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Invisible Households

A Gendered Analysis of Single Male-Headed Households in Kyaka II Refugee Settlement in Uganda

Keri Leigh Baughman

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Keri Baughman completed a BA in International Relations and Diplomacy (2009-2013) at The Ohio State University in Columbus, Ohio, USA, graduating Magna Cum Laude, followed by an MA in Development Studies (2014-2016) from the Graduate Institute in Geneva, Switzerland. During her MA she focused on human and social development from an anthropological and sociological perspective, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa. She writes a blog about single fathers in Kyaka II Refugee Settlement in Uganda where research for this thesis was undertaken. It is available at www.singlefathersofkyaka.wordpress.com. Keri is currently based in Bangui, Central African Republic where she is working with an international humanitarian NGO.

ABSTRACT

Single male-headed households (SMHH) have been largely understudied. Within refugee contexts, SMHH are generally overlooked to the point that they are rendered invisible. Based on four weeks of qualitative field research in Kyaka II Refugee Settlement in Kyegegwa District, Uganda as well as an extensive literature review, this dissertation explores the challenges and coping strategies of 27 single fathers (26 Congolese and one Rwandan) living in the refugee settlement. The research methodology included semi-structured interviews with the single fathers, several key informant interviews, extensive observation, and participative photography. Through an interdisciplinary lens, mainly a gender-framework drawing on theories of hegemonic masculinity, several challenges are analyzed including “women’s work”; challenges in raising children, especially adolescent daughters; time poverty; health issues; and poverty. Empirical research findings indicate that local masculinity norms translate into gender-specific challenges for single fathers thus contesting previous research that homogenizes the experiences of all single parents.

Keywords: single fathers; refugees; masculinity; Uganda; challenges

PREFACE

In the summer of 2015 Keri Leigh Baughman was interning with the Sexual and Gender-based Violence (SGBV) unit of Africa Humanitarian Action in Kyaka II Refugee Settlement in Uganda. On a daily basis she went into the settlement to sensitize the community on SGBV issues and in doing so Keri's broader interests were triggered. Very soon her attention was drawn to problems encountered by new female-headed households who came to seek help because they had no immediate source of income once their husbands had left them. The project was indeed giving support to women who had to look after their children and had no immediate source of income.

While she went along talking to refugees in the settlement coincidentally she overheard a story told by a single father and his complaints about the lack of support he encountered. This serendipitous moment was the onset of the idea to study the challenges that single male-headed households face in Kyaka II. An initial literature review made her aware that the topic had been addressed in studies on the USA and Canada, but hardly in refugee camps. However, in the studies on single male-headed households they were rarely differentiated from the broader category of male-headed households, and contrary to female-headed households they were not framed as suffering from economic hardship. So, how could Keri make sense of the complaints uttered by the single father she met?

During an extremely well prepared field research in early 2016, Keri and her research assistant were able to interview 27 single fathers in Kyaka II Refugee Settlement. The main objective was to understand the many challenges these single fathers face and how they cope with the multiple tasks of earning an income, educating their children and completing household chores (cleaning, washing, cooking, caring. etc.) on a daily basis. The very interesting outcome of her research is that challenges faced by single parents cannot be homogenized and that the specific difficulties that single fathers encounter need to be taken up in policy debates, especially in the context of refugee settlements.

This study is among the rare jewels that gives you an "*ah ha Erlebnis*" once you have read it. This is a feeling of "how could we not have thought of it, it is so evident". Indeed, single female-headed households suffer economic deprivation because of the absence of a male bread-winner, but single male-headed households not only experience the lack of support in the reproductive sphere – which leads to an extra workload, time poverty and emotional solitude –, but also face the mockeries of transgressing the norms of hegemonic masculinity. The strength of a gender analysis is that it helps to unravel the workings of social hierarchizations between men and women at institutional, symbolic and individual levels.

Dr. Fenneke Reysoo (February 2017)

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This dissertation could not have been completed without the participation of the single fathers, their children, the refugee community workers, government officials, and humanitarian staff members in Kyaka II Refugee Settlement who generously set aside time to be interviewed. Their willingness to share their experiences and knowledge with me was integral to this project's completion. Thank you for your time, patience, and kindness.

I would like to thank the Government of Uganda's Office of the Prime Minister, specifically Mr. Charles Bafaki, for giving me permission to conduct my research in Uganda. I would also like to thank the staff members of Africa Humanitarian Action's Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV) Unit in Kyaka II Refugee Settlement, who always welcomed me into their offices and homes. A special thank you to Robinah Eyotaru, SGBV Officer, for your support and friendship throughout my time in Uganda. In addition, I owe my extreme gratitude to Raymond Kituku, my translator, who has been my friend since day one in Kyaka II. This research could not have been completed without your dedication and support, which always surpassed my expectations.

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PART I: INTRODUCTION, RESEARCH METHODOLOGY, LITERATURE REVIEW, AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION TO THE RESEARCH

Single male-headed households (SMHH) have been largely understudied and generally ignored by humanitarian and development organizations as well as policy-makers. Within refugee settings, single fathers are overlooked to the point that they are rendered invisible. This dissertation aims to explore, from a gender-perspective, the challenges and coping strategies of single fathers in Kyaka II Refugee Settlement in Uganda. This section will give a brief overview of the context in which this research was undertaken. First, brief background information on the conflict in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC; also referred to as “Congo”, not to be confused with the Republic of Congo) will be given as the majority of single fathers who took part in this study originate from Eastern DRC. Then, general information about Uganda and refugees in Uganda is outlined, followed by a description of Kyaka II Refugee Settlement. Finally, an organizational overview of the rest of this dissertation is given.

1.1. Background information on conflict in DRC and Congolese refugees

In the DRC, conflict has been recurring since independence in 1960. The Second Congo War, often described as “Africa’s World War”, began in 1998. At one point, nine countries and as many as 25 different armed groups were directly involved resulting in the deadliest conflict since World War II. A fragile peace treaty was signed in 2003 officially ending the war, but armed conflict has continued resulting in millions of refugees and internally displaced people (Kreibaum 2014). The DRC is often described as a “failed state” due to the destabilization, corruption, and lack of social services that characterize the country (Lwambo 2013). Despite this backdrop, conflict is only one aspect of life among the Congolese: the single fathers in this study were all forcibly displaced due to conflict, however, their discourses centered on issues of parenting, childcare, and poverty rarely citing conflict in direct relation to their current challenges.

Congolese refugees are considered to be in a protracted situation, as defined when “25,000 or more refugees from the same nationality have been in exile for five years or more in a given asylum country” (UNHCR 2015c, 11), according to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). The refugees are scattered throughout the great lakes region and beyond. In total numbers, Congolese represent the sixth largest refugee population in the world. Uganda has a long history of hosting refugees, including Congolese, who make up 65 % of total registered refugees in the country. UNHCR notes that among Congolese refugees, there are high numbers of “single parents/single mothers, persons with

medical needs, including various trauma and SGBV survivors, and unaccompanied or separated children.” (UNHCR 2015c, 2). This dissertation explores the challenges and coping strategies of single fathers specifically.

Despite efforts by the UNHCR at repatriating Congolese refugees to the DRC, continuous armed conflict and ethnic tensions result in increasing numbers of new (and those who are displaced for a second or third time) refugees: almost 49,000 Congolese refugees registered in Uganda, Rwanda, Burundi, and Tanzania alone in 2013 (UNHCR 2015c, 3).

1.2. Uganda, refugees, and Kyaka II Refugee Settlement

Throughout Africa, the right to seek asylum is generally respected and more than three million refugees are benefitting from protection in a country outside of their origin (UNHCR 2015a). Among the refugee-hosting countries is Uganda, a tropical, landlocked country of approximately 36 million inhabitants located east of the DRC. Conditions in Uganda are generally poor as more than 85 % of the Ugandan population relies on agriculture as their main income-generating activity. Poverty is widespread with almost one in four Ugandans living below the poverty line (The World Factbook 2014). Per-capita yearly income is equivalent to USD 490. At birth, life expectancy is around 54.5 years, one of the lowest in the world. Uganda scored low at 0.48 on the Human Development Index in 2015 ranking 163rd out of 188 countries (United Nations 2013).

Despite poor living conditions, Uganda is generally praised for its long history of hosting refugees. In 2015, there were more than 482,000 people of concern to UNHCR living in Uganda. Among these, 204,041 were refugees from the DRC (UNHCR 2015c, 1). Uganda is a party to the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees as well as the 1967 Protocol, however, local integration of refugees into Ugandan society is not seen as a viable option by UNHCR. Instead, UNHCR advocates for resettlement to a third country for long-term Congolese refugees. A “multi-year plan of action” that includes resettling at least 15,000 Congolese refugees from Uganda between 2012 and 2016 is in place (UNHCR 2015c, 3). Indeed, during my time in Kyaka II, several Congolese refugees told me that they were waiting for “lists to be posted” by UNHCR specifying which families are to be resettled to various countries in the near future.

In Uganda, refugee “settlements”, in contrast to “camps” are the norm. Constituting a type of camp, refugee settlements do not feature tents and instead have houses built from natural materials, namely sticks and mud. The settlement structure was adopted when it became clear that an immediate solution would not be reached and longer-term development initiatives were sought: “In the context of linking refugee protection with development assistance, refugee settlements provide more livable conditions for refugees and decrease

the likelihood for conflicts among national communities living close to the settlement.” (Krause 2014, 34).

Within Uganda, the vast majority (88 %) of Congolese refugees live in settlements, while the rest live in urban settings (UNHCR 2015c, 2). There are several refugee settlements located throughout Uganda, mainly in the North, West, and South. Among them is Kyaka II Refugee Settlement located on 81.5 km² of land in Kyegegwa District in rural, southwest Uganda. The settlement was established in 1984 in order to accommodate Rwandan Tutsi refugees, but the population is now mainly Congolese. The settlement is open (i.e., no fence or boundary) and refugees and members of the host population often interact and sell goods to each other in local markets. The services provided, such as the health center and schools, are open to both refugees and the host population (UNHCR Uganda 2014).

As of July 2015 there were 25,233 refugees and 833 asylum seekers living in the settlement. The vast majority of these are Congolese at 21,947, followed by 1,664 Rwandese, and 727 Burundians. Ethiopians, Malawians, Kenyans, Somalis, Sudanese, and Congo-Brazzaville make up the rest of the population (Office of the Prime Minister, personal communication, July, 2015). The government of Uganda's Office of the Prime Minister (OPM) oversees all activities within the refugee settlement along with the main implementing partner, UNHCR. Several other implementing partners are active in Kyaka II including Danish Refugee Council, Windle Trust Uganda, and Africa Humanitarian Action. Samaritans Purse (on behalf of World Food Program), Finnish Refugee Council, and Uganda Red Cross are also active operating partners (UNHCR Uganda 2014).

Kyaka II is divided into nine zones (Sweswe, Buliti, Bukere, Mukondo, Itambabaniga, Kakoni, Bwiriza, Byabakora, and Kaboragota) and subsequently into 26 villages. Like most of rural Uganda, only very small areas of the settlement have access to resources such as electricity, which is sporadic. The settlement is dusty due to unpaved roads often leading to respiratory illnesses. During the rainy season, the roads flood and some routes are blocked for weeks at a time. Staff members travel in large vehicles, but they are still limited in their movement throughout the settlement. During my field research, we were unable to visit Bwiriza zone to meet with single fathers for two weeks because the road was flooded and impassable, although we eventually managed to cross.

According to Fred Kiwanuka, the settlement commandant of Kyaka II and a Ugandan OPM employee, Kyaka II is different from other settlements in Uganda for a number of reasons. First, the population is different in that the majority of refugees originate from DRC. Second, Kyaka II is located far from national borders meaning it is more difficult for people to “cross the border and disorganize here” (e.g., rebel groups recruiting). For that reason, individuals with complicated cases, particularly political cases, who are in need of advanced

protection are sent to Kyaka II. Lastly, there is relative peace between the refugees and host communities; conflict over land and livestock is uncommon in Kyaka II (Fred Kiwanuka, personal communication, February 2, 2016).

The long-term history and ongoing conflict in DRC indicate that the number of Congolese refugees will continue to rise in the near future and Uganda will most likely continue to be a main hosting-country. As UNHCR noted, single parents (not only single mothers) are common among Congolese refugees. Therefore, it will serve humanitarian and development purposes to explore the challenges and coping strategies of single parents, including single fathers, so that assistance and aid can be effective.

1.3. Organizational overview

This dissertation is organized into two parts. Part I includes Chapter 2, which presents the research methodology; personal background of the author; interest in carrying out the research; the role of the translator; ethical considerations; and strengths and weaknesses of the research. Chapter 3 provides a review of relevant literature and outlines the theoretical framework that is used to analyze the empirical findings.

Part II highlights the empirical research findings and includes five thematic chapters. Each chapter addresses one of the challenges and subsequent coping strategies discussed by the single fathers. Chapter 4 presents general information about the research participants and discusses the challenge of “women’s work”. Chapter 5 discusses challenges relating to raising children, particularly adolescent daughters. Chapter 6 deals with challenges of time poverty and health. Chapter 7 discusses challenges related to poverty and debt, while Chapter 8 addresses challenges relating to feeling alone or isolated and issues of sexuality. Finally, Chapter 9 takes the analysis to the level of humanitarian organizations and policy in order to discuss why SMHH are not considered as an “interest group” within humanitarian and development discourses. A final conclusion and suggestions for future research concludes the dissertation.

CHAPTER 2: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This chapter gives details on my personal background and interest in this research as well as some self-reflections drawn from my field notes. It also outlines the methodological approach used, ethical considerations, and the main strengths and weaknesses of the research.

2.1. Personal background and interest

My connection to Kyaka II began in January 2015 when I was interning with an organization in Fort Portal, Uganda and made several trips to Kyegegwa District. I was looking for further internship opportunities and was specifically interested in interning in a refugee settlement. Therefore, I went to Kyaka II on two separate occasions and met with several humanitarian workers from different organizations in the settlement. In addition, I became friends with a Congolese refugee, Raymond Kituku (who later acted as translator during my field work), who helped me negotiate my entrance into the settlement on my first day; I did not have the correct paperwork. After these initial trips to the settlement, I applied to be an intern with African Humanitarian Action (AHA), an African NGO working in Kyaka II. I was accepted and returned to the settlement in July-August 2015 as an intern in their Sexual and Gender-based Violence (SGBV) unit.¹

During my time interning in the settlement, men approached me on several occasions to explain how they felt excluded from the NGO's services with whom I was interning; we almost exclusively targeted women. One incident in particular occurred during this time that drew my attention to men in the settlement. In the afternoon of July 29, 2015 when I was walking in the refugee settlement with an AHA representative, I saw a man sitting along the path further ahead of us. When the man saw us walking he immediately stood up and approached me. His demeanor was aggressive, but not threatening; it became obvious that he was drunk. He began speaking very quickly to me in French and a crowd started to gather. I began to understand what he was saying: "wives are also mistreating the husbands... sometimes they take all the money and refuse to share with their husband... I am suffering too." (personal encounter, July 29, 2015). At the time this incident seemed trivial, although I noted it in my field notes when we sat down.

Intrigued by this man's outburst, shortly after I looked into the statistics in AHA's office and found that approximately 20 % of incidents (mostly SGBV-related, but also including some non-SGBV issues) reported to AHA in the first seven months of 2015 were reported by men.² After examining statistics from the previous two years, I found that also in 2014

¹ AHA has been working in Uganda since 1995. The organization runs a health clinic and is charged with preventing and responding to SGBV in the settlement (Africa Humanitarian Action n.d.).

