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Predictors of Landlords' Willingness to Offer Land for Refugee Settlement and Use in Dziapi Sub-County, Adjumani District, Uganda

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Access to land is central to refugee settlement, livelihood security, self-reliance, and local integration. In refugee-hosting areas, however, land allocation depends not only on national refugee policy or humanitarian need but also on the willingness of local landlords and customary landholders to make land available. This study examined predictors of landlords' willingness to offer land for refugee settlement and use in Dziapi Sub-County, Adjumani District, Uganda. A sequential explanatory mixed-methods design was used. Quantitative data were collected from 160 landlords around Nyumanzi refugee settlement through structured interviews, while qualitative data were collected through in-depth and key informant interviews with selected landlords, land chiefs, and officials involved in land negotiations. Quantitative data were analysed using SPSS version 25, and qualitative data were analysed thematically. Only 30% of landlords were willing to offer land. Willingness was lower among landlords who perceived refugees as disrespectful, believed refugees should not receive more land, lacked authority to offer land without secondary or third-party approval, associated land offers with monetary-benefit expectations, and reported inadequate government sensitisation. The study concludes that willingness to offer land is shaped by refugee-host relations, customary land governance, decision-making authority, perceived fairness, benefit expectations, and institutional communication.

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INTRODUCTION

The growth of forced displacement has intensified pressure on refugee-hosting countries, humanitarian agencies, and local communities. Refugee hosting requires more than admitting displaced populations into national territory; it also requires arrangements through which refugees can live safely, access services, pursue livelihoods, and participate in social and economic life. Land is central to these arrangements. It determines where refugees settle, whether they can cultivate food, how they relate to surrounding communities, and whether commitments to protection and self-reliance can be implemented. As displacement has increased, housing, land, and property have therefore become central to refugee protection and humanitarian governance (OHCHR, 2020; Norwegian Refugee Council, 2019; UNHCR, 2020d).

In many refugee-hosting contexts, land access is treated as an administrative problem: the state identifies land, humanitarian agencies support services, and refugees are settled. This view is incomplete. Land is also a social, political, cultural, and economic asset. Its allocation is shaped by tenure systems, family claims, community authority, local histories, perceptions of fairness, and expectations about future rights. Where land belongs to, or is administered by, local landlords, families, clans, or customary authorities, refugee settlement depends on more than formal policy. It depends on the willingness of local landholders to cooperate with state and humanitarian actors.

Uganda provides an important setting for examining this issue. The country is often described as having one of Africa's more progressive refugee policy frameworks. Its settlement model has historically sought to provide refugees with plots for residence and, where possible, productive use. Such land access is expected to support food production, reduce dependence on humanitarian assistance, and promote self-reliance. Yet this model depends on land availability in refugee-hosting areas. Much of this land is embedded in local tenure arrangements and cannot be treated as vacant administrative space. The attitudes, expectations, and authority of local landlords are therefore central to settlement planning.

Inadequate land access has cascading consequences. Refugees with insufficient land are less able to cultivate food, generate income, or pursue livelihoods. This can deepen food insecurity, poverty, malnutrition, and dependence on humanitarian assistance, especially during funding shortfalls or ration reductions (UNHCR, 2020a; USAID, 2020; World Food Program, 2020; WHO, 2020). Limited land may also increase pressure on host-community land, producing encroachment, boundary disputes, and refugee-host tensions. Studies and reports have linked refugee-hosting pressures in Uganda and elsewhere to land conflict, environmental degradation, livelihood competition, and contested access to local resources (Dawa, 2018; Herbert & Idris, 2018; Idris, 2020; International Refugee Rights Initiative, 2019; Danish Refugee Council, 2018).

The problem is therefore not only how much land is physically available but how land becomes socially and institutionally available. Apparently, unused land may be held for future cultivation, preserved for family members, governed by clan structures, reserved for inheritance, or politically sensitive because of past transactions. Landholders may also fear that temporary refugee use could become permanent occupation or that state institutions may not return land after settlement use. In such contexts, willingness to offer land is a complex social decision rather than a simple humanitarian response.

This study focuses on Dziapi Sub-County in Adjumani District, northern Uganda, where Nyumanzi refugee settlement is located. Dziapi is analytically important because it is a refugee-hosting area with substantial land mass, yet some landlords remain reluctant to offer land for refugee settlement and use. The original dissertation notes that Nyumanzi and Pagirinya refugee settlements were established with plans to obtain 4.9 square miles of land in Dziapi Sub-County on a voluntary basis from the host community. Several years later, less than half had reportedly been obtained, leaving a shortfall of 2.3 square miles. The number of landlords who voluntarily offered land rose from 8 in 2016 to 12 in 2017 and 26 by 2019, but remained below the target of 100 landlords.

