host	10	8	0	0	2	3	8	18
Total	14	21	8	7	5	5	16	50
Total	50				10% persons w/ disabilities & 42% persons w/ disabilities & caretakers			
Bidibidi:								
IDP	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Returnee	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Refugee	10	15	8	8	3	11	3	41
Host	1	1	1	0	2	0	0	3
Total	11	16	9	8	5	11	3	44
Total	44				25% persons w/ disabilities & 31% persons w/ disabilities & caretakers			

CONTACT

Sara Murray
Program Manager | Energy Access in Emergencies
Mercy Corps
smurray@mercycorps.org

ABOUT MERCY CORPS

Mercy Corps is a leading global organization powered by the belief that a better world is possible. In disaster, in hardship, in more than 40 countries around the world, we partner to put bold solutions into action — helping people triumph over adversity and build stronger communities from within. Now, and for the future.

mercycorps.org

Tenzin Manell | Senior Technical Advisor, Cash and Livelihoods
Women's Refugee Commission
TenzinM@WRCommission.org

ABOUT THE WOMEN'S REFUGEE COMMISSION

The Women's Refugee Commission (WRC) improves the lives and protects the rights of women, children, and youth displaced by conflict and crisis. We research their needs, identify solutions, and advocate for programs and policies to strengthen their resilience and drive change in humanitarian practice.

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