² I was granted access to official statistics only during my internship in July-August 2015. The AHA office received reports of rape, physical assault, sexual assault, forced marriage, psychological/emotional abuse, and denial of resources which is treated as a non-gender based violence incident, however, it is nonetheless included in overall

approximately 20 % of incidents reported to AHA were reported by men, and in 2013 it was higher at approximately 32 % of incidents (AHA, personal communication, August 2015).³ This number is not surprisingly high, as men are known to be victim to SGBV incidents much more than typically acknowledged (see for example Baaz and Stern 2013), however, I was disappointed that more was not being done by AHA and other organizations present to prevent and mitigate SGBV (and other inflictions) against men.

Soon after I became acquainted with Baraka Donat, a single father in the settlement with three children. His wife had been killed in Congo and he was in need of a full knee replacement leaving him unable to farm – the main income-generating activity in Kyaka II. As he explained his situation I became aware that there were very limited resources available that could assist him. At this time there were several ongoing projects and activities in Kyaka II that specifically targeted women and girls including women's associations, adolescent girls' programs, and livelihoods support and training. For example, during my internship a four-day skills training event was organized for approximately 100 women and included sessions on how to start or improve small businesses as well as marketing skills and sessions on how to make handcrafts. The participants were mainly women: I only saw one man sitting in the back taking notes. While AHA is providing life-saving support to many women in the settlement, I was taken aback by how men were generally excluded.

Following the completion of this internship, I began to reflect on my experiences and the service provision by humanitarian organizations in this settlement. Indeed, much attention is focused on women, including specifically targeting female-headed households, women SGBV survivors, single mothers, and adolescent girls. Single fathers, and all men and boys in general, are generally overlooked by the organizations working in the settlement. There is no project or program that targets single fathers specifically; they are practically invisible. Compacted together, these incidents greatly influenced my research topic.

2.2. Methodological approach, research questions, and sampling

Upon returning to Geneva, I conducted an extensive literature review in order to specify the research gaps surrounding single fathers and their experiences in refugee camps/settlements and designate the two research questions. Following the literature review, the two research questions were designated as: *What challenges do single fathers face? What strategies do they employ to cope with these challenges?* A semi-structured interview

statistics. Men reported 24 cases of physical assault, psychological/emotional abuse, and denial of resources between January and July 2015.

³ These are the statistics from AHA only – not including SGBV incidents reported to Danish Refugee Council. However, the statistics for 2015 includes reports from both offices combined.

guide was created to explore these two questions while allowing engagement with previous research.⁴

Fieldwork was carried out between January and February 2016 for a total of four weeks. A qualitative approach was utilized that combined 27 semi-structured interviews with single fathers, five key informant interviews (UNHCR employee, OPM employee, AHA SGBV employee, AHA SGBV community worker, and Samaritan's Purse employee), plus informal conversations with the children of single fathers (two girls and three boys). Of the 27 semi-structured interviews, 26 were with Congolese (DRC) fathers and one Rwandan. During the duration of the four weeks I resided within the refugee settlement resulting in extensive observation. Lastly, five of the single fathers were invited to participate directly in the data collection process by photographing chosen aspects of their lives over a period of 48 to 72 hours, without any oversight by the researcher. The only directions given were on how to operate the camera and the suggestion to take photographs that would help me understand the lives of single fathers in Kyaka II. 27 photos in total were taken and several of them are included throughout this report.

The interviews were semi-structured in order to allow flexibility during the interview. All interviews were carried out in the language of choice by the interviewee; most were conducted in Kiswahili, but also Kihema, Kitoro, and Kigegere were used sporadically. The interviews lasted between 65 and 120 minutes for an average of 85 minutes. The majority of interviews took place either inside or in front of the interviewee's home, while the rest were completed in the local community worker's home or in their respective village center. In these cases, an effort was made to visit the interviewee's home, usually directly following the interview, so as to get a sense of his living environment. Notes were taken during each interview and following each interview both myself and Raymond (the translator) wrote self-reflections regarding the interview resulting in over 100 pages of notes and observations.

2.2.1. Role of the translator

Due to my previous involvement with a humanitarian organization in the refugee settlement, arranging a translator was relatively simple. As stated previously, I had met Raymond in January 2015 during a day trip to Kyaka II and he had also been employed as a staff member at AHA during my internship. Raymond is a 27-year-old refugee from Beni, North Kivu, DRC and has spent several years in Kyaka II. He previously worked as a translator for the United Nations in Eastern DRC and Sudan. He lives in Bukere zone in Kyaka II near several of his family members. I spent time with him, his family, and friends during my internship in July and August 2015 as well as during my field research in January and

⁴ The interview guide is included in the Appendix.

February 2016. His knowledge of local languages – he speaks five languages fluently - and background made him an ideal translator.

Raymond's involvement in my research surpassed translating to include written self-reflections following each interview and long, detailed discussions about the research process and my understanding of life in Kyaka II. He accompanied me to every interview, often driving me on a motorbike, and once even carried me on his back across flooded paths to make it to a scheduled interview! Despite my fluency in French and mediocre knowledge of Kiswahili, I relied on Raymond to translate every interview, except with key informants who spoke English. His knowledge of the appropriate semantics in each situation was a huge advantage. One of the research purposes was to uncover the challenges that the single fathers are facing, however, translating the word “challenge” into Kiswahili was not straightforward. The Kiswahili that is spoken by the majority of refugees in Kyaka II differs greatly from Tanzanian Kiswahili. Therefore, Raymond's understanding of languages spoken in Congo was crucial. During the interviews he utilized several forms of the word “challenge”. I made the following notes about Swahili terminology in my field journal:

1. Changamoto – translates to “challenge” in English – but very few of the interviewees understand this word because they don't speak Tanzanian Kiswahili
2. Shida – translates to “problem” in English – he has to use this word because they do not usually understand “changamoto”
3. Tatizo – translates roughly to “trouble that you are seeing”
4. Mateso – translates to “trouble” or “suffering”.

During the interviews Raymond would negotiate semantics to ensure that the interviewee understood correctly. Following each interview both he and I made written reflections of the interview including our thoughts, speculations, and conclusions. These self-reflections make up a large part of my data. Raymond's insights and contribution to my research were significant and greatly enhanced my data collection.

2.2.2. Sample

Two months before my field research, I began communicating with Raymond to identify the single fathers and possible interviewees in the settlement. Therefore, a purposive sampling was used. As stated, 26 out of 27 interviewees were of Congolese nationality, while one was Rwandan. However, my research findings indicate that there were no noticeable differences when it came to the challenges and coping strategies among the single fathers. For the sake of simplicity, the single fathers interviewed are sometimes referred to as “Congolese” throughout this report simply because the vast majority are Congolese.

Specifying the number of single fathers in Kyaka II is nearly impossible as no statistics on household composition are easily available. During my field research, a UNHCR staff member explained that the OPM recently took over the task of keeping statistics on the number of refugees and asylum seekers as well as household compositions. I followed up several times with OPM employees in Kyaka II, but I was unable to locate the number of SMHH. The lack of information available on the number of SMHH hints at their invisibility. Therefore, for my research I relied on the AHA SGBV community workers, who are refugee volunteers that live in each of the nine zones of the settlement. They agreed to locate the single fathers within their specific zone or village for a small stipend, which I sent via wire transfer. They communicated their findings to Raymond. Therefore, upon my arrival in the settlement, the research interviewees were already identified and we set up appointments with each father 24 to 48 hours in advance by either telephoning the community worker or stopping by the man's home and asking his availability. This method worked quite smoothly. Only on two occasions did Raymond and I make a trip to a man's home to find that he was not there during our scheduled appointment. However, this gave me the opportunity to complete informal interviews with their children who were at the house. Following each interview I gave the interviewee (not including the children or key informant interviewees) 10,000 Ugandan Shillings⁵ to account for his time.

2.3. Ethical considerations

The research topic involved personal and often extremely sensitive material. I asked my interviewees to recollect memories of their lives in Congo, often necessitating stories of torture and/or abuses that led to their fleeing their homeland. They elaborated on their challenges in living in a refugee settlement and explained how they cope with these challenges. Many of the men's wives were murdered, died of an illness, or abandoned them. Recounting these narratives rendered many of the fathers visibly emotional. For ethical reasons, all interviewees were explained the purpose and nature of the research before beginning the interview and asked to give their verbal consent for participation. They were ensured of their right to stop the interview at any time and the option to not respond to any specific question. In addition, in order to ensure their privacy, each interviewee was given the option to remain anonymous or identified using a pseudonym, however, every single man insisted to be identified by his real name in this dissertation. The principle of "do no harm" was respected throughout the data collection process.

⁵ The exchange rate fluctuates often, but as of June 10, 2016 was equal to USD 2.99 according to Yahoo Finance. The men reported huge variations in income, however, several men said that if they work in another person's garden for a day they could make around 5,000 UGX meaning my payment of 10,000 UGX was relatively generous. In addition, to the best of our knowledge, no interviewee skipped a day of work in order to meet with us.

2.4. Strengths and weaknesses

One strength of the research stemmed from my previous involvement in the settlement which gave me an initial understanding of the way the settlement operates, its history, and insights into the social and gender relations. This connection also allowed me to organize from afar and keep in contact with my translator and research participants after completing my fieldwork, generally via WhatsApp. A second strength is the qualitative approach utilized which afforded flexibility during data collection. The interview questions were adapted during each interview according to the ongoing discussion allowing the interviewee to make connections and discuss issues openly; the interviewee had an important amount of control during the interview. For example, when discussing one man's perceived sense of security in his home, he began to recount his fear in letting his young teenage daughter leave the house past dark. He feared for her safety in the town center, and specifically that boys would "tempt" her to do things he would prefer she not do. If I had rigidly stuck to my interview question which related to his sense of security at home, I would have missed the information regarding his worries about his daughter in town. Therefore, I allowed the interviewee to discuss topics that did not always seem directly related to my question. Only after several minutes would Raymond bring him back to the topic if the discussion had veered into completely unrelated territory. My findings are broader than originally anticipated and arguably richer and more comprehensive due to this flexibility.

There are also weaknesses and limitations to the research. A purposive sampling method was used that gave complete control to the AHA community workers: it was not random. In addition, 26 of the 27 interviewees were of Congolese nationality meaning the other nationalities in the settlement were not included, with the exception of one Rwandan single father. Also, my contact with each interviewee was rather brief. I met each man, with the exception of one (Baraka Donat whom I met in January 2015), for the first time on the day of the interview and spent between one and three hours with him. This was clearly not enough time to understand the nuances of their lives.

CHAPTER 3: LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This chapter provides a review of relevant literature and outlines the theoretical framework used to analyze the research findings. The literature presented here comes from several disciplines including sociology, anthropology, and economics and includes both qualitative and quantitative studies. In order to understand the challenges and coping strategies of the single fathers, an interdisciplinary theoretical lens is necessary that draws from gender and masculinities theories, economic measures of poverty, as well as time poverty and childcare issues.

3.1. Literature sources and organization

The research studies presented here were mainly found by searching on JSTOR and Sage digital libraries of academic sources with combinations of the keywords “single male-headed households”, “male-headed households”, “single fathers”, “single parents”, “refugee settlement”, and “refugee camp”. In addition, certain books were consulted, especially in researching gender and masculinities theories. Descriptive studies undertaken by international organizations and available on their websites, namely from UNHCR, the International Labor Organization (ILO), and the International Rescue Committee (IRC) were examined and relevant ones are referenced in the text. Lastly, Ugandan blogs and websites that have written about single fathers in the country are included. The literature was summarized, for the most part, on how the authors presented their findings, although the focus is on what was relevant to my own research. Methodology, data sources, and key findings are the main components of each literature review. Where findings resonate or differentiate from my empirical findings, it is noted in the text. The studies are organized chronologically and into different sections: gender and masculinities theories; humanitarian service provision and gender-equality initiatives; economic conditions; time poverty and childcare; time poverty in refugee contexts; and lastly, studies from international organizations, advocacy groups, and Ugandan blogs.

3.1.1. Theoretical and conceptual flaws

Within the literature presented in this review there are several theoretical and conceptual flaws that have severe consequences for policy making, humanitarian initiatives, and future research. First, the conceptualization of the household is generally one of a two-parent, heterosexual model thus excluding single parents, or providing a norm to which single-parent households are futilely compared.

Second, there are numerous ways in defining “household head” among single-parent households, although these conceptualizations are absent in literature regarding SMHH. Research among FHH generally differentiates between *de jure* FHH, which include widowed,

divorced, and separated women, and *de facto* FHH which includes women who head households due to the fact that their husband is disabled, unemployed, or has migrated elsewhere for work and these women may or may not be receiving remittances. These are the most common differentiations made among FHH, but it should be noted that this ignores the reality that many women simply choose to head their household; they are not passive victims (Datta and McIlwaine 2000). Of particular interest here, theories of the process through which single men become heads-of-households are noticeably lacking.

Third, very few research studies, regardless of the discipline, differentiate between male couple-headed households and single male-headed households; all male-headed households (MHH) are typically categorized together. This homogenization may be as a result of the shortcoming in conceptualizing “household” and “household head” in research undertaken among SMHH. Grouping all MHH together inevitably conceals SMHH and has therefore resulted in limited attention towards these households.

Fourth, among single-parent households, vulnerabilities are constructed around the absence of income (productive tasks) which is more often undertaken by men, and not around care-related work (reproductive tasks) which is more often undertaken by women. This bias contributes to the idea that FHH are automatically vulnerable and rationalizes the idea that single fathers would not be vulnerable. However, the value and importance of reproductive labor, and potential vulnerabilities when the provider is absent (i.e., in SMHH), was evident in my research findings.

Lastly, there is the assumption prevalent throughout the literature that single fathers and single mothers have similar experiences due to their structural position as sole family head. However, the empirical research results presented in the following chapters challenge this notion as well.

3.2. Gender and masculinities theories

This section outlines several theories of masculinities that are used in the analysis. This gender framework is essential for understanding the challenges and coping strategies that the single fathers discussed during our interviews. First, it is imperative to define certain terms, including “gender” from an anthropological perspective. Desiree Lwambo explains gender as the following: “Gender describes the characteristics and behaviors societies assign to the supposed corporal realities, or biological sexes, of men and women. Through social conditioning, individuals learn to perform gender roles and to imbue them with meaning and order.” (2011, 8).

Lwambo goes on to explain that nearly every aspect of human lives is “gendered”, including economic and income-generating activities, sexual practices, and political structures among other things. “Gendering” involves the projection of perceived male or

female characteristics and is laden with power hierarchies that reinforce social inequalities (Lwambo 2011, 8). Miguel Vale de Almeida in *The Hegemonic Male*, explains that “being a man” exceeds physical attributes and lies in behavior and actions that are socially sanctioned as “masculine”, and which are constantly changing (1996, 141). He also argues that gender cannot be thoroughly studied without considering other intersectional characteristics such as social class, ethnicity, and religious affiliations (Vale de Almeida 1996). For that reason, an emphasis is made in contextualizing the relative economic status of the single fathers in my analysis compared to their status before living in Kyaka II.

Research on masculinities from a social sciences perspective took off during the 1970s alongside the rise in the women's movements. Early research was limited and mainly focused on how men struggled with emotional expression and were confined within stereotypes of masculinity. Similar to the experience of feminist social scientists, research among men and masculinities tended to be (and is arguably still today) viewed by many academics as unimportant and was therefore marginalized within academia. However, gender is an important organizing principle for most societies (Coltrane 1994) – including among the Congolese I interviewed – meaning efforts at understanding masculinities and gender relations are of great importance.