These figures reveal a gap between institutional demand for land and local willingness to offer it. Counting landlords who have already offered land shows realised land access, but does not explain why others remain unwilling or hesitant. Without understanding predictors of willingness, policy interventions may continue to rely on general humanitarian appeals or repeated sensitisation meetings without addressing the factors that shape landlords' decisions.

This article asks: what predicts landlords' willingness to offer land for refugee settlement and use in Dziapi Sub-County? It examines three categories of predictors: perceptions of refugees and

refugee-community relations; landlord intrapersonal characteristics, including beliefs about whether refugees should receive more land and whether landlords have authority to offer it; and institutional factors, including sensitisation, benefit expectations, trust, bureaucracy, and engagement with customary structures.

The study contributes to refugee and migration studies in three ways. First, it shifts attention from refugees as recipients of land to landlords as local decision-makers whose cooperation affects refugee policy implementation. Second, it demonstrates that land availability is mediated by attitudes, authority structures, and institutional trust. Third, it offers empirical evidence from a Ugandan case where land access is not merely a technical settlement question but a negotiated social process.

LITERATURE REVIEW AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMING

Land, Refugee Protection, and Self-Reliance

Access to land is a practical foundation of refugee protection. While legal status and documentation are essential, protection also requires material conditions that allow displaced people to live safely and with dignity. Land provides space for shelter, household organisation, agriculture, services, and livelihood activities. In settlement-based refugee responses, it is therefore closely linked to food security, self-reliance, and local integration.

Housing, land, and property rights matter because land insecurity produces further deprivation. Refugees without adequate land may depend heavily on food assistance, which is often unstable because of funding gaps. They may also be unable to cultivate crops, rear livestock, or establish livelihood activities. When land is inadequate, refugees may seek surrounding land informally, increasing conflict risks with host communities. Land insecurity can thus become both a humanitarian concern and a source of local political tension (NRC, 2016; Norwegian Refugee Council, 2019; OHCHR, 2020).

In Uganda, land access has long been part of the refugee settlement model and is frequently presented as an enabling condition for self-reliance. However, land availability is not guaranteed. As Uganda continues to receive refugees, demand for settlement land grows, and host communities may become more reluctant to surrender or share land, especially where they face poverty, limited services, natural-resource pressure, or uncertain land rights. The Global Compact on Refugees similarly emphasises self-reliance, but this goal remains difficult to achieve when refugees lack productive assets such as land (UNHCR, 2018).

Refugee-Host Relations and Land Conflict

Refugee-host relations are shaped by solidarity, competition, resentment, interdependence, and institutional mediation. Host communities may benefit from refugee presence through expanded markets, infrastructure, humanitarian employment, and improved services. At the same time, they may face pressure on land, water, forests, schools, health facilities, and local administration. These mixed effects can produce ambivalence: hosts may support refugees in principle while resisting specific demands on local resources.

Land-related tensions have been reported in several refugee-hosting contexts. In Uganda, studies of settlements such as Bidibidi, Kyaka II, and other West Nile areas show that land conflict is rarely caused by scarcity alone. It is often connected to perceived inequality, aid competition, environmental degradation, unclear boundaries, weak communication, and institutional mistrust (Dawa, 2018; Danish Refugee Council, 2018; Herbert & Idris, 2018; Idris, 2020). In northern Uganda, the International Refugee Rights Initiative (2019) similarly emphasised host-community grievances, including concerns that refugees receive more assistance than hosts, that humanitarian actors insufficiently consult hosts, and that land-use arrangements are unclear.

Every day social interaction also matters. In the Dziapi study, a significant refugee-community predictor was the perception that refugees in Nyumanzi settlement were disrespectful and did not respect elders. This indicates that willingness to offer land is partly relational. A landlord may be reluctant not only because of land scarcity but also because of negative experiences or perceptions of refugees. In communities where respect for elders and local authority carries cultural weight, perceived disrespect can transform land allocation from a humanitarian act into one that feels undeserved or socially risky.

Landlords as Local Actors in Refugee Governance

Refugee policy literature often focuses on the state, UNHCR, humanitarian organisations, and refugees. Host communities are increasingly recognised, but landlords require more specific attention within this category. They are not simply residents of refugee-hosting areas; they are people with ownership, administrative authority, or custodial responsibility over land needed for settlement expansion. Their decisions can determine whether land becomes available or remains outside the settlement system.

In this study, “landlord” refers to persons who own or have administrative powers over land located near Nyumanzi refugee settlement and not currently settled by refugees. This definition recognises that landholding may involve more than individual ownership. Some landlords may hold land as family or clan trustees; others may have administrative authority but not unilateral power to transfer, sell, or offer land. A landlord may personally support refugee settlement yet be unable to offer land without approval from family members, clan elders, or other authorities.