Today, most academics working on gender-related issues agree that masculinity is socially constructed and subject to change based on time and location. Furthering this, in the 1980s the concept of “hegemonic masculinity” was put forth and subsequently popularized by R.W. Connell, to describe the varying degrees of male dominance. The theory popularized the idea of “masculinities” (plural) as opposed to “masculinity” (singular) (Connell and Messerschmidt 2005). The concept of hegemonic masculinity had a profound influence on research among men and masculinities, despite the criticism leveled against it (see Connell and Messerschmidt 2005 for an overview of criticism and the authors' responses). Connell also posited the idea of “gender politics within masculinity” that arise due to the differing relations that exist between masculinities. These relations, she argues, are constructed and rely on alliances, dominance, and subordination (Connell 1995, 37). Within patriarchal societies the power struggle is mainly placed between men and women, but among masculinities it is placed between the “hegemonic masculinity” and the other subordinate masculinities (Vale de Almeida 1996, 159).

Also important for my analysis is Michael Kaufman's contribution to theories of masculinities in *Men, Feminism, and Men's Contradictory Experiences of Power* published in 1994. Kaufman argued that when analyzing men's power, caution should be exercised. He argued that although all men hold power, they are not always able to “reap” it. He said: “There is, in the lives of men, a strange combination of power and powerlessness, privilege and pain.” (Kaufman 1994, 142). Kaufman draws on the theory of hegemonic masculinity and

says that in order to explore men's contradictory experiences of power, it must be recognized that there is a hegemonic and various subordinate forms of masculinity forming hierarchies and complex relations among and between men. Power is the key to theorizing hegemonic masculinity, however, the power that a particular man is able to exercise depends also on other factors such as race, class, religion, ethnicity, and sexual orientation. While he argues that men may experience a certain powerlessness, Kaufman adds that men who are oppressed in one way may still exercise great power over women or other males in other situations (Kaufman 1994). Kaufman's theory of men's contradictory experiences of power is useful in analyzing some of the challenges single fathers are facing in Kyaka II.

The masculinities theory from Kaufman and that of hegemonic masculinity popularized by Connell underlie the analysis of my research findings. However, these initial academics share a common background as white, Western (Australian and Canadian) thinkers mainly engrossed in analyzing gender and masculinity in Western contexts, while theories on African masculinities remain rather scarce (Ouzgane and Morrell 2005). In *African Masculinities: Men in Africa from the late nineteenth century to the present* the editors, Lahoucine Ouzgane and Robert Morrell, argue that men in Africa have been homogenized at best and completely overlooked at worst. The volume brings together research from several disciplines, including anthropology, sociology, health, and education, and discusses specific domains of African masculinities that have been researched. However, Africa's diversity means that several aspects of African masculinities remain unexplored (Ouzgane and Morrell 2005).

For this reason, Desiree Lwambo's analyses of masculinities in Eastern DRC, where the majority of the single fathers interviewed in Kyaka II originate, provide interesting insights. Lwambo's article "*Before the war, I was a man*": *men and masculinities in Eastern DR Congo* was published in 2011 on HEAL Africa's website and a slightly different version titled "*Before the war, I was a man*": *men and masculinities in the Eastern Democratic Republic of Congo* was published in 2013 by an academic journal. Field research for both analyses was carried out by HEAL Africa, an Eastern DRC organization, and included 231 research participants in male-focus groups, female-focus groups, and interviews with men from various socioeconomic backgrounds in order to explore local perceptions of masculinity within a patriarchal society.

In her analyses of the research findings, Lwambo showed that Congolese men are expected, according to other Congolese men and women, to be leaders and providers. It is a social norm for men to establish a "homestead" (house) and start a family (wife and children). During the research, the words "children", "married", "wife", and "house" were often cited by research participants in answer to qualities associated with a "good man". The importance of family and a home are summarized: "The homestead on which a family can be created and

raised remains symbolic of achieving manhood, viewed as the seat of male power and social coherence” (Lwambo 2011, 14). Within the household, the husband is expected to be the central figure of the family and the wife to be subservient to the husband. It is also expected that men have several sex partners. Despite prevailing male privilege, husbands and wives are understood as complementing each other as a “partnership” (Lwambo 2011, 12).

The descriptions given by research participants of what a “real” man is are often conflicting, meaning it is impossible for Congolese men to live up to masculine norms. For example, men are expected to be honest and trustworthy, although during focus group discussions men and women made statements implying that earning money may sometimes be more important than honesty. When masculine norms are not met, men are likely to experience an internal crisis and/or feel emasculated. Lwambo also noted that women were generally complicit in this system of hegemonic masculinity by expecting men in their lives to fulfill these norms (Lwambo 2011, 4).

Desiree Lwambo’s work provided a detailed insight into local perceptions of masculinity. These masculine norms are unattainable for the majority of Congolese men: norms do not equal reality. For example, the importance of a “homestead” in Congolese hegemonic masculinity is nearly impossible to achieve in Kyaka II where refugees are prohibited from establishing permanent structures in order to more easily facilitate repatriation or resettlement possibilities resulting in houses that are built with temporary (natural) materials (i.e., no iron sheeting roofs or concrete). Furthermore, single fathers evidently do not have a “subservient” wife, further challenging the hegemonic masculinity. Therefore, I draw heavily on Lwambo’s work in order to contextualize the analysis within local gender norms.

3.3. Humanitarian service provision in refugee contexts and impact of gender-equality initiatives: From theory to the field

Masculinities are understood as ever changing and subject to time and location. Therefore, the life-changing event of forced displacement and subsequent “refugeeism” is expected to have an impact on conceptions of masculinity. Asha Hans, a professor of political science and women’s rights activist, argues that the act of displacement itself is a gendered process (as cited in Krause 2014, 31). Men and women experience displacement differently. Furthermore, refugee settlements are complex sites characterized by hierarchies of power among and between the refugees and humanitarian organizations present. Through the act of displacement and living in this context, traditional gender relations can be renegotiated and redefined (Krause 2014).

During our interviews many of the single fathers alluded to the change in social relations in Kyaka II due to the specific interest of the humanitarian organizations in single

mothers who are perceived as “especially vulnerable”, making the single fathers feel forgotten. This section presents some literature documenting the actual effects of humanitarian service provision and gender-equality initiatives on gender and social relations in refugee settings. The focus is mainly on UNHCR as the organization is one of the main implementing partners in Kyaka II.

UNHCR began to focus on the needs of refugee women in the 1970s as a response to studies documenting sexual and gender-based violence incidents against women and girls (Grabska 2011). Before this focus, development policies in general were typically gender-blind (Whitehead 2006). The shift to focusing on women meant that men were subsequently homogenized to a certain extent and nuances among different groups of men were generally overlooked. In addition, the effects of UNHCR’s gender-equality initiatives often resulted in paradoxical results on gender and social relations.

While analyses focusing specifically on Kyaka II Refugee settlement are lacking, other examples are telling and present potential issues that can arise following the implementation of gender programming. It becomes apparent that gender is conceptualized differently in academia than it is in humanitarian practice as embodied by the UN. For example, in 2000 Simon Turner published a short article titled *Vindicating masculinity: the fate of promoting gender equality* documenting the unintended effects of UNHCR’s gender equality initiatives in Lukole Refugee Camp in Tanzania. Through group interviews and a survey of more than 464 refugees, men and women were asked about their perceived differences in gender and social relations. The recurring response was that “things had changed” in their lives, and mainly that women found UNHCR to be a “better husband” (Turner 2000, 8). This was due to the fact that UNHCR was providing material goods that were traditionally provided by the husband. Paradoxically, UNHCR’s equality policy was understood by many in the camp as UNHCR replacing men as breadwinners and husbands: “UNHCR has simply taken their women and their masculinity” (Turner 2000, 8). Many men responded to this by taking part in political activities (which are banned in Tanzanian refugee camps) in a way to assert or “take back” their masculinity. Therefore, instead of empowering women and increasing gender equality, the initiatives upset the gender relations in several unexpected other ways (Turner 2000).

Similarly paradoxical results were documented in Kakuma refugee camp in Kenya by Katarzyna Grabska in *Constructing “modern gendered civilized” women and men: gender-mainstreaming in refugee camps* (2011). Based on ethnographic fieldwork and interviews that took place over eight months in 2006, Grabska investigated the effects of “gender-sensitive” initiatives by humanitarian organizations (operating in partnership with UNHCR). In the early 2000s UNHCR changed its approach in Kakuma from a top-down approach to a more bottom-up participatory approach. Kakuma was also one of the first refugee camps in

which UNHCR began its gender programming that included awareness-raising of human and women's rights, physical protection, education possibilities, economic empowerment, and leadership opportunities for women and girls. Grabska criticizes the way that these initiatives were implemented because the results of her research indicated unintended, and often negative, results. She stated:

For most of the refugees, human rights were equated with women, and gender was understood as “giving power to women”. This was greeted with two reactions from men. One was great suspicion from men, and rejection of any gender-programming as they saw it as challenging their own position in society, already diminished by the conditions in the camp. When I asked men about ‘gender relations’, their usual response was: “Oh, you have to talk to women!” (Grabska 2011, 88).

While in Tanzania men referred to UNHCR as “new husbands” for their wives, in Kakuma camp men often referred to UNHCR as “their father” who was replacing them in their position as husband and household head. In general, men felt threatened and reported a sense of loss of masculinity as a result of the gender programming initiatives. Through their programs, the humanitarian organizations had spread the stereotype of women as “vulnerable victims”. Because of this simplification and a misunderstanding of the complexities of gender and social relations, the initiatives generally failed for both women and men. Grabska (2011) argues for a rethinking of gender equality and for humanitarian organizations to go beyond the conceptualization of gender equality as being how the West (and the UN) envisions.

These examples show the effects of humanitarian activities on gender and social relations in two refugee contexts in Eastern Africa. The similarity is that men were displaced in their role as husbands. In Kyaka II, gender-equality initiatives are common, therefore an awareness of potential effects is important. As explained in the introduction, there is a focus on women and girls in the settlement. The research findings must be understood within the framework of humanitarian initiatives and the reality of activities happening on the ground in the settlement where several organizations are operating “gender” initiatives.

3.4. Economic conditions among SMHH

Several of the single fathers discussed challenges relating to poverty rendering an economic framework of analysis useful. Economic status is important to consider when undertaking gender analyses, as intersectional characteristics (i.e., gender and economic status) give a more coherent contextualization of the subject of analysis, in this case SMHH living in a refugee settlement characterized by widespread poverty. Much of the early research on household composition and poverty focused exclusively on traditional two-parent,

heterosexual households and adopted a “unitary model” of the household approach, which has since been proven inaccurate (see for example Udry 1996). Since the 1980s much research has been undertaken among FHH, with the majority of the early research concluding that FHH are extremely vulnerable and economically disadvantaged (see for example Aghajanian 1981; Kazi, Raza, and Aziz 1988).

One example, by Charles Smith and Lesley Stevens investigated the differences among FHH and MHH in a rural Haya Village in Tanzania (1988). The authors interviewed a random sample of 50 households, including 15 FHH and 35 MHH, from January to May 1987 and collected data on several domains including landholdings, farming tools, inputs and methods of cultivation, the division of labor, sources of income, household expenses. They found that FHH were disadvantaged in several ways including insecure land tenure, lower than average education levels, lower than average income, and fewer assets than average in their homes than their male counterparts, making females more vulnerable to economic shocks (Smith and Stevens 1988). The authors stated, “in many ways, their [women’s] profile (of land shortage and reduced access to inputs and capital) resembles that of poor male-headed small-holder households” (Smith and Stevens 1988, 564). This study displays several of the theoretical and conceptual flaws discussed previously. In particular, the main subject of analysis, *de jure* FHH (widowed, divorced), were compared to the norm of MHH. Furthermore, all MHH were grouped together in the analysis; no attention was given to SMHH which are assumed to be included with MHH despite the fact that they are also single-parent households.

The claims of FHH being among the poorest of the poor has not gone without critique. As early as 1998, Alain Marcoux (1998) argued that the “feminization of poverty” and widespread claims that 70 % of the world’s poor are women was inaccurate. Subsequently, Sylvia Chant’s influential article *Female Household Headship and the Feminisation of Poverty: Facts, Fictions and Forward Strategies* (2003) challenged previous research on FHH. She argues that over the past several decades FHH have been equated with the “poorest of the poor”, but that this is not accurate (Chant 2003, 4). Most of the research focuses on income, expenditure, and/or consumption, but there are other facets of poverty that should be examined. Equating household wellbeing with the household head is unrealistic because many FHH have working males in the house that contribute (Chant 2003; see also Datta and McIlwaine 2000); a finding that does not resonate with my research findings among single fathers in Kyaka II who are almost always the only person earning an income in the household. In fact, some research shows that FHH may have more salary earners within the household and evidence shows that in FHH there may be more money available for expenditure than in MHH due to the fact that women generally devote more of their earnings to household needs than men (Chant 2003).

Finally, in 2006, Martha Ozawa and Yongwoo Lee published *The Net Worth of Female-Headed Households: A Comparison to Other Types of Households* which examined the assets and debts of households in the U.S. and differentiated between male couple-headed households and SMHH. Data for their analysis came from the Survey of Consumer Finances from 1998 which collected information on assets, liabilities, and demographics. They found that indeed FHH were economically disadvantaged (although economically disadvantaged is only one aspect of vulnerability and ignores the value of reproductive work). FHH had the lowest income averaging USD 22,000 per year compared with USD 55,000 for married-couple households. Interestingly though, the average income among SMHH was USD 30,000, meaning the median income of SMHH was closer to that of FHH than two-parent households. While the income measure of SMHH sheds light on the economic vulnerability of these households, the number of SMHH in their sample was also surprising. Of the total sample size of 14,831 households (all households that participated in the 1998 survey with a household head aged 25-61), 2,625 were female-headed, and 1,985 were headed by single males (Ozawa and Lee 2006).

A similarly surprising number of SMHH were found by Blessing Uchenna Mberu and her study *Household Structure and Living Conditions in Nigeria* (2007) that used data from the national 1999 Nigeria Demographic and Health Survey. In her sample of 7,632 households, approximately nine percent of households were headed by single males, and approximately eight percent were headed by single females. These two studies highlight the prevalence of SMHH in these two contexts. Mberu's results also showed that FHH were the most disadvantaged, followed by SMHH. Most importantly for the purposes of this literature review, the difference between FHH and SMHH was not statistically significant. The author noted, "accordingly, it will serve both research and policy agendas if attempts at understanding the determinants of poverty and its alleviation focus on single adult – headed households in general" (Mberu 2007, 525). These two studies focused on FHH, but their analyses revealed the prevalence and average low-income of SMHH as well.

In 2006, an article focusing solely on single fathers in Canada titled *The Health of Single Fathers: Demographic, Economic and Social Correlates* by Bonnie Janzen, Kathryn Green, and Nazeem Muhajarine was published. Data comes from Statistics Canada's Canadian Community Health Survey collected in 2000 in 10 Canadian provinces and three territories. Total sample size for the research was 15,662 men between 15 and 64 years who live with at least one child under the age of 25. The authors state that the number of households headed by single fathers is increasing, often faster than the number of FHH, in many developed countries (Janzen, Green, and Muhajarine 2006, 440). They found that single fathers were more likely to be unemployed and in the lowest income group compared to two-parent households. Also, single fathers reported poor health conditions more

frequently than fathers in two-parent households. This finding resonates with the single fathers in Kyaka II, who often reported severe health concerns. The authors advocate for policies to target the well-being of all single parents. The research presented here shows that both FHH and SMHH, when in comparison to two-parent households, tend to be more economically disadvantaged as well as in poorer perceived health (Janzen, Green, and Muhajarine 2006).

As shown above, most previous research has mainly focused on the economic vulnerabilities of FHH with SMHH only occasionally acknowledged. The exception is Janzen, Green, and Muhajarine's (2006) article that focuses specifically on SMHH in Canada and determines that single fathers are often economically disadvantaged and in poorer health than fathers in two-parent households. There are several conceptual and theoretical shortcomings prevalent throughout these studies. One is the action of grouping all MHH together, including two-parent and single-parent households. Another is that household vulnerability is constructed around the absence of income (productive tasks) and generally ignores the role of care work (reproductive tasks). Productive labor is more often undertaken by men than women, meaning that households without a man (i.e. FHH) tend to be thought of as automatically more vulnerable than households without a woman (i.e. SMHH). However, the value of reproductive labor, and potential vulnerabilities when the provider is absent, became evident during interviews with the single fathers in Kyaka II, challenging this assumption.

3.5. Time poverty, childcare, and reproductive labor

A second conceptualization of poverty, in great contrast to economic poverty which tends to be biased against reproductive work, is that of time poverty. During our interviews, the single fathers in Kyaka II repeatedly discussed challenges related to time poverty and childcare. Since the 1960s, research has been undertaken among single fathers relating to reproductive labor and generally shows a greater awareness of SMHH than the economic literature. However, the main focus was typically on white, middle-class, single fathers in Western societies. Initial research mainly showed that men reported feeling at ease with parenting, but worried that their children were missing a female-figure in their lives (Risman 1986). From the beginning, research on single fathers pointed to the conclusion that single fathers feel confident raising their children alone. This is contradictory to the traditional assumption that men are "naturally" less capable at "parenting" than women, which persists today in many societies. This strand of research is evidently more anthropological and sociological than the literature presented in the previous section on economic conditions.

The earliest study that I found pertaining to single fathers specifically is *Single Fathers* by Helen Mendes published in 1976. Mendes explains that single fatherhood is on

the rise in the U.S. due to increased marital instability and equates to at least 600,000 households (1976). She interviewed 32 single fathers in California to explore their experiences in childcare, homemaking, meeting the emotional needs of their children, and raising their daughters without a mother figure. Four of the men had become single fathers due to a separation, seven were widowed, and 21 were divorced. She noted that single fathers were perceived as “atypical” in the U.S. meaning that single fathers would face social scrutiny in order to carry out their role as single father (Mendes 1976, 440). Interestingly, single fathers reported experiencing sexist opposition to their decision to stay home and care for their children (i.e. undertake reproductive tasks in addition to, or in lieu of, productive labor), resonating with my research findings in Kyaka II. Furthermore, Mendes linked challenges in single fatherhood to concepts of masculinity, albeit briefly. She noted, “it also appeared that some fathers were reluctant to admit that they needed help; such behavior was inconsistent with the masculine ideals they held for themselves.” (Mendes 1976, 441). Also noteworthy was the focus on the challenges of daily cooking and raising daughters without a mother, findings that resonate with my research in Kyaka II. This study is unique and especially useful for my research because it pertained solely to single fathers and explored their challenges while utilizing a gender framework, although to a very small degree.

In 1981 John Defrain and Rod Eirick published *Coping as Divorced Single Parents: A Comparative Study of Fathers and Mothers*. The authors also noted an increase in the number of SMHH in the United States: from roughly 212,000 in 1970 to roughly 423,000 in 1978. Exploring this phenomenon, the authors investigated “areas of coping patterns and adjustment to single parenthood; the history of the divorce process; feelings as a single parent; childrearing issues; the children’s feelings and behaviors; relations with the ex-spouse; and forming new social relationships” (Defrain and Eirick 1981, 273). This study focused exclusively on divorced parents meaning widowed, abandoned, and single parents through other means were not included. A sample of 38 divorced single mothers and 33 divorced single fathers were sent a questionnaire by post that they were asked to fill out and return – an impersonal methodology that does not allow any interaction between researcher and research participant. The research respondents were overwhelmingly white and all were currently living in the U.S. state of Nebraska. Echoing results from economic research, their results showed that single mothers were less educated than single fathers; 63 % of single mothers had continued their education past high school as opposed to 79 % of single fathers. Single fathers also earned higher average incomes than single mothers. However, single mothers and single fathers’ responses to 62 out of 63 questions were not significantly different leading to the authors’ claim that they perceive their challenges and lifestyles to be quite similar in regard to the areas explored (Defrain and Eirick 1981). However, this

similarity could be due to the structural position of being a single parent, but should not be understood as meaning that single fathers and single mothers have the same experiences; the areas explored by the authors were inflexible (i.e., questionnaire by post) meaning their results were limited.

Five years later in 1986, Barbara Risman published *Can Men “Mother”? Life as a Single Father*. Her research contradicted the familiar assumption that women are “naturally” better parents than men. Risman surveyed 141 single fathers and, unlike Defraigne and Eirick (1981), included more than divorcees. More than half of the sample were men who had been deserted, widowed, or their ex-wife refused custody upon their divorce. The vast majority of men in this study were also white, and therefore unrepresentative of the actual U.S. population. Interestingly, the single fathers also earned, on average, a higher salary than the U.S. average at the time contradicting most of the economic literature presented previously and indicating at the heterogeneity among SMHH. Her results showed that 80 % of the men did not have any outside help in cleaning or cooking, implying they “manage their households by themselves” (Risman 1986, 99). The men also reported being deeply involved in their children’s lives by driving children to activities, taking part in educational outings, watching/playing sports together, and watching television with their children regularly. Other indicators showed that 90 % of the fathers had a family physician and take their children to visit a dentist annually demonstrating an active interest in their children’s health. While wealthier fathers did tend to have hired domestic help, the father’s income was not correlated with their reported satisfaction in relationships with their children (Risman 1986). These findings supported previous research and demonstrated that men are able and willing to be the primary caregiver for their children, a finding that resonates with my research in Kyaka II.

Throughout the 1980s, the total number of single parent households in the U.S. continued to grow. By 1993, more than 25 % of all households were headed by single mothers or single fathers (Richards and Schmiede 1993). In 1993, Leslie Richards and Cynthia Schmiede published *Problems and Strengths of Single-Parent Families: Implications for Practice and Policy*. In order to challenge the traditional belief that households only thrive when a mother and father are present, the authors sought to uncover the strengths of single parent households. They undertook in-depth interviews (over the telephone) with 11 single fathers and 60 single mothers in order to collect data on demographics, custody and child support, intergenerational relationships, parenting challenges and strengths, and other relationship issues. However, the research participants were generally white and middle-class thus ignoring all other single-parent households as most previous research did. While they only included 11 single fathers in their study, they stated:

Little is known about the extent, for example, to which single-parent fathers experience the same type of difficulties commonly reported by single-parent mothers: poverty, role and task overload, and problems having an adult social life. Similarly, little is known about the perceived strengths of single-parent families headed by men (Richards and Schmiede 1993, 278).

Their results showed that single fathers and single mothers perceived themselves as having similar strengths as single parents. Single mothers and single fathers reported being supportive to their children, showing patience, and helping their children cope in difficult situations. Men were more likely to report “personal growth” and “family management” as strengths, while women reported more pride in being able to financially support their children. One difference was that single fathers noted that they felt they were “treated as oddities” in their social circles, similarly to the single fathers I interviewed in Kyaka II (Richards and Schmiede 1993, 282). This finding hints at the gender differences between single mothers and single fathers when it comes to parenting, although this finding was diminished in order to focus more on the similarities. While homogeneity among single parents may be attractive for policy purposes, the reality is that this is not always the case: the lived experiences of SMHH may differ greatly from single mothers and FHH.

Perhaps in response to the heavy focus on FHH, in 1996 David Eggebeen, Anastasia Snyder, and Wendy Manning's article *Children in Single-Father Families in Demographic Perspective* was published. This study highlighted the prevalence of SMHH and criticized the way single fathers had been included in previous research. The authors rightfully argued that single fathers had been homogenized: differences among SMHH were rarely acknowledged. After examining data spanning forty years, results showed that by 1990, 15 % of single-parent households were headed by single males and the rate of increase in single male-headed households was much higher than the rate of increase in FHH. Furthermore, children that identify as a non-white race are more likely than white children to live in households headed by single fathers, calling attention to the limitation of previous research that focused mostly on white single fathers and families. Lastly, the results showed that SMHH are increasingly headed by men who have never married, with younger and smaller numbers of children and with less economic resources. Among single-male headed households, living arrangements are heterogeneous: only 25 % live alone and more than 33 % are cohabiting (Eggebeen, Snyder, and Manning 1996). The heterogeneity among SMHH was also apparent in my research findings in Kyaka II. This article highlighted the increasing prevalence of single-male headed households (in the U.S.) and the need to acknowledge the differences among these households when conducting research.

Jump forward a decade, and research among single parents had expanded into documenting another dimension of poverty: time poverty. In 2007 Andrew Harvey and Arun Mukhopadhyay published *When Twenty-Four Hours is not Enough: Time Poverty of Working Parents*. By focusing on working single-parent households (compared to two-parent households) in Canada, the authors proved that all working single parents are very likely to experience time poverty. To measure this, data was collected on the time allocation to different activities throughout the day by research participants then categorized and examined. Results showed that single parents have a noted time-deficit acting to their disadvantage, an extremely important finding for future research and policy pertaining to single parent households. The authors noted that for single parents it is “virtually impossible” to escape time poverty (Harvey and Mukhopadhyay 2007, 70); similar experiences of time poverty were reported by the single fathers in Kyaka II. Gender differences were not explicitly examined, although the authors posited that single mothers and single fathers face similar expectations in their daily tasks (Harvey and Mukhopadhyay 2007). Again, this assumption should be questioned, and my research findings show that while indeed daily expectations such as providing meals, taking children to school etc. may be similar for single mothers and single fathers (i.e., the structural position of being a single parent), it is possible that there exist large differences in the lived experiences of carrying out these gendered tasks. The experiences of single mothers and single fathers are not synonymous.

Despite the research documenting single fathers’ involvement and confidence in heading households, men are continuously perceived as less able to parent (raise children, complete domestic tasks, etc.) than women. For example, in cases of divorce, judges in the U.S. show a preference in assigning mothers custody of children because of “mother’s instinct” (Hook and Chalasani 2008, 980). In response to these stereotypes, Jennifer Hook and Satvika Chalasani published *Gendered Expectations? Reconsidering Single Fathers’ Child-Care* in 2008. The number of SMHH continued to rise through the 1990s and numbered more than 2.3 million in 2003. Stating that single fathers are still under-researched, the authors used data from the American Time Use Survey from 2003-2006 to identify a sample size of 16,654 including 431 single fathers and 2,452 single mothers. The research methodology included telephone interviews to document time allocation during a 24 hour period. Statistical analysis of the results showed that single fathers spend an average of 22 more minutes each day on child care than married fathers, an average of 10 minutes less than single mothers, and an average of 11 minutes less than married mothers. The authors state:

Single fathers are caught between two worlds – they are more likely to be in the labor force and less likely to be poor than single mothers, but less likely to be in the labor

force and more likely to be poor than married fathers. More so than single mothers, single fathers are expected to be sole providers. (Hook and Chalasani 2008, 979).

As shown in these statements, the authors argued that single fathers' experiences differ because of a gendered expectation for males to be breadwinners. The single fathers in Kyaka II also expressed the desire (and expectation for them) to financially provide for their children, and the feelings of shame when they cannot. Therefore, gender norms must be taken into consideration when undertaking research, even from an economic perspective (intersectional characteristics), thus validating a gender-framework.

3.5.1 Time poverty and childcare in refugee settings

The research presented thus far in this section focuses heavily on the global North and, for the most part, mainly examines white, financially well-off households. For the purposes of this dissertation I was interested in research undertaken among single fathers in refugee settings, especially in sub-Saharan Africa. However, within the academic literature that I assessed, I struggled to find even one study that adhered to these parameters. There are, however, several studies exploring fatherhood among immigrants and refugees in Canada (see also Stewart et al. 2015).

In 2011, the Sexuality Education Resource Centre (SERC) published a paper titled *Refugee Single Parents: A Community-Based Assessment*. The focus was on recent refugee single parents and included gender-specific focus groups and interviews with recent refugees from several countries including Sudan, Congo, Burundi, Rwanda, and others. The research objective was to uncover the needs, challenges, and capacities of the single parents relating to issues surrounding sexuality. Interestingly, 13 % of the single mothers had a university education level, while only 12.5 % of single fathers did, in contrast to previous findings where single fathers tend to be more educated than single mothers. Despite the fact that single mothers were slightly more educated on average, 58 % of single mothers were not currently working in contrast to only 33.3 % of single fathers (Sexuality Education Resource Center 2011). This difference may relate to the finding in Hook and Chalasani's paper that the experiences of single fathers differ from single mothers, partly due to gender norms deeming men to be breadwinners and provide for their families which could drive men to find paid work in order to meet this demand. In general, results from the study showed that all single parents reported that their lives are difficult, especially in accessing employment and income. In addition, the SERC report noted that the single fathers felt that single mothers were receiving benefits that they were not, a sentiment echoed in my research findings in Kyaka II (Sexuality Education Resource Center 2011).

Another study exploring fatherhood among refugees in Canada is David Este and Admasu Tachble's article *Fatherhood in the Canadian Context: Perceptions and Experiences of Sudanese Refugee Men* published in 2009. The authors undertook interviews with 20 Sudanese fathers (all married, not single fathers) who had spent at least six months, and a maximum of 10 years, in Canada and who had at least one child under the age of 12. Among the men interviewed, 14 had at least some university-level education meaning they were well-educated, unlike single fathers in most studies presented previously. The interviews uncovered that the Sudanese men feel that being a father means being a "provider" (Este and Tachble 2009, 460). Although the study does not analyze their findings within a gender or masculinities framework, being a "provider" resonates with Lwambo's (2013) study exploring masculinities among Congolese. The Sudanese fathers also reported that they provide a teaching role for their children, which includes giving them advice and guidance on how to be citizens, similarly to the single fathers in Kyaka II. Also of relevance to my research is that the authors explored challenges for the Sudanese fathers. Their challenges include finding a job, disciplining their children in their traditional way, racism, feeling isolated, and lacking a social support system (Este and Tachble 2009). Some of these challenges resonate with the single fathers in Kyaka II, who reported work-related challenges (mainly time poverty), feelings of isolation, and the lack of a social support system.

These studies are more closely related to my research as the participants were often from sub-Saharan African countries and are living in a situation of forced displacement. After being resettled to Canada, gender norms are challenged due to new surroundings, similarly to the experiences of the Congolese single fathers living in Uganda. Several issues addressed and uncovered in these studies resonate with the single fathers in Kyaka II Refugee Settlement, although a literature gap exists among single fathers in a context of displacement within sub-Saharan Africa.