This issue connects with customary land governance in Uganda. In many rural contexts, land decisions involve household heads, extended families, clans, local councils, and state institutions. Requests for land from government or humanitarian

agencies may therefore pressure individuals whose authority is socially constrained. If institutions treat these individuals as sole decision-makers, they may misunderstand the processes through which legitimate land offers are made.

Attitudes, Intentions, and the Theory of Planned Behaviour

The study draws on the Theory of Planned Behaviour. Ajzen (1991) argues that behaviour is influenced by intention, which is shaped by attitudes toward the behaviour, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control. This theory is useful because land offers are intentional acts. A landlord's willingness depends on how they evaluate the act, how they perceive others' expectations, and whether they believe they have the authority to act.

Attitudes are reflected in beliefs about refugees and land allocation. Landlords who believe refugees have already received enough land may view further allocation negatively, while those who perceive refugees as disrespectful may regard land offers as undeserved. Subjective norms are reflected in family, clan, and community expectations. If relatives or clan members are likely to oppose a land offer, willingness may decline even where the landlord personally sympathises with refugees. Perceived behavioural control is reflected in whether landlords believe they can offer land without secondary or third-party approval.

The theory, therefore, links individual willingness to wider social and institutional conditions. Willingness is not merely a private preference; it is a socially embedded intention formed at the intersection of personal beliefs, community expectations, authority relations, and institutional trust. Land availability alone does not translate into land offers unless landlords view the act as desirable, socially acceptable, and practically within their power.

Institutional Trust, Sensitisation, and Procedural Fairness

Institutional factors are central because land offers require trust in government and humanitarian agencies. Landlords must believe that institutions will explain the process clearly, respect local authority, honour agreements, and protect their interests. If they fear that land will not be returned, promises will not be kept, or hosts will receive no benefits while refugees receive assistance, willingness may decline.

Sensitisation is one mechanism for building trust and clarifying expectations. In public programs requiring citizen cooperation, sensitisation explains the intervention, citizens' roles, and expected benefits or safeguards (Gilmore et al., 2020; Kaleli et al., 2021). Refugee land offers it is especially important because requests for free land can generate suspicion. Landlords need to know how much land is needed, for how long, under what legal arrangement, with what compensation or recognition, and through what dispute-resolution mechanism.

The Dziapi study found that lack of sensitisation significantly predicted unwillingness. Information gaps and procedural uncertainty are therefore not minor administrative problems; they directly shape willingness. Sensitisation also matters because landlords may need to convince family members or clan leaders. Without adequate information, they cannot credibly explain or defend a proposed offer within their own social networks.

Literature Gap

Existing studies on refugees and land in Uganda have largely examined land conflicts, environmental impacts, refugee-host relations, and policy implementation (Ahimbisibwe, 2018; Bagenda et al., 2003; Barasa et al., 2020; Dawa, 2018; Danish Refugee Council, 2018; Idris, 2020; Rugadya, 2009; Sebba, 2006). These studies are important, but do not sufficiently explain willingness to offer land among landlords who have

not yet made land available. This study addresses that gap by examining willingness as an outcome and identifying refugee-related, landlord-related, and institutional predictors.

METHODS

Study Design

The study used a sequential explanatory mixed-methods design. The quantitative phase estimated the level of landlords' willingness to offer land and identified predictors, while the qualitative phase contextualised the statistical findings through accounts from landlords and institutional actors involved in land negotiations.

A mixed-methods approach was appropriate because willingness to offer land is both measurable and interpretive. Survey data can capture reported willingness and associations with predictors, but the reasons behind willingness or unwillingness are embedded in social relations, authority structures, trust, expectations, and past experiences. Qualitative data helped explain why the quantitative associations existed.

Study Area

The study was conducted in Dziapi Sub-County, Adjumani District, north-western Uganda. Adjumani borders Amuru District to the south and east, Moyo to the north, and Arua and Yumbe to the west. Dziapi Sub-County is associated with Nyumanzi refugee settlement and includes parishes and villages such as Ajugopi, Arinyapi, Elegu, Liri, Logoangwa, Mgbwere, and Miniki.

Dziapi was selected because it is a refugee-hosting area with substantial land mass, yet some land had not been offered for refugee settlement despite engagement by institutions such as OPM and UNHCR. The study focused on parishes and villages near the settlement rather than areas already incorporated into settlement land, because the aim was to assess willingness among landlords whose land could potentially support expansion.