3.6. Studies from International Organizations, advocacy groups, Ugandan blogs, and websites

When altering the focus from academic literature to the descriptive studies undertaken by international organizations including UNHCR, the International Labor Organization (ILO), and the International Rescue Committee, there is some evidence of an awareness of SMHH, although it is limited. When searching for "single male headed households" or "male-headed households" on UNHCR's database, little comes up that actually has a focus on MHH, and practically nothing is available on SMHH. However, I found one link to a study completed by Danish Refugee Council with support from UNHCR in 2007. More than 1,160 households were interviewed in order to examine the demographic and socio-economic profile of the Iraqis living in Lebanon. Most importantly, the report stated "the most striking feature is that

single heads of households are predominantly male” (Danish Refugee Council 2007, 30). This conclusion, however, led to little follow-up on the challenges and capacities of these SMHH. In general, the majority of UNHCR reports do not differentiate between MHH and SMHH (see for example UNHCR 2014).

Similarly to UNHCR, when using the key words “single male-headed households” on the ILO’s and International Rescue Committee’s websites, there are very few results. The most relevant connection was made to the study *Needs Assessment Survey for Income Recovery (NASIR) –III* from the ILO, which was a survey carried out in Sri Lanka in 2005 following the tsunami. A general reference was made to “single parents” in addition to “female-headed households” as being in need of special targeting by organizations (ILO 2006). While many studies produced by ILO make general remarks about single parent households and SMHH (see for example Reddock and Bobb-Smith 2008), I was unable to find a study focusing specifically on SMHH. The fact that there are limited reports focusing on SMHH undertaken and published by major international development and humanitarian organizations is worrying. It is also potentially related to the limited attention received by policy makers and the reality of their initiatives on the ground where, at least in Kyaka II, there are practically no initiatives targeting SMHH.

Furthermore, MenCare is an international campaign focusing specifically on men and fatherhood with the goal to improve gender equality and the overall wellbeing of children. MenCare works in more than 35 countries working on advocacy and pro-fatherhood programming (MenCare 2016). In 2015, MenCare published a report titled *State of the World’s Fathers* (Levtov et al. 2015). The report discusses several topics including the role of fathers around the world, issues of unpaid childcare and domestic work, and issues of violence. Considering this publication is focused on fathers around the world, and the previous studies have documented the rising number of SMHH, there is very little content on single fathers. “Single parents” are mentioned several times throughout the report, however, often in reference to single mothers. “Single fathers” is mentioned directly only once and is in reference to gay and trans men (Levtov et al. 2015, 182).

However, several of my empirical findings resonate with certain informal sources available on Ugandan blogs and websites. For example, a well-known Ugandan blog titled *This is Uganda* published the article “Celebrating Uganda’s Single Fathers” (2015) in honor of Father’s Day last year. The author carried out interviews among single fathers in Uganda with results that resonate with my research findings in Kyaka II. In particular, one single father explained the pressure he felt from community members to take his children to their grandmother’s house in “the village” upon the death of his wife: gender norms in the community did not acknowledge men as potential caregivers. Another discussed the

challenge in paying school fees and dealing with health complications that arise (“Celebrating” 2015).

Another article, titled “Going Solo: inside a single father’s life”, was published in early 2016 on a Ugandan news website (Ssekandi 2016). The article documented the challenges of several fathers including traversing traditional gender-divisions (especially in undertaking “women’s work”), time poverty, and raising their children. Furthermore, one of the single fathers explained the pressure stemming from gender and social expectations: “friends, family and even total strangers would question your ability, commitment, loyalty, intentions and pretty much everything else that you did, not only for your children but for yourself” (Ssekandi 2016 para. last). These articles highly resonate with the discourses produced by single fathers in Kyaka II during our interviews which also centered around the challenges discussed here: poverty in relation to school fees, health complications, and gender norms that question men’s ability to “parent”.

Conclusion

Drawing on the theories and studies outlined in this review, the empirical research findings are mainly analyzed using a gender-framework drawing on the theories of hegemonic masculinity and men’s contradictory experiences of power articulated by Connell (1995) and Kaufman (1994). I also draw heavily on Lwambo’s research documenting local conceptions of masculinity in Eastern DRC (2011; 2013). The specific context of a refugee settlement is analyzed through a framework of poverty, limited opportunity, and gender norms that are subject to renegotiation following displacement and gender programming undertaken by humanitarian and development organizations.

Finally, gender has already been defined, but it is also important to define two other terms that are integral to this analysis: “household” and “single male-headed household”. Within my analysis “household” is understood as one or more people (related or not) living in a house, thus encompassing the SMHH in this analysis. However, this conceptualization challenges the hegemonic masculinity norm of the “homestead” in this context, which is expected to include a man, his wife, and their children living in a house, thus excluding SMHH (Lwambo 2011). This conceptualization difference is at the heart of several of the challenges the single fathers are facing. Furthermore, in my analysis “single male-headed household” is understood to be a household that includes a man and children without an adult woman living in the house (excluding grown children). The children can be of any age, can be biological children or non-biological children, and can be currently living in the house or have lived in the house in the past but have moved out (most often due to marriage or resettlement). Relating this to conceptualizations of FHH, I adopt a definition based on *de jure* means.

The following five thematic chapters present the empirical results and provide a discussion of the research findings. Each chapter focuses on one of the main challenges that the single fathers reported, explains their coping strategies, and draws on the theoretical framework outlined. The last chapter, Chapter 9, also invokes a gender-framework in analyzing the fact that single fathers and SMHH are not considered as an “interest group” in humanitarian and development discourses.

PART II: EMPIRICAL FINDINGS, THEMATIC EXAMPLES OF CHALLENGES AND COPING STRATEGIES, AND ANALYSES

CHAPTER 4: SINGLE FATHERS IN KYAKA II REFUGEE SETTLEMENT AND THEIR CHALLENGES: “WOMEN’S WORK”

This chapter is the first in a series of five thematic chapters presenting the empirical research findings pertaining to the two research questions: *What challenges do single fathers face? What strategies do they employ to cope with these challenges?* During the interviews, each of the single fathers was asked about the specific challenges he is facing. While their responses are widespread, general patterns are noticeable. The majority of men mentioned that doing “women’s work” (i.e., reproductive tasks) is the most challenging thing for them. Others that will be presented in the following chapters include aspects in raising their children, particularly their adolescent daughters; time poverty and health complications; poverty and debt; and feeling alone or isolated and issues related to sexuality. The coping strategies that they discussed are presented following each challenge along with a detailed discussion and analysis of the results drawing on the gender-framework. In addition, photographs are included where their content is relevant. However, before “women’s work” is discussed it is important to give an overview of the single fathers involved in this research.

4.1. Profiles of single fathers in Kyaka II

The profiles of the single fathers were extremely diverse. There is no “typical” single father as the men showed variations in all aspects of their lives. They ranged in age from 29 to 71 years old, with an average age of 49.6 years. As previously stated, 26 of the men are of Congolese nationality, although two of them were born to Congolese parents who happened to be living in a refugee settlement in Uganda (they are still of Congolese nationality), and one man was born in Rwanda. All of the men born in Congo originate from North Kivu, South Kivu, or Ituri in the Eastern DRC.

Their education levels ranged from never having attended school to a university degree. Five of the single fathers reported never having attended school, eight of the men completed some primary school, and 10 completed at least some level of secondary education. One completed a three-year university degree.

The ways in which these 27 men became single fathers were also diverse. 11 of the men became single fathers when their wife died due to health complications (widows). Several died from malaria, while others from typhoid, asthma, flu, or diarrhea, and five died from unknown illnesses. Seven of the men said that their previous wife abandoned them for one reason or another. One man said he believes his wife abandoned him and their children because of the harsh conditions in Kyaka II. Another man returned home after having

surgery on his eyes to discover that his wife abandoned him and their four children, presumably because he was suffering health problems and was struggling to provide for them. Six men became single fathers when their wives were killed by various rebel groups in Congo, often spurring them to flee their village with their children. Two other men recounted that when violence came to their village in Congo, he and his wife were separated during the ensuing chaos and were unable to find each other. Finally, one man reported that he and his wife officially divorced. Unlike FHH, none of the single fathers became a single parent through *de facto* means, or due to the fact that their wife has migrated elsewhere for work, is disabled, or unemployed.

The men have been single fathers for various amounts of time ranging from six weeks to 22 years averaging six years and four months respectively.⁶ All of the single fathers had between one and nine children, with an average of 3.6. Although many of the men reported currently caring for fewer children due to the fact that some children were “lost”, some live with their mother in the case of abandonment, some children had died, some children had gone back to Congo on their own initiative, and some children had gotten married and started their own household. In addition, two men reported caring for the children of deceased relatives making them “foster parents”.

When it comes to living arrangements, the men are currently living in various household setups. Most men report that they do not spend time with, or bring, any woman to



Photograph 1 Typical refugee housing in Kyaka II Refugee Settlement; Photo credit: Author, 2016

their house regularly, although several men have occasional help doing domestic tasks from a sister, neighbor, or female friend. Very few men reported bringing a woman into their house occasionally. “Bringing a woman to the house” was generally implied to mean, and understood as, involving a sexual relationship.

One man is currently married to another woman who also has children from a previous marriage, but they do not live in the same house. The woman often cooks for him and his

⁶ Included in this statistic is the man who is currently married, but living separated from his wife. He perceives himself as a single father.

children, but the man insisted that their lives are separate and he is the sole caretaker of his children; he perceives himself as a single father.

Finally, while this research was concerned mainly with the challenges that the single fathers are facing, it is important to acknowledge that the majority of the men also expressed positive sentiments in being a single parent; challenges are only one dimension of their lives. For that reason, it is important to note, albeit briefly, some of the positive and enjoyable moments these men experience with their children. For example, when asked what they enjoy most about being a single father, the most often reported pleasure was teaching their children useful skills and giving advice and guidance to their children on how to navigate their lives. Many reported enjoying playing games with their children, often soccer or tennis. Some of the fathers enjoy creating stories to entertain their children. Another teaches his children songs from Congo so that they learn about their heritage. Lastly, all of the men were able to recount at least one thing they did recently with their children that they enjoyed. The majority mentioned Christmas Day, which involved eating well (typically meat, which is expensive), drinking soda, dancing, and spending time with friends and family.

4.2. Challenges associated with “women’s work”

Approximately half of the men interviewed answered that completing certain domestic tasks is very challenging. Specifically, doing “women’s work”, generally tasks related to reproduction, including childcare, cooking, and cleaning, was most often cited. The single fathers have to undertake tasks that men are not socialized nor socially expected to do, thus challenging their sense of masculinity. For these men, the gendered separation of tasks in the household is clear; there is “women’s work”, and there is “men’s work”, with little social acceptance in traversing these gendered divisions. As Lwambo noted, men and women are seen as complementing each other and working in “partnership” (Lwambo 2011, 12). This

“partnership” is based on a gendered division of labor that allows the household to function in a socially acceptable way. In an interview with the Gender-based Violence (SGBV) Officer at AHA in Kyaka II, a Ugandan woman, she explained:

Women think that men should play the fatherly role and women should play the motherly role. Sometimes you find in



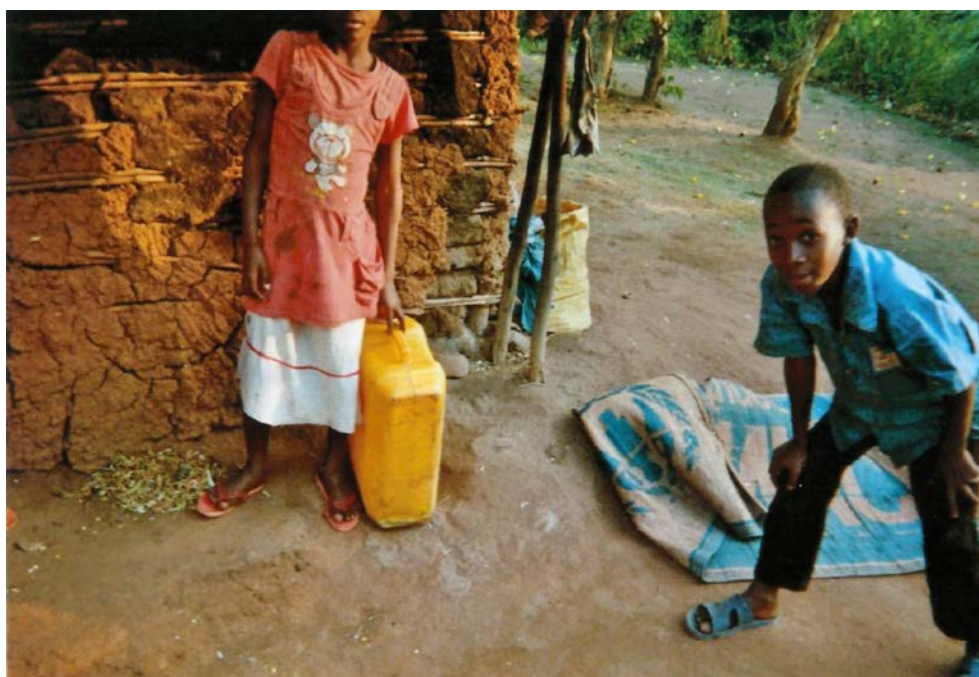
homes that they try to separate... like boys Photograph 2 Jean Moniniri (single father) photographed his daughter washing dishes in front of their house; Photo credit: Jean Moniniri, 2016

should follow the father’s footsteps and girls should follow their mother’s footsteps. That’s why sometimes you find them saying “this is your child go and discipline her” or “this is your child, your son, go and discipline him”. So you find that they try to separate. They say kitchen work is for girls. That includes washing plates, cooking the food, cleaning the house, fetching the water, cleaning the compound, washing the clothes, they feel it is for women and girls. Then boys have their work, though some of the work they do together. The digging part [farming] of it is both women and men who do it, or boys and girls. Then the harvesting is done together. But, when it comes to money, it is supposed to be the man to receive the money. He has to do the planning for the money that has been received from the harvest. So they feel that it is the head of the family to plan for that money. The woman has not much say in it.

This statement outlines the gendered expectations of men, women, boys and girls within the refugee settlement; these expectations also became clear during our interviews. This clear separation presents an intense practical and psychological challenge for single fathers who are forced to traverse these gender divisions. Single fathers are forced to “become like a mother and a father” as so many of the men told me.

4.2.1. Challenges in completing domestic tasks: Empirical examples

Among the challenges the single fathers are facing, completing certain domestic tasks poses a serious problem because they do not possess the required skills. Raising children, looking



Photograph 3 Gilbert Saloman (single father) photographed two of his children. The girl is carrying a jerrycan to collect water while the boy poses next to her; Photo credit: Gilbert Saloman, 2016

after their daily needs, preparing them for school, cooking, cleaning the house, washing clothes, preparing the bed, collecting water and firewood are all tasks that are classified as feminine within the context of the refugee settlement (reproductive tasks), and they require certain knowledge. At least seven

of the men discussed that cooking for himself and his children is a challenge. For

example, Sulaiman, a Congolese refugee who has been living in Kyaka II since 2005, became a single father five years ago when his wife abandoned him. During our interview he talked of feeling ashamed in not being able to cook properly for his two sons aged 16 and 18. 18 months ago Sulaiman was remarried to a single mother, however, they kept their separate houses and continue to live separately. Now he relies on her the majority of the time to cook for him and his sons. Others, like Maombi, a Congolese refugee living in Kyaka II for the past six years with his 13-year-old son, explained that after his wife was killed by rebels in North Kivu, cooking was a huge challenge for him. He said that his parents had taught him how to cook when he was young, but he had forgotten because his wife was the one to do the cooking and he had to relearn.