Study Population and Eligibility Criteria

The quantitative population consisted of landlords in Dziapi Sub-County with land located around or within a 10-kilometre radius of Nyumanzi refugee settlement and who had not previously offered land for refugee settlement and use. Excluding landlords who had already offered land avoided distorting the measure of willingness; such landlords might be unwilling to offer additional land simply because they had already contributed.

The qualitative population included landlords who did not participate in the survey, land chiefs, and officials from the Office of the Prime Minister involved in land negotiations. These participants had direct knowledge of local land governance, negotiation processes, and institutional engagement with landlords.

Landlords were eligible if they possessed or administratively controlled land near the refugee settlement. The study excluded landlords who, even after consenting, showed hesitation in expressing their true intentions or responding to questions from an institutional perspective, given the sensitivity of land, government, refugees, and community relations.

Sample Size and Sampling Procedures

The quantitative sample size was calculated using the Krejcie and Morgan approach for a known population. The target population consisted of 274 landlords in parishes around the settlement. The sample size was computed using the following formula:

$$S = \frac{X^2 NP(1 - P)}{d^2(N - 1) + X^2 P(1 - P)}$$

Where S is the required sample size, X^2 is the chi-square value for 1 degree of freedom at the 95% confidence level, N is the population size, P is the assumed population proportion, and d is the margin of error. Substituting the study values, $X^2 = 3.841$, $N = 274$, $P = 0.5$:

$$S = \frac{3.841(274)(0.5)(0.5)}{0.5^2(274 - 1) + 3.841(0.5)(0.5)}$$

$$S = \frac{263.11}{1.64} = 160.2$$

Thus, the required sample size was approximately 160 landlords.

The researcher obtained landlord lists from the Office of the Prime Minister and local administration, merged them into a sampling frame, and removed landlords who had previously offered land. The remaining landlords were sampled consecutively. Consecutive sampling was used because landlords were a small, geographically dispersed population, and the study required 160 participants from a known population of 274. Once a landlord was identified, eligibility was assessed, location confirmed, and an interview arranged.

Qualitative participants were purposively selected. A total of nine (09) key informants were selected for the study, comprising local community leaders and officials from the Office of the Prime Minister and UNHR implementing partners involved in land negotiation and refugee settlement. They were selected because of their institutional roles and knowledge of customary land governance, land negotiations, and refugee settlement processes. Qualitative sample size was determined by saturation, with interviews continuing until responses became repetitive and no substantially new themes emerged (Saunders et al., 2018).

Data Collection Methods and Instruments

Data were collected through structured interviews, in-depth interviews, and key informant interviews. Structured interviews generated standardised quantitative data on demographic characteristics, willingness to offer land, refugee-community perceptions, landlord intrapersonal characteristics, and institutional factors.

The dependent variable was willingness to offer land for refugee settlement and use, conceptualised

as the near-future intention of a landlord with land near Nyumanzi settlement to offer part or all of it freely for refugee settlement and use. Because settlement land should accommodate a household, willingness was assessed with reference to a threshold of at least 100 by 100 feet.

In-depth interviews with selected landlords explored land-offer dynamics, refugee perceptions, decision-making authority, institutional engagement, and expectations around benefits or compensation. Key informant interviews with officials and actors involved in land lobbying and settlement planning examined institutional approaches to obtaining land, perceived barriers, and predictors of landlord willingness.

Quality Control

The structured questionnaire was assessed for content validity by four experts in refugee housing, land, and property rights. The content validity index was 0.92, indicating sufficient relevance for data collection.

Four research assistants, two women and two men, all fluent in the local dialect of Adjumani District, were trained on the study's purpose, interview procedures, ethics, and questionnaire interpretation. The tool was pretested among 16 landlords around the Bidi Bidi refugee settlement, which was suitable because landlords there also had experience with refugee settlement dynamics. The pretest assessed question clarity, interview length, sampling feasibility, and translation needs; selected items were revised accordingly.

For qualitative data, credibility was strengthened through digital recording, note-taking, and probing. Reflexivity was promoted by bracketing the interviewer's assumptions. Confirmability was supported by recapping participant responses and allowing participants to confirm that their views had been accurately captured.

Data Management and Analysis

Quantitative data were entered into SPSS version 25. Questionnaires were checked for completeness before data entry. Variables were named, labelled, coded, and checked for errors. Descriptive statistics summarised demographic characteristics and willingness to offer land. Bivariate analysis examined unadjusted associations between predictors and willingness. A log-binomial model estimated prevalence ratios. Variables significant at the bivariate level were entered into multivariate analysis to identify independent predictors after adjustment.

Qualitative data consisted of audio recordings and notes from in-depth and key informant interviews. Recordings and notes were compared for completeness and analysed thematically. Themes were developed around perceptions of refugees, authority to offer land, benefit expectations, sensitisation, trust, and fears of future conflict. Qualitative findings were used to interpret and contextualise the quantitative results.

Ethical Considerations

The study followed standard ethical procedures for research involving human participants. Participants were informed about the study purpose, voluntary participation, absence of incentives, and lack of negative consequences for refusal. Consent was obtained before interviews. Confidentiality, privacy, and anonymity were maintained. Full names were not recorded, and qualitative reporting used pseudonyms or anonymised descriptions. Interviews were conducted privately.

RESULTS

Socio-Demographic Characteristics of Landlords

Table 1 presents the findings for the Landlords' willingness to offer land for refugee settlement and use. The study involved 160 landlords. Most respondents were men, older adults, married, formally educated, and long-term residents of Dziapi. The sample composition is important because willingness to offer land may be shaped by gendered land authority, age, social status, and length of residence. In many rural contexts, older married men are more likely to be recognised as landowners or representatives of family or clan land. The high proportion of respondents who had lived in Dziapi for more than five years suggests sustained attachment to the locality.

The dominance of male respondents reflects the gendered character of landholding in many rural Ugandan settings. Although women may use, cultivate, and depend on land, men are often more likely to be recognised as owners or representatives of family land in formal negotiations. This has implications for settlement land acquisition because negotiations that engage only recognised male landlords may overlook other household members whose livelihoods are affected.

Age also matters. Forty percent of respondents were above 50 years old. Older landlords may be cautious because they act as custodians of family property and may be concerned about inheritance, clan expectations, and intergenerational claims. At the same time, they may carry authority to make or influence land decisions. This combination of authority and custodial responsibility helps explain why willingness cannot be interpreted as individual preference alone.

Table 1: Landlords' Willingness to Offer Land for Refugee Settlement and Use

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Female	25	15.6
	Male	133	83.1
	Not recorded	2	1.3
Age	20–30 years	30	18.8
	31–40 years	31	19.4
	41–50 years	35	21.9
	More than 50 years	64	40.0
Marital status	Not currently married	3	1.9
	Currently married	157	98.1
Religious denomination	Born again	39	24.4
	Catholic	121	75.6
Formal education	No	15	9.4
	Yes	145	90.6
Highest education level	Primary lower	57	35.6
	Primary upper	45	28.1
	Secondary O level	38	23.8
	Secondary A level	3	1.9
	Post-secondary	2	1.3
Duration of residence in Dziapi	Less than five years	21	13.1
	More than five years	139	86.9

Note: Percentages are based on the full sample of 160 landlords. The education-level percentages are presented as reported in the original study.

Level of Willingness to Offer Land

Landlords' willingness to offer land for refugee settlement and use was low. Only 48 of the 160

landlords, representing 30%, were willing to offer land; 112 landlords, representing 70%, were not willing.

Table 2: Landlords' Willingness to Offer Land for Refugee Settlement and Use

Outcome	Frequency	Percentage
Willing to offer land	48	30.0
Not willing to offer land	112	70.0
Total	160	100.0

Source: Author's analysis of field survey data collected

Note: cPR = crude prevalence ratio; aPR = adjusted prevalence ratio; CI = confidence interval. A prevalence ratio below 1 indicates a lower prevalence of willingness to offer land relative to the reference category. Statistical significance was assessed at the 5% level. The monetary-benefit variable should be interpreted in line with the original coding of the survey item.

The finding that only three in ten landlords were willing is significant for settlement planning. It suggests that even where land exists physically, it

may remain socially and institutionally inaccessible. Land availability is therefore not only a question of acreage but also of cooperation, legitimacy, and trust.

Qualitative findings reinforced the low level of willingness. Key informants and in-depth interviewees generally estimated willingness to be even lower than the survey estimate, with some placing it below 10%. This difference may reflect the gap between reported willingness under survey conditions and perceived willingness based on

institutional experience. It may also indicate that some landlords express conditional willingness but do not proceed when required to consult family members, clarify terms, or face community scrutiny.

Refugee-Community-Related Predictors

The most important refugee-community predictor was the perception that refugees in Nyumanzi settlement were disrespectful and did not respect elders. In bivariate analysis, willingness to offer land was 71% lower among landlords who strongly agreed that refugees were disrespectful compared with those who disagreed.

This result highlights the relational character of land willingness. Landlords' decisions were shaped not only by land quantity, compensation, or institutional requests but also by how they interpreted refugees' conduct within the host community. In Dziapi, respect for elders and local authority is part of the moral order through which social relations are regulated. Perceived disrespect may therefore signal that refugees are not sufficiently appreciative, socially integrated, or deserving of further generosity. Where landlords feel refugees disregard elders or local norms, the moral basis for voluntary land-sharing is weakened.