Many of the men, especially those with very young children, complete all of these tasks on a daily basis; photographs they took show them undertaking reproductive tasks while also teaching their sons how to perform certain tasks, such as cooking. However, some of the men rely on various coping strategies. Having help from female extended family



Photograph 4 Baraka Donat (single father) photographed himself sitting next to his son who is cooking, presumably teaching/supervising him; Photo credit: Baraka Donat, 2016

members and older children, both male and female, was frequently discussed. Several of the photographs taken by the single fathers show them and their children, particularly their daughters, carrying out reproductive tasks. For example, Omar, a 32-year-old single father with four children aged 14, 11, eight, and three, relies on his sister who also lives in Kyaka II to help him around the house

occasionally. Another single father talked about how relieved he was when his sister moved to the

settlement. He invited her to live with him and his children and now she does a large part of the domestic tasks and helps take care of the children. Amisi, a 41-year-old single father with five children relies on his oldest child still living in his house, a 16-year-old boy, to help with the cleaning, cooking, and supervision of the younger children when Amisi goes to the market. The boy no longer attends school because Amisi cannot afford the school fees.

Indeed, a majority of the men said that their children help them complete domestic tasks, including “women’s work”. Young children are able to sweep the compound and fetch water with small jerry cans, while older children often help with the cooking, fetching firewood, and washing clothes. Nyau, a single father with two children, told us how challenging it was for him when his oldest daughter got married and left the house because she had been the one to cook and clean. Nyau’s neighbors watched the transition and sometimes “have mercy and provide some food for him and his son” as Nyau told us. Now, sometimes Nyau pays other children in the village to fetch him water, or he sews something small for them if they are willing to wash his and his sons’ clothes.

John is a 41-year-old Congolese single father who was born in a refugee settlement in Northern Uganda and has spent his entire life in three different settlements in Uganda. His

wife died from an unknown illness seven years ago and since then he has been raising their four children alone. John told us that even with his 16-year-old daughter helping around the house, sometimes they still struggle with cooking. During these times, his daughter goes to their female neighbor and asks how to cook specific meals. She recently went to ask how to cook cassava leaves, because John told us the preparation requires a long process. The woman teaches his daughter and then his daughter cooks for the family.



Photograph 5 Baraka Donat (single father) photographed his three children, one girl and two boys, returning to the house after fetching water; Photo credit: Baraka Donat, 2016

Providence, the 20-year-old daughter of one of the single fathers, told us in an interview that she has taken care of all domestic tasks for the past eight years since her father could no longer afford her school fees and she dropped out of school. Since then, her daily routine includes farming in the morning, and cooking, cleaning, and looking after her five young nieces and nephews in the afternoon and evenings. She sells her produce twice a year and uses the money to buy soap and small things for the family. Her father brought her to Kyaka II when she was only two years old, and she has rarely left the settlement. She told us that growing up without her mother was difficult, because she had to learn the “women’s work” very young. Her father is too old to farm, so he relies completely on Providence to take care of the household.

However, the physical action of completing domestic tasks such as cooking is only a small part of the problem for most of the men. The biggest challenge remains the negative reaction of the community towards a man seen completing “women’s work”. In other words, men who traverse the traditional gender division of labor.

4.2.2. Social repercussions for single fathers undertaking “women’s work”: Empirical examples

After a few discussions with single fathers in Kyaka II, it became clear that the real challenge in completing “women’s work” is the derision by neighbors and community members. Men who are seen completing tasks that are typically done by women are often teased, taunted,

and laughed at by community members, challenging their sense of masculinity. At least 12 men said they had experienced negative incidents in Kyaka II, perpetrated by both men and women in the community. Many said that people walking by while they are washing clothes in a basin laugh at them, ask them why they do not remarry, or “bring a woman into the house”. Another man said that when they are walking with a jerry can to the borehole to collect water, men and women laugh at him and say they feel sorry for him to have to do this work. When asked how the neighbors react when he is cooking in front of his house, one of the men told me: “The cultural norms of Africa are different. Here in Africa when they see a man cooking, they laugh at him. They talk nonsense.” Several of the men confirmed this, shown in the following examples.

Jean Luc is a 29-year-old Congolese refugee who has spent the last nine months living in Kyaka II with his three-year-old twins. Two years ago rebels stormed into his home in North Kivu with the intention to kill him and his wife. They succeeded in murdering his wife, and Jean Luc survived with a gunshot wound in his arm. He fled to Uganda not long after this event. During our interview he recounted what it is like for him to complete “women’s work”: “When I am washing clothes, or especially when I am cleaning up after the children...the neighbors laugh at me. They say to me “why don’t you get remarried?” It’s mainly women who laugh at me. But I just remember my wife and how she died and I feel bad inside. I don’t want to fight with them [the neighbors] so I keep quiet.”

Another example is Simon, a 63-year-old single father who looks after the three



Photograph 6 Baraka Donat (single father) photographed himself cooking in front of his house; Photo credit: Baraka Donat, 2016

young boys of his late brother, who told us that his neighbors laugh at him and ask him “aren’t you tired yet?” when they see him doing certain tasks around his home. Bagambe is a 47-year-old Congolese refugee who has been living in Kyaka II for the last two years. When conflict came to his village in North Kivu, him and his wife were

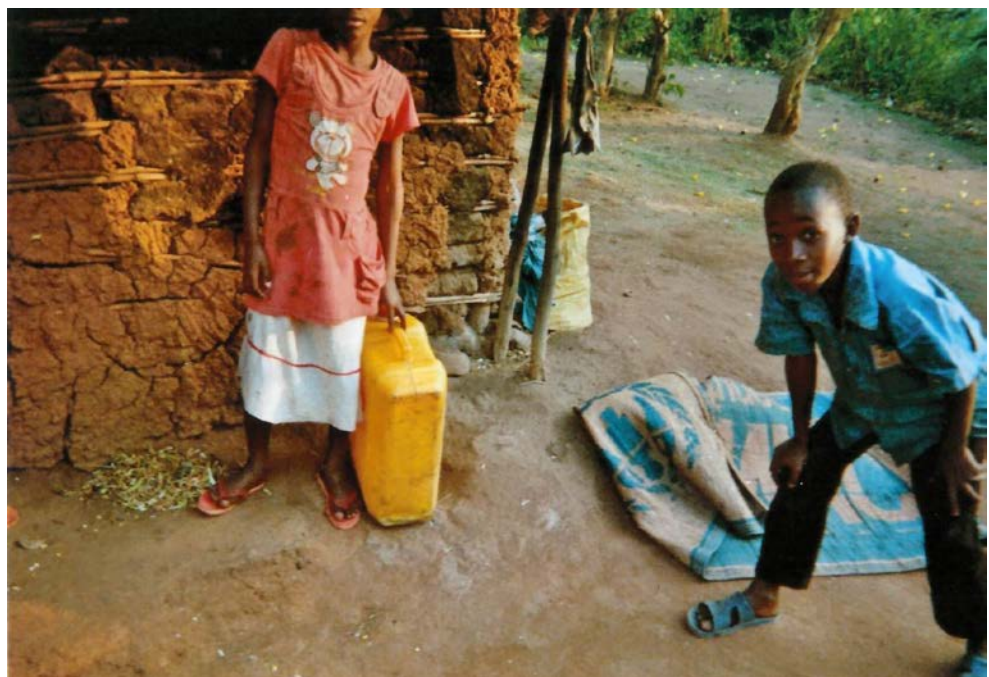
unexpectedly separated. He fled Congo with one of his two children. His wife and their other

child were never found; he has searched for them in other refugee settlements in Uganda, but to no avail. Bagambe recounted that some community members sympathize with him, however, others laugh at him. He told us: “When I am washing dishes or sweeping they say to me ‘your wife is dead so why aren’t you getting married again?’ I don’t know what to say because I don’t have money for a dowry.”

As these incidents show, single fathers have little room to maneuver outside of the local normative construction of masculinity and the two-parent heterosexual household model. An AHA volunteer community worker who lives in Mkondo zone confirmed these negative social repercussions. She commented about single fathers being treated badly within her community: “They are used to it [being treated badly], but sometimes men who have women [a wife] exchange words with the single fathers and they tell them they are bullshit and that’s why their wife died or left them. It’s happened to at least five men here recently.”

Her response shows that the men are perceived by community members to be at fault for their situation; being a single father is not socially accepted. However, the single fathers

interviewed defy these gendered expectations. In addition to interviews, five of the single fathers were asked if they wanted to participate by taking photos with the intent to help me understand what it is like to be a single father in Kyaka II. Several of the photos showed men undertaking “women’s work”, especially cooking and washing



clothes. Some of the photos show the men teaching their sons tasks such as cooking

Photograph 7 Gilbert Saloman (single father) photographed two of his children. The girl is tending to a basin full of dishes while the boy poses next to her; Photo credit: Gilbert Saloman, 2016

and fetching water, while others show their daughters performing the “women’s work”. None of the 27 photos taken showed an adult woman; the men only photographed themselves and their children.

On the other hand, several of the men answered that their neighbors are generally sympathetic, sometimes even helping them complete certain tasks, such as fetching water.

In a few instances men said that their community members “have mercy” on them by giving a small amount of money or helping him to do some housework. Lastly, as discussed above, many of the men rely on older children, extended female family members, and/or neighbors help them to complete some or all of the “women’s work”. Returning to Augustine, who has been a single father since his wife died from diarrhea in 1994, he has relied on his children, his daughters in particular, to do the daily cooking, cleaning, and other housework while he farmed. He told us with a big smile that he is now retired and living a happy life while his youngest daughter, who is 20 years old, still lives with him and takes care of him. His sons provide him with small amounts of money and he spends most of his days volunteering in a local church.

4.3. Discussion and analysis of challenges related to “women’s work”

An analysis of the challenges that the single fathers are facing must begin from the realization that they exist within a highly patriarchal society: Lwambo noted that among the Congolese in Eastern DRC, “Men’s roles and activities are defined as more valuable than women’s, which means that if a man ‘loses’ his attributes, he is reduced to the inferior status of a woman.” (2011, 27). Therefore, among the Congolese population, reproductive tasks undertaken by women are regarded as less valuable than productive work more often undertaken by men. This belief (against which generations of feminists have fought) persists beyond the Congolese context and will be used later in the explanation given for why SMHH are generally overlooked by humanitarian organizations and policy makers. Furthermore, the conceptualization of the hegemonic masculinity among the Congolese encompasses the role of “fatherhood”; men are expected to establish a “homestead”, obtain a subservient wife, and start a family (Lwambo 2011, 4). The single fathers, by definition, do not have a “subservient” wife to whom “women’s work” can be relegated, thus challenging the social norm of the “household” and what a “real man” should be and do.

Several of the single fathers discussed their inability, due to lack of a specific skill set, to complete certain domestic tasks. Cooking was repeatedly mentioned as a challenge, and derives from the gendered division of labor within the refugee settlement and Eastern DRC more generally: men are not socialized nor expected to be able to cook. When men suddenly become a single father, they often struggle to carry out this necessary task for themselves and their children. They find themselves reliant on female family members; older children, especially girls; neighbors; and other community members until they themselves learn how to cook or find a solution to this challenge. Importantly, not all men relegated this work to other women even when it is seemingly possible. Several of the single fathers defy the social norm and undertake “women’s work” regularly thus challenging the hegemonic masculinity.

The more pressing and widespread challenge is the negative social repercussions that many of the single fathers experience when undertaking “women’s work”. This finding indicates the gendered differences in the lived realities of single parents and is likely to be related to the sentiment reported (feeling to be an “oddity”) by single fathers in other contexts such as reported by Richards and Schmiede (1993). The derision directed towards the single fathers, including the mocking, taunting, laughing, ridiculing, and pitying, mainly centered on pressure to remarry. In this sense, the community members were insisting that the single fathers reestablish the normative concept of the “household” which, in this context, includes a heterosexual man and a woman (and children). As Connell explained, the hegemonic masculinity is socially constructed and continues to exist because of alliances, dominance, and subordination (Connell 1995, 37). The dominance of hegemonic masculinity is reinforced through the derision directed towards the single fathers. It is important to recognize that women often took part in the derision because it confirms Lwambo’s (2011, 4) assertion that women are complicit in reinforcing the hegemonic masculinity.

As a male Congolese refugee told me one day: “men here are not respected unless they have a wife in the home”. Among the single fathers interviewed, younger single fathers were more likely to report experiencing pressure from the community to “bring a woman into the home” and remarry than older single fathers, potentially because they are closer in age to when the social expectation to establish a “homestead” is typically carried out; older men may get a social pass on this.

The majority of men said that they do not plan to get remarried in the foreseeable future because they do not believe a stepmother would properly care for their children; the new wife may not be “subservient” to the husband and children in all ways. As one of the single fathers put it: “It’s very dangerous to bring a woman into the house because if I do then my children will be left with her and she could violate their rights.” This was confirmed by Patrice, a single father who remarried after his wife abandoned him. His new wife refused to cook for his children and soon became an alcoholic and physically abused his children. Patrice was only married to her for two years, and now he does not plan to get remarried because he said it “would only add to my burden.”

The fear of a new wife mistreating their children was very common. The SGBV Officer at AHA confirmed this fear:

That is true [stepmothers do not generally care for the stepchildren]. Women sometimes become very dangerous. Like they have no love for their stepchildren and that’s why you find there is always mistreatment in the homes. They don’t like these kids that they found in this home. They only prefer their own children that they came

with. For a woman to look after another woman's child, it is very hard. So they tend to mistreat these kids and at the end of the day these kids sometimes run away.

She went on to tell stories of stepmothers in Kyaka II who refused to provide food for their stepchildren, and sometimes even forced the children to help prepare the food, and then not allow them to eat. Other stepmothers deny their stepchildren education, force them to take care of younger children, and ignore them when they are sick. This leads to children running away from their home, often to other family members, but sometimes deciding to live alone. This phenomenon of mistreatment by stepmothers has, to the extent of my knowledge, not been explored. In any case, it is a very strong belief among the single fathers interviewed and prevents them from remarrying until their children are grown. The single fathers ignore the pressure and expectation placed on them to remarry, simply for the sake of their children's wellbeing.

The results presented here support Kaufman's theory of men's complex experiences of power. The single fathers interviewed are understood to represent a subordinate expression of masculinity, located below the hegemonic masculinity on the hierarchy. While all men in the Congolese patriarchal society are capable of wielding a certain amount of power, the extent to which they are able to "reap" the benefits of simply being a man are sometimes limited. The power that an individual man can exercise also depends on other factors, including marital status (Kaufman 1994, 147). Without a "subservient" wife, single fathers are forced to undertake "feminine" tasks thus emasculating them and challenging men's power. However, in other situations that were not explored here, these same men most likely exercise power over other men and women.

As stated earlier, the single fathers demonstrate their agency by continuously defying the expectation placed on them to remarry and reestablish the socially accepted household. Every single man who reported being derided by someone in the community responded by ignoring the taunt; not one reported to have "given in" and remarried or "brought a woman in the home" due to this pressure. In this sense, the single fathers are complicit to the hegemonic masculinity – they are aware of the expectation for them to avoid undertaking tasks perceived as feminine and to remarry, but they simply do not oblige. They are not just "slacker versions" of hegemonic forms of masculinity (Connell 1995, 79-81). Instead, the vast majority of single fathers reported that they do not plan to get remarried in the foreseeable future.⁷ The single fathers generally viewed the prospect of bringing a new wife into their home as detrimental to their children's wellbeing and stick to this principle despite the sexual frustration that some of the single fathers expressed. Therefore, the single fathers can be

⁷ Although a select few had been remarried once or twice after the loss of their children's mother, and one single father who is legally married but living apart from his wife – again, heterogeneous experiences.

understood as striving towards the ideals of hegemonic masculinity in one sense (strong, provider, central figure), but also consciously accepting a subordinate form of masculinity by brushing off the critiques from community members and heading their households alone.