Landlord Intrapersonal Predictors

Landlord intrapersonal characteristics were among the strongest predictors of willingness. First, landlords who believed refugees should not be given more land were substantially less willing to offer land. This belief may reflect concerns that refugees have already received sufficient support, that host communities are being neglected, that land is finite, or that further settlement may create future problems.

Second, landlords who reported that they had no power to offer land without secondary or third-party approval were less willing to do so. This shows that willingness is constrained not only by personal attitude but also by perceived authority. A landlord may be a trustee rather than an absolute owner, and offering land may require consultation with relatives, clan leaders, or other stakeholders.

Third, monetary-benefit expectations were associated with willingness. The original study found lower willingness among landlords whose responses reflected that OPM did not have to first offer monetary benefits before a land offer could be made. This counterintuitive finding should be interpreted carefully. It suggests that willingness is not simply purchased through compensation but is also shaped by perceptions of refugees, fairness, authority, and institutional trust.

Institutional Predictors

The most important institutional predictor was sensitisation. Landlords who agreed that the government had not sensitised them about the need and modalities of giving out land were less willing to offer land. Institutional communication is therefore central to willingness.

Sensitisation is not merely information transmission; it is a trust-building and legitimacy-building process. Landlords need clarity on why land is needed, how much is required, who will use it, how long it will be used, whether ownership remains with the landlord or community, what safeguards exist, what benefits may be provided, how disputes will be resolved, and whether land will be returned. Without such information, requests for free land may appear suspicious, risky, or unfair.

Table 3: Predictors of Willingness to Offer Land for Refugee Settlement and Use

Predictor	Model	Prevalence ratio	95% CI	p-value	Interpretation
Strong agreement that refugees are disrespectful and do not respect elders	Bivariate	cPR = 0.290	0.165–0.511	< .001	Willingness was lower among landlords with strongly negative perceptions of refugees.
Belief that refugees should not be given more land	Multivariate	aPR = 0.283	0.179–0.447	< .001	This belief independently reduced the prevalence of willingness to offer land.
No power to offer land without secondary or third-party authority	Multivariate	aPR = 0.400	0.244–0.658	< .001	Limited decision-making authority reduced willingness.
Monetary-benefit condition before land can be offered, as coded in the original model	Multivariate	aPR = 0.419	0.246–0.713	.001	Expectations and views around benefits were associated with lower willingness.
The government had not sensitised landlords about the need and the modalities of giving out land	Multivariate	aPR = 0.244	0.090–0.663	.006	Lack of sensitisation reduced willingness.

Notes: cPR = crude prevalence ratio; aPR = adjusted prevalence ratio; CI = confidence interval. A prevalence ratio below 1 indicates a lower prevalence of willingness to offer land. *Source:* Authors

Table 4: Qualitative Explanation of Quantitative Findings

Theme	Qualitative interpretation	Link to quantitative finding
Perceived disrespect by refugees	Some landlords associated refugee presence with weakened respect for local norms and elders.	Explains why negative perceptions of refugees were associated with lower willingness.
Land as socially governed property	Land decisions were not always made by individual landlords alone; relatives, clans, or other authorities could influence decisions.	Explains why the lack of autonomous authority predicted lower willingness.
Expectations of benefits	Landlords expected clarity on whether land offers would be accompanied by monetary or non-monetary benefits.	Explains the importance of compensation-related variables.
Limited sensitization	Landlords reported uncertainty about why land should be offered, how the process works, and what safeguards exist.	Explains why the perceived lack of sensitisation reduced willingness.
Fear of future conflict	Landlords feared that land allocation could create future disputes over ownership, boundaries, or permanence.	Helps explain the overall low willingness to offer land.

Note: The themes summarise recurring qualitative explanations from in-depth interviews and key informant interviews. They are used to interpret and contextualise the quantitative associations reported in Table 3; they are not additional statistical predictors. The table should therefore be read as an explanatory integration of the mixed-methods findings rather than as a separate quantitative model.

Source: Author's thematic analysis of in-depth interviews and key informant interviews with selected landlords, land chiefs, and officials involved in land negotiations in Dziapi Sub-County, Adjumani District.

Qualitative findings suggested that landlords and local actors also associated unwillingness with non-provision of benefits, insufficient engagement of local leaders, and lack of clarity about terms. These concerns are conceptually linked to sensitisation: benefit provision, leader engagement, and clarity are components of meaningful participatory negotiation. The institutional issue may therefore be broader than whether meetings occurred; it concerns whether engagement was inclusive, detailed, credible, and responsive.

DISCUSSION

This study found low willingness to offer land for refugee settlement and use among landlords in Dziapi Sub-County. Only three in ten landlords reported willingness. This finding is important because Uganda's settlement approach depends not only on national refugee policy and humanitarian planning but also on the cooperation of local landholders. If landlords are unwilling to offer land, settlement expansion, livelihood support, and refugee self-reliance become difficult to implement.

The study's central contribution is that willingness to offer land is produced through the interaction of relational, intrapersonal, and institutional factors. It is not reducible to the physical presence of unused land. Land that appears unused to external observers may be tied to family histories, inheritance, clan authority, livelihood security, or fears of permanent loss. This helps explain why some land remains outside refugee settlement use despite institutional demand.

These findings are consistent with previous studies showing that land access in refugee-hosting areas is not only a technical issue of land availability but also a matter of social legitimacy, institutional trust, and perceived fairness. Earlier work in Uganda has

linked refugee settlement to land conflict, environmental pressure, livelihood competition, and strained refugee–host relations (Dawa, 2018; Danish Refugee Council, 2018; Herbert & Idris, 2018; Idris, 2020; International Refugee Rights Initiative, 2019). The present study supports these reports by showing that landlords' willingness to offer land is lower where refugees are perceived as disrespectful, where landlords believe refugees have already received enough land, and where institutional engagement is viewed as inadequate.

However, this study also differs from much of the previous work by shifting attention from general refugee–host tensions to the specific decision-making position of landlords. Previous reports often emphasise land scarcity, environmental degradation, and competition for services as sources of conflict. In contrast, the present findings show that unwillingness to offer land may persist even where land exists physically, because land is embedded in customary authority, family claims, inheritance expectations, livelihood concerns, and fears of future disputes. This discrepancy suggests that land scarcity alone does not fully explain resistance to refugee settlement land allocation. Rather, land may be physically available but socially, culturally, or institutionally unavailable.

The finding on perceived refugee disrespect extends previous work on refugee–host relations. Studies such as Dempster and Hargrave (2017), International Refugee Rights Initiative (2019), and Idris (2020) emphasise that host-community attitudes are shaped by perceptions of fairness, recognition, and social behaviour. The present study confirms this pattern but adds that, in Dziapi, respect for elders and local authority is especially important because it affects whether landlords consider refugees deserving of further land support. Land offers are therefore not merely legal or administrative transactions; they are social acts that require goodwill. This helps explain why material incentives or general humanitarian appeals may be

insufficient where unwillingness is rooted in strained social relations.

The finding that landlords who believed refugees should not receive more land were less willing to offer land also aligns with previous reports on perceived inequality between refugees and host communities. In refugee-hosting settings, hosts may observe refugees receiving food assistance, shelter materials, services, and humanitarian attention while local poverty remains visible. Even when humanitarian agencies include hosts in programming, perceived inequality may persist and feed resistance to further land allocation. This finding, therefore, supports earlier work showing that refugee–host tensions are often shaped not only by actual resource scarcity but also by perceived distributive injustice.

The findings on decision-making authority clarify an important gap in previous reports. While earlier studies on land conflict in Uganda highlight unclear boundaries and contested tenure arrangements, they often do not show how such arrangements influence individual willingness to offer land. This study demonstrates that some landlords may not be unwilling in a simple attitudinal sense; rather, they may be socially constrained by family, clan, or third-party authority. In customary and family-based land systems, a person may be publicly recognised as a landlord while land remains subject to collective claims. Refugee land negotiations that treat landlords as individual owners may therefore overlook the collective nature of customary land governance.

The result concerning monetary benefits also requires careful interpretation. Some previous reports imply that host-community resistance may be reduced through compensation, shared services, or livelihood support. The present study partly supports this view because benefit expectations were associated with willingness. However, the findings also suggest that compensation alone may not resolve the problem. Where mistrust is high, refugee conduct is negatively perceived, or

authority over land is collective, monetary benefits may generate new disputes over entitlement and distribution. This explains a possible discrepancy between studies that emphasise compensation and the present findings, which show that compensation must be accompanied by trust-building, clear agreements, participatory sensitisation, and recognition of customary authority.

The finding on sensitisation strongly supports previous work emphasising communication, participation, and institutional trust in refugee-hosting settings. Reports by the International Refugee Rights Initiative (2019) and Idris (2020) note that insufficient consultation and unclear land-use arrangements contribute to host-community grievances. The present study confirms this but provides more specific evidence: landlords who reported inadequate government sensitisation were less willing to offer land. Sensitisation should therefore not be limited to broad information meetings. It should clarify the need for land, the size required, duration of use, legal status, safeguards, benefits, dispute-resolution mechanisms, and the role of customary leaders. This is consistent with the wider literature on community engagement, which emphasises that public cooperation depends on credible information, participation, and trust-building (Gilmore et al., 2020; Kaleli et al., 2021).