CHAPTER 5: RAISING THEIR CHILDREN

After “women’s work”, challenges associated with raising their children were the second most cited by the single fathers. Raising children inevitably entails many aspects, including feeding, clothing, educating, and ensuring adequate health among other things, however, the men specifically discussed the challenges of supervising their children, steering their children away from making “bad friends”, and raising their children without their mother present. Several examples from interviews illustrate these challenges.

5.1. Challenges in raising children: Empirical examples

Patrice is a 52-year-old Congolese refugee who has been living in Kyaka II for 11 years. His wife abandoned him and their four children eight years ago. When asked what is challenging for him in raising his four children, Patrice responded:

Caring for the children is difficult. Controlling them, cooking food, telling them to go to the garden. A child is not like an adult, even if you put food on the fire it will not get cooked, you have to supervise them. I tell them to remain somewhere, but they go play instead. When I come back from the garden sometimes one of them is sick and they need medicine.

This response encompasses the daily struggles for many of the single fathers interviewed. For the men who discussed these challenges, their coping strategy is generally to persevere with the situation; they look forward to the day when their children are grown. However, several of the fathers talked about the presence of drugs in the settlement, and the fear they have of their children making “bad friends”. For example, Joseph is a Congolese single father who has spent the last 12 years in Kyaka II. His wife abandoned him and their two sons seven years ago. He told us that his two sons, aged 14 and 16, are making “bad friends” who use marijuana and opium. In order to deal with this challenge, he said that he tries to counsel them, and since his children are his best friends he is generally open with them. However, he feels he struggles to steer them onto the “correct” path.

Kapili is a 50-year-old university-educated Congolese man who has been living as a refugee in Kyaka II for the past eight years. When conflict came to his village in North Kivu, his wife and sister were killed. At the time he had one young child, whom he left with his parents in Congo. He fled to Uganda and soon after he became a single father when his late sisters’ three children followed him to Kyaka II. He raised them in the settlement and two of the children, now aged 23 and 18 are studying at vocational schools in Kampala. He explained to us that the other boy “got lost” meaning that he left Kyaka II without informing UNHCR or Kapili and his current whereabouts are unknown. When raising his children, Kapili

told us that he often counseled them so that they would not make “bad friends”. He even asked members from the local church to speak with the children. However, Kapili was visibly saddened to tell us that the “lost boy” had “bad friends” who possibly convinced him to leave the settlement. Kapili is worried about the boy and frets about his safety.

Another aspect of raising children that was mentioned by several men is the challenge of raising children without their mother present. Jean Luc, the single father with three-year-old twins, explained that when he finds work, mainly odd mechanic jobs, he must leave the children at the house while he works (double burden of reproductive and productive tasks). If his wife was still alive she would be looking after them. He fears for the safety of his children because some children in Sweswe Zone where they live were reportedly poisoned and kidnapped. He feels lucky that his sister recently joined him in Kyaka II and often helps supervise the children while he works.

Other fathers explained to us that their children miss their mother and often ask about her. Jean Luc explained to us the challenge in communicating to the young children. He said that his children ask him “where is mom?” and he fails to explain to them that their mother is dead. Instead, he just tries to comfort them and make them feel like they are not alone. Jean Luc, like many of the fathers interviewed, said that he relies on God to help him through his challenges because he feels powerless. Other fathers said that they enjoy talking to their children about their homeland, often singing songs from Congo to console themselves. Jean, a single father with six children, told us that he plays with his children and tries to remind them about their homeland in order to “disappear the bad feelings from their minds.”

Lastly, a few of the men discussed their fear of passing away and leaving their children alone with no one to care for them. Anastasie, a 45-year-old Rwandan single father with five children, told us that since his wife died in 2003, he is worried that he may not survive until his children are grown. The thought of his children being alone stresses him. Similarly, Baraka, a 47-year-old Congolese refugee with three children, told us that he spends his free time teaching his children “life skills” and how to survive without him in case he should die unexpectedly. Gilbert, a single father with five children, also worries about dying and leaving his five children alone, so he spends the evenings after dinner telling his children stories and about “how to survive in society” in case they find themselves alone.

5.1.1. Challenges in raising adolescent daughters: Empirical examples

As shown in the previous section, for many of the single fathers interviewed, different aspects of raising their children present challenges. However, some of the men (especially those with adolescent daughters) explained that raising their daughters, in contrast to their sons, is a challenge. The explanations generally centered around providing material desires, dealing with “private issues”, and fearing for their daughters’ physical safety. In addition,

many of the men said that they feel unable to fulfill all the needs of their children without their wife, and many stated that they wish their wives were still around to help them raise their daughters; working “hand in hand” with their wife was an ideal that was mentioned repeatedly. In order to deal with this challenge, several of the men mentioned relying on a female friend, church member, or relative to help raise his daughter.

In general, the single fathers felt that raising an adolescent daughter requires a mother; it cannot be achieved by a man alone. Echoing the gendered division in raising children that the AHA SGBV officer explained, Baraka said: “according to our culture women must educate the girls, especially about private issues.” Michael, a 61-year-old single father with two children, a 13-year-old boy and ten-year-old girl, stated: “it’s difficult for me as a man to raise my daughter because she doesn’t listen to me like she would her mother. It’s better for the mother to be advising her.” Michael was abandoned by the mother of his daughter, however, his ex-wife still lives in Kyaka II. Occasionally she comes to see her child, and Michael explained that she gives “bad advice” to their daughter and tells her not to listen to her father, causing further parenting challenges for him.

Returning to Kapili, the single father who raised his late sister’s three children, he explained that the challenge for him in raising his sister’s daughter was providing her material desires that he was unable to provide, such as cosmetics and specific clothes. He said: “Raising the girl was difficult. She needs so many things. She wants body lotion, to fix her hair, and to have nice clothes. I counseled her on how to take care of herself and to live in our condition here. Sometimes women from the church came to talk to her also.”

Other men expressed the challenge of providing material desires for their daughters. For one man whose daughter wanted her hair braided, which can be costly in a local salon, he asks a female friend to braid his daughter’s hair. Kapili’s challenge was also in communicating with the girl, as shown by the fact that he encouraged women from the church to come and speak with her. Another single father, John, exemplified the problem of communication and dealing with issues of menstruation. John’s youngest daughter, Mwavita, is 16 years old and still lives at home with him. John told us that raising her and her older sister, who is now married and living with her husband in Kyaka II, was particularly challenging for him. He told us:

It was more difficult to raise Mwavita than my sons because she fears to tell me things that she would have told her mother. Sometimes she tells me ‘my head hurts’ and I take her to Bujubuli [medical center] but they find nothing and so I ask our female neighbors to talk to her and she finds out that she is menstruating and didn’t want to tell me.

Following on the topic of “private issues”, Benjamin, a 43-year-old Congolese single father with six children, including three daughters, explained that he tries to take care of his children when they fall ill, however, he struggles with his daughters because he does not feel comfortable bathing them anymore because they are getting older. Yet, according to Benjamin, caring for sick children includes bathing them. Therefore, he feels unable to entirely care for his daughters.

Another issue raised by the men was the safety of their children, and their daughters in particular. At least three men said that they fear for their daughters to “move around” the settlement. One man explained that he does not allow his teenage daughter to visit the village center where there are shops, restaurants, and people gathering because “she can be tempted by boys who may offer her things that can lead to bad actions”. He also fears that she could fall in love, however, he says that she is too young. During the interview with Kapili, who discussed the challenges in raising his three children, he mentioned that children get married too young in Kyaka II. Indeed, early marriage is a concern of AHA’s SGBV office, which receives reports of early marriages regularly. Patrice, the single father of four children, including two daughters, told us that in order to deal with the safety challenges, his two daughters (and youngest son) need permission from him to leave the house. Furthermore, the girls are never allowed to “move” at night.

5.2. Discussion and analysis of challenges in raising children, especially adolescent daughters

The second most widespread challenge (also a reproductive task) for the single fathers was in certain aspects of raising their children, especially their adolescent daughters. The challenges center around providing appropriate guidance to children (i.e. steering them away from certain things and into the “correct” direction) and providing them with desired goods. Related to this, Chapter 6 will discuss the challenge in providing school fees and education to their children in the context of poverty. Similarly to “women’s work” discussed previously, what is evident here is the distinction between mothers and fathers, men and women, that dictates what men must do and what women must do when it comes to raising children; a naturalized binary. Single fathers feel incapable, and are in many cases unwilling, to traverse this gender binary because it challenges their sense of masculinity.

When it came to steering their children away from “bad friends”, the challenges were assumed to be, by the single fathers, partly as a result of the refugee setting and not the absence of a mother-figure. However, challenges in raising daughters were, without exception, associated with the absence of the mother and rarely linked to the refugee context. Men with daughters in their adolescent years were more likely to name this as a challenge for them than those men with younger or older daughters, potentially because it is

at this stage in life when girls begin menstruating and having sexual relationships. Indeed, every single father interviewed with at least one daughter between the ages of ten and 18, with the exception of one, said that raising their daughters is more challenging for them than raising their sons. The single fathers reported feeling unable to “educate” their daughters about “private issues” because this is typically taken care of by the mother. Again, men are not traditionally socialized to undertake this task, although they could learn.

Several of the men stated that their daughters “need” a mother-figure in their lives, resonating with early research undertaken with single fathers in Western contexts (Risman 1986, 96-97). This contributes to the naturalization of women as “better” caregivers than men. However, at the same time, the majority of the single fathers also adamantly refused to consider remarriage in the foreseeable future. The single fathers are often without their kinship networks in the refugee settlement, which would certainly exist in their village of origin. Therefore, they cope with this challenge by turning to other female-figures in the community, such as women involved in their local church or a close neighbor, to provide the desired guidance for their daughters. The decision to not remarry – while being under pressure from the community - indicates the single fathers’ willingness and perceived capacity to be the primary caregiver for their children, including their daughters, resonating with much of the research undertaken with single fathers over the past several decades in other contexts (see Risman, 1986; Defraigne and Eirick 1981; Richards and Schmiede 1993).

Applying the hegemonic masculinity theory, it becomes clear that the single fathers are generally complicit in upholding the hegemonic masculinity by relegating certain aspects of the “motherly role” to women in the community. However, the single fathers do indeed undertake some aspects of raising their children that are typically performed by women, such as taking care of them when they are sick, cooking for them, and cleaning up after them thus again practicing their own subordinate form of masculinity.

Indeed, the men expressed a mixture of respect for the role that women play in raising children, but at the same time made it clear that they are unwilling, or unable in many cases, to perform the “feminine” tasks that are typically undertaken by the mother. One of the single fathers, Joseph, clearly explained the importance he places on having a wife: “I want to be the head of the family and I need a wife like any human being”. His quote indicates that he needs a wife, both as a status symbol of his masculinity and also to complement his role as head of the family. The respect towards the motherly role was apparent when the men discussed their desire to work “hand in hand” again with their previous wife. This resonates with Lwambo’s analysis which noted that despite male privilege, the relationship between a man and a woman is perceived as one of complementarity and “partnership” (2011, 12). The hegemonic masculinity norm prevails though. For example, one of the men told us: “I want a woman to help raise my children. If I had a wife I would be stronger.” In this case, “stronger”

can be understood as “better” at “fathering” or able to live up more fully to the masculine norm of a father and man. Instead, many of the single fathers claimed to have “become like a father and a mother”, or in other words are in the inferior position of a woman (mother), while also still fulfilling their fatherly or masculine role.

CHAPTER 6: TIME POVERTY AND HEALTH

Another challenge that the single fathers face is that of time poverty. Almost every single father interviewed alluded to the idea that they feel they do not have enough time to complete their parenting tasks as well as their paid work; this double burden leads to time poverty. When asked about their challenges, at least six of the men directly said “I do not have enough time” while others mentioned it in passing during the interview. After explaining that they do not have enough time, the men generally linked time poverty to health problems and/or poverty and being unable to pay school fees.

6.1. Challenges of time poverty: Empirical examples

Mugeni, a 58-year-old Congolese refugee with three young children aged eight, six, and three has been a single father for the past two years since his wife died from an unknown



Photograph 8 Nyao Singoo (single father) sits at his sewing machine waiting for clients after being interviewed. He farms and also works as a seamstress to support his two children; Photo credit: Author, 2016

illness. Before she died, he was successfully working as a blacksmith by buying pieces of metal and turning them into useful items and selling them. He was able to balance his work-life schedule more effectively: in one day he could make five energy-saving stoves. Now without his wife, he can only manage one stove a day because he spends most of his time cooking and supervising the children. Mugeni explained that he does not have enough time to do his paid

work properly and therefore he has a very limited income. He told us that he feels poor now and that he is aging quickly; he worries about the future for his children.

Benjamin, the single father with six children, told us that he is overloaded with work. He struggles to take care of his garden and make handcrafts that he sells. He is working two jobs to support his children, yet he says they still do not always have food to eat. Food

security is an issue for many of the single fathers, as food rations in Kyaka II are only given temporarily to new arrivals. He recounted his daily schedule to us:

I wake up around seven AM, wash my face and teeth, start the fire and warm leftovers from the night before for my children or I make them tea. Then the children go to school and I go to the garden for three hours. I grow maize, beans, and sweet potatoes. I come home and cook lunch for the children, usually maize flour and beans. The children come home around one o'clock, and the older ones go back to school in the afternoon until four o'clock. After lunch the older children clean the dishes. In the afternoon they go get firewood and water. I remain at the house and do my handcraft work from around two until six o'clock. The children play and rest at the house. We eat dinner around seven or eight o'clock. I cook the same foods. After dinner we rest and sleep around nine o'clock.

Like Benjamin, many of the men report feeling overburdened with work, and unable to complete all their daily tasks. Several of the men are involved in more than one income generating activity.

6.1.1. Challenges of time poverty and health issues: Empirical examples

The single fathers mainly linked their lack of time to health issues. In fact, 11 of the men became single fathers due to the fact that their wives died from health complications, many of which are preventable and/or treatable.⁸ But, it is mothers who are expected to take care of sick children, including taking them to the health center when needed which can take the entire day if the wait is long. Therefore, many of these men had never



Photograph 9 Baraka Donat (single father) photographed himself washing clothes with one of his sons while his daughter washes dishes next to them. His other son is setting down a pot, presumably to be washed; Photo credit: Baraka Donat, 2016

⁸ From a human rights perspective this finding is troubling as all human beings have the right to a standard of living high enough to ensure adequate health. Article 25 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights states: "(1) Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services, and the right to security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age or other lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond his control." ("United Nations", 2015 Article 25).

looked after their children when they fell ill until they became a single parent.

When asked about their health and the health of their children, most of the men mentioned at least one ailment. The health problems were widespread, however, malaria was mentioned the most as a recurring illness in their families. Men also specifically mentioned that they themselves or one of their children suffered from Hepatitis B, HIV, stomach ulcers, anemia, earaches, toothaches, sore backs, chest pains, jiggers (parasitic flea), and stomach pains. Several reported feeling chronic fatigue and high levels of stress, often over providing the next meal for their children or their children's futures.