Overall, the study demonstrates that land access for refugee settlement is a governance problem involving state policy, humanitarian planning, customary authority, interpersonal relations, trust, fairness, and future security. A narrow focus on land supply will not resolve it. What is needed is a negotiated settlement model that recognises landlords as rights-bearing, interest-bearing, and socially embedded actors.

Policy and Practice Implications

The findings have several implications for government, humanitarian agencies, local authorities, and refugee-hosting communities. First, land acquisition should be preceded by stakeholder

mapping. OPM, UNHCR, local governments, and settlement authorities should identify not only individual landlords but also the family, clan, and customary structures that influence land decisions. Where land is collectively governed, negotiations should involve legitimate representatives to reduce incomplete consent and strengthen legitimacy.

Second, sensitisation should be redesigned as participatory dialogue rather than one-way information delivery. Landlords should receive clear information on the need for land, size required, duration of use, legal status, safeguards, dispute-resolution mechanisms, and possible benefits. Sensitisation should be repeated, delivered in accessible language, and include opportunities for landlords to ask questions and negotiate conditions.

Third, institutions should address perceived unfairness between refugees and host communities. If landlords believe refugees receive more assistance than hosts, resistance is likely to persist. Humanitarian and development actors should strengthen host-community programming and communicate how host communities benefit from refugee-hosting arrangements. Investments in shared services, roads, water systems, schools, health facilities, and markets can reduce perceptions that refugee assistance excludes hosts.

Fourth, refugee–host relations should be strengthened through dialogue, conflict prevention, and social accountability mechanisms. Since perceived refugee disrespect was associated with lower willingness, settlement authorities and refugee leaders should work with host-community leaders to promote mutual respect and address complaints before they escalate.

Fifth, compensation, benefit arrangements, and written agreements should be transparent. Agreements should specify who receives benefits, whether benefits are individual or communal, and whether land use is temporary, leased, donated, or subject to another arrangement. They should also clarify boundaries, duration, rights retained by

landlords, rights granted to refugees, conditions for return or renegotiation, and dispute-resolution pathways. Documentation should complement, not replace, customary legitimacy.

Finally, refugee livelihood planning should be embedded within host-community land governance. Agricultural self-reliance programmes cannot assume land access without first establishing whether access is locally legitimate, socially accepted, and institutionally secure.

CONCLUSION

This study examined predictors of landlords' willingness to offer land for refugee settlement and use in Dziapi Sub-County, Adjumani District, Uganda. Willingness was low: only 30% of landlords were willing to offer land. This shows that refugee land access cannot be understood solely in terms of physical land availability or national refugee policy. Land becomes available through negotiated social, institutional, and governance processes involving landlords, customary authorities, host communities, refugees, and state actors.

The study demonstrates that willingness is shaped by refugee-community perceptions, landlord beliefs and authority, benefit expectations, and institutional communication. Landlords were less willing to offer land when they perceived refugees as disrespectful, believed refugees should not receive more land, lacked authority to make land decisions without secondary or third-party approval, associated land offers with monetary-benefit expectations, or reported inadequate government sensitization. Refugee settlement land is therefore not simply an administrative resource to be identified and allocated; it is a socially embedded asset tied to authority, inheritance, fairness, trust, and future security.

The study has limitations. It was conducted in one sub-county and focused on landlords around Nyumanzi refugee settlement, limiting statistical generalizability to other refugee-hosting areas. It

measured willingness rather than actual land-offering behaviour, although intention may not always translate into action where family opposition, clan authority, unclear compensation, or changing institutional terms intervene. Willingness is also sensitive, and some landlords may have provided socially desirable responses. Finally, the cross-sectional design identifies associations but cannot conclusively establish causal direction.

Further research should compare refugee-hosting districts with different tenure systems, settlement histories, and refugee populations. Longitudinal studies should examine whether reported willingness translates into actual land offers and how negotiations evolve over time. Future studies should also examine intra-household and clan-level decision-making, especially because individual landlords may not have unilateral authority over land. Research incorporating women, youth, refugees, customary leaders, and local government officials would provide a fuller account of how land decisions are made and contested. Finally, future work should assess which sensitisation, compensation, documentation, and conflict-resolution models improve the legitimacy and sustainability of refugee land access.

Overall, improving access to land for refugee settlement requires more than identifying available acreage. It requires attention to the social relations, customary governance arrangements, perceptions of fairness, and institutional trust through which land becomes legitimately available. A relational and governance-oriented approach is essential if refugee settlement planning is to support self-reliance, reduce host-community grievances, and promote sustainable local integration.

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