Omar, the single father with four children, told us that one year ago his 12-year-old daughter was raped in the settlement. She was taken to the health center, however, she continues to suffer from severe fatigue, stomachaches, and she has open sores on her feet leaving her unable to walk. She stopped attending school and no longer leaves her bed. Her father said he has taken her more than 30 times to the health center in the settlement, but they are unable to treat her medical condition. He even took her to Kampala where she was given medication and sent back to the settlement. Once the medication ran out, Omar was unable to find more. During the days he spent at the health center with her, he was unable to work (he is a seamstress) meaning he received no income and the entire family suffered. The case of Omar demonstrates clearly how the health of one family member is tied into time poverty for the single father, and poverty more generally for the entire family.

Three of the single fathers had recently undergone a major operation making it a



challenge to physically move. Baraka had surgery on his knee before leaving Congo, however, he has trouble walking now and is in need of a total knee replacement. The surgery is too complex for the health center in the settlement, so he is on a waiting

Photograph 10 Mugeni Bodwe (single father) takes a break from his work as a blacksmith to sit with his three children; Photo credit: Author, 2016

list to undergo the surgery in another hospital in Uganda. He does not know when he will finally receive the surgery.

In addition, some fathers discussed psychological/emotional health problems that they or their child is experiencing, including stress, and feelings of loneliness and isolation. For example, Omar told us that he drinks alcohol because he is “thinking too much”. Similarly, Rockie is a 70-year-old single father with four children aged 21, 12, ten, and seven. When we arrived for the interview Rockie was visibly drunk. He insisted to do the interview so we began a discussion and I soon found out that his wife died from typhoid only six weeks before. When asked about his challenges, he told us that he is drinking because he is stressed: “my wife died and now I am alone”. Alcohol abuse is his coping strategy for the moment. Further reports of feeling lonely and isolated are discussed in Chapter 8.

Mathias, also a single father with four young children, described experiencing disturbing images after his wife unexpectedly died from an illness one year ago. He told us that being a single father has become easier with time, because: “at least I don’t see her image everywhere anymore. Before, when I walked around I saw my wife everywhere”.

Most of the men confirmed that when they, or one of their children, falls sick, they rely on the health centers in the settlement for treatment and medicine. However, several of the men claimed that the health center is inadequately stocked. For example, Benjamin told us that he has been having chest pains for the past few days, however, he is hesitant to go to the health center because it takes time and he may not receive adequate treatment. Mugeni explained, and other single fathers confirmed, that when one of his children falls sick he just goes directly to the pharmacy to buy the child medicine rather than take the child to the health center where he may spend all day waiting. This leaves healthcare decisions up to pharmacy staff, who are often untrained (“Ministry of Health” 2008). Furthermore, another negative of going directly to the pharmacy is that the men must pay for the medicine, while medicine from the health center in Kyaka II is provided free of charge (when the medicine is in stock). For two of the men, neither the health center nor the pharmacy is satisfying so they prefer to seek out herbal medicine from a Ugandan national living near the settlement.

6.2. Discussion and analysis of challenges related to time poverty and health

Time poverty is an issue that affects many of the single fathers interviewed. Like the previous challenges of “women’s work” and raising children, applying a gender-framework to this issue is useful. To begin with, the theory of the “double burden” of reproductive and productive tasks is usually associated with single mothers, but also applies to single fathers. This bias stems from the fact that within academia and humanitarian and development discourses, vulnerabilities in the household are centered around the absence of productive work, or income-generating activities, more often performed by men. This assumption leads to the

portrayal of single mothers as “especially vulnerable” which as a construction has been criticized (see Chant 2003). However, for the single fathers interviewed here, when they became single parents, they were inevitably burdened with all of the necessary reproductive tasks that allow a household to function. Single fathers, although theoretically able to continue their productive work, are also likely to suffer from time poverty.

Interestingly, when it comes to time poverty the single fathers experience a paradoxical mixture of power and powerlessness resonating with Kaufman’s theory. In this patriarchal context, men are afforded luxuries that women are not, including “resting” time. For example, a typical daily schedule for a two-parent, heterosexual household in Kyaka II is for the husband and wife to work together in the garden (although undertaking different tasks) during the morning hours (roughly seven AM until 12 PM), then return to their home around lunchtime when the woman then begins preparing lunch and the man benefits from a “rest” often lasting several hours.⁹ “Resting” is mainly understood to be sleeping, but can also include sitting calmly in a chair and/or reading.

During our interviews, almost all of the men alluded to the idea that they suffer from time poverty. Yet, when asked to recount their typical daily activities, around half of the men recounted spending at least a short time during a typical weekday “resting” in the afternoon. Because they are men, they are expected to benefit from this “resting” time in the afternoon, however, the single fathers are not always able to “reap” this benefit because they must now cook lunch and dinner. If single fathers take part in the typical period of “rest” in the afternoon, they are certainly doomed to suffer from time poverty. However, it should be noted that not all of the single fathers “rest” in the afternoon, as Benjamin’s daily schedule showed, yet they still consistently reported the challenge of time poverty.

This result resonates with previous research that finds that single parents are very likely to suffer from time poverty (see Harvey and Mukhopadhyay 2007) and also supports Hook and Chalasani’s argument of single fathers being “caught between two worlds” (2008, 979). Men are expected to be financial providers often conflicting with other expectations, such as benefitting from a “resting” time. These contradicting expectations put single fathers in a position of choosing between an activity that is socially accepted as a man’s rights (i.e., “resting” in the afternoon) and undertaking more hours of productive work. Many of the single fathers choose to continue productive work in the afternoon hours, such as farming or making handcrafts, while others take advantage of the “resting” time.

⁹ Women may also “rest”, but generally only during the dry season when there is less work to be done in the garden (AHA GBV Officer, personal communication, February 3, 2016).

CHAPTER 7: POVERTY AND DEBT

Poverty is widespread in Kyaka II and is a challenge for many of the single fathers interviewed. Many explained that they are now living in poverty, often for the first time in their life. When prompted, the single fathers analyzed their economic status in Kyaka II in comparison to their village of origin. Results indicate that many are experiencing a lower standard of living. However, for the single fathers, the weight of poverty is felt in the struggle to find enough food for their children and especially to pay their school fees. As the previous chapter explained, time poverty is tied into, and contributes to, economic poverty. The coping strategy most used is to borrow necessary items or take out a loan on credit often leading to insurmountable debts.

7.1. Challenges of poverty and debt: Empirical examples

While their previous socioeconomic status is difficult to calculate based solely on personal recollections, it was obvious that the majority of the men had a higher standard of living before moving to Kyaka II. A few of the men are living within similar standards as they previously did in Congo (although there is inherent instability in living in a refugee settlement), and a very few indicated that they may actually be better off in certain aspects in Kyaka II indicating their background was one of extreme poverty. This is determined from their comparisons of house structure and quality and their general assets during the interviews.

The majority of men said that in Congo (or Rwanda in the case of the one Rwandan man) they had several among the following items: a bed frame and mattress; a radio; an iron; plastic chairs and tables; other furniture for storage; decorative plates; eating utensils; and various livestock. Most men had several rooms in their houses, which they described as being well-built and “sturdy” often involving brick, iron sheets, cement, or strong sticks. One man told us that in Congo he had a brick house, glass windows, cement floor, and access to electricity. Their living standard in Kyaka II is



Photograph 11 Michael Manimani (single father) showing Raymond and I around his garden and house after being interviewed. He told us he fears his house will collapse soon as he points out weak spots; Photo credit: Author, 2016

generally less well off. Houses are not sturdy and often have holes in the roof leaving the house exposed to rain and insects. Without exception their houses have dirt floors making bare feet susceptible to jiggers and other insects and parasites that thrive in the soil. The single fathers and their children generally sleep on very thin mattresses or mats on the ground. Despite their general loss in assets, not one of the single fathers listed this as a challenge for them today; they only recounted these stories when specifically asked about changes in their standard of living. Following this discussion, several of the men added that despite poverty, they feel a sense of security and calmness in Kyaka II that they no longer felt in Congo; “at least in Kyaka II I don’t hear bullets when I close my eyes at night. I feel safe.”

Their shifts in socioeconomic status can be partly explained through their changes in paid work. In Congo, the majority of men took part in various income-generating activities, including rearing livestock, selling and trading in gold, working as a fisherman, mechanic, carpenter, or blacksmith. One single father was a previous park ranger in Virunga National Park for seven years. The single father with the university degree in management, commerce, and bank administration used these skills in Congo working for a local NGO at



Photograph 12 Amisi Ismael (single father) photographed himself eating a meal of porridge with his children. One of his sons helps feed another child; Photo credit: Amisi Ismael, 2016

the same time as running a small shop. When asked to describe their income-generating activities today, the majority of single fathers described themselves as “just a farmer”; there are limited opportunities for economic advancement in Kyaka II, particularly for those with no savings or cash available for

start-up. Some of the single fathers in Kyaka II also take part in various activities. For example, one single father makes handcrafts from natural materials he collects, two others work as seamstresses, another works as a blacksmith, others in commerce, and several work as casual laborers either in other people’s gardens or undertaking mechanic jobs. Some of the men indicated that since their wife died, they struggle to earn an income. One of

the men told us “when my wife was alive we had a small shop together, but now I can just buy charcoal to sell and farm.”

It is clear that many of the single fathers struggle to provide basic human needs for themselves and their children. In order to cope with this challenge, the men rely on community members for help, borrow from friends and local shops, as well as participate in skills training events organized by fellow refugees in order to learn small business skills that can translate into increased income in the future.

Benjamin, the single father with six children, told us that sometimes there is no food in their home, but his children are hungry so they go to the neighbors' houses without his permission and ask for food. Then the neighbors gossip about him not being about to provide for his children and Benjamin feels ashamed. Another example is Tsumba, a 53-year-old single father. His wife died from an unknown illness two years and three months ago. They had four children together, but since his wife's death three of his children have developed an illness and passed away leaving him with one five-year-old daughter. His daughter was ill when we came to interview Tsumba, and he told us that when he is away or unable to cook, he relies on his neighbors to feed his daughter.

In addition to providing food, several men discussed the effects of poverty on their children's education. Eight of the men said that at least one of their children had dropped out before completing primary school, while another four said that they had at least one child who aspired to continue onto secondary school but the fees were too high. Two



Photograph 13 Sulaiman Sudik (single father) stands in front of his house after being interviewed. He farms and also attends a weekly soap-making lesson taught by a fellow refugee in hopes of starting his own business to support his children; Photo credit: Author, 2016

other fathers explained that their children do not attend school regularly due to the inability to pay the fees on time often resulting in their children being chased away from the school grounds.¹⁰

John, a single father discussed above, told us that his biggest challenge is in educating his children; the school fees are too expensive. When asked what he would like to do in the future, he said his wish is for his four children to be able to go back and finish secondary school. He wants them to learn technical skills, but he said that because he is now living in poverty he cannot afford the school fees. Mwavita, his 16-year-old daughter is his only child still enrolled in school. He told us “Mwavita loves school”, but paying for her school fees is a challenge and in addition he also must pay for a uniform and shoes. In order to do this he saves some money after harvesting season twice a year to pay all the fees required for her schooling.

Another man who expressed the challenge in educating his children was Tijebuka, a single father with five children. Tijebuka has three children of his own, a ten-year-old girl, eight-year-old girl, and four-year-old son, as well as two daughters from his late sister, aged 12 and nine. In 2013 Tijebuka's wife abandoned him to marry another man leaving Tijebuka with the five children. In 2015 Tijebuka began having health complications with his stomach and underwent a major operation in Fort Portal, leaving him unable to complete the physical work of farming. Since the operation, his five children have not attended school because he can no longer afford the school fees. He expressed frustration with the humanitarian organizations present, whom he claims cut him off from food rations even though he is a single parent with major health complications and is caring for orphans.

As shown, poverty was a recurring challenge among the men interviewed. In order to cope with the challenge of poverty, a few of the men said that their children undertake paid labor. For example, Kisembo told us that his 15-year-old daughter fries cassava or *maandazi* (sugar fried bread) and sells it at the market during school holidays in order to earn some cash for her father. Likewise, Baraka told us that his 15-year-old son sometimes helps people do small work on their houses for a little money. Sulaiman's two sons, aged 16 and 18, also do small jobs like fetching water for other people and selling eggs so they have money to buy soap or other small things. All of these men expressed feelings of guilt in having to rely on their own children for support.

In order to cope with these challenges, borrowing on credit was common among the men interviewed with at least 11 men claiming to have an outstanding debt. Several of the

¹⁰ From a human rights perspective this finding is also troubling as all human beings have the right to education. Article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights states: “(1) Everyone has the right to education. Education shall be free, at least in the elementary and fundamental stages. Elementary education shall be compulsory. Technical and professional education shall be made generally available and higher education shall be equally accessible to all on the basis of merit.” (“United Nations”, 2015 Article 26).

men buy food on credit from local shops. For example, one man said that he currently owes 19,000 Uganda Shillings (UGX) to a local shop for sugar and rice. Another owes 20,000 UGX to a shop for salt and cooking oil. Another man took a loan for 1.5 million UGX from a local organization to buy cloth for his sewing business and he also paid the 24,000 UGX school fees for his son for the year. He has four months to pay the loan back with interest. These sums are relatively enormous considering a daily wage for farming is around 5,000 UGX. The option of formally taking a credit from an organization seemed to be preferred to borrowing from friends or community members.

A more common strategy mentioned, potentially due to limited formal options, was borrowing food and/or money from people in the community thus resulting in debt. Patrice told us that whenever he is short on money he borrows from a friend. In turn, his friends also borrow from him occasionally. Pauloco, a single father with one six-year-old child told us that if he does not have food or money to buy food, he looks to borrow by asking people in the community to lend him food that he will repay later. He said he is typically forced to borrow food twice a week. Gilbert, the single father with five children, explained that because he has so many children, and he refuses to beg for food in the streets, he borrows food on credit from his neighbors. He currently owes several people a total of 70,000 UGX for food. When Tijebuka needed the surgery on his stomach last year, he could not afford the payment so he borrowed 120,000 UGX from three different people in the community that he must pay back when he is able to farm again.

Poverty is a challenge that many in the refugee settlement are facing, not only single fathers. This has led to some innovative solutions, including one refugee man who started a small group training. He has skills in soap-making so he invited others in the settlement who would like to learn for training lessons. Participants must pay 5,000 UGX per week to attend the lesson. Sulaiman decided to join this group despite the weekly cost because he sees it as a necessary investment for the future.

7.2. Discussion and analysis of challenges related to poverty and debt

The single fathers in Kyaka II are clearly facing challenges associated with poverty, which may derive from the double burden of productive and reproductive tasks and/or as a result of poor conditions and limited opportunities in the settlement. Furthermore, time poverty and poor health contribute to and exacerbate poverty. The fact that the men repeatedly discussed the two issues of food security and education show their intentions to “care” for their children – not one man cited the fact that they have lost their assets, or material goods, or that they are forced to sleep on a dirt floor with no mattress when they had a mattress and bed frame before in Congo as a challenge. They are indeed focused on their children’s wellbeing when

it comes to being fed and educated. Failing to provide these basic human needs (and rights) for themselves and their children evidently challenges the masculinity norm.

As previously discussed, it is a social norm for Congolese men to establish a “homestead” and start a family and to subsequently provide for this household (Lwambo 2011, 4). However, the context of the refugee settlement constrains men from fulfilling this gender norm, particularly the limitation on establishing permanent structures and widespread poverty. This is a constraint for all men (and women), however, the single fathers interviewed indicated that it is especially challenging since they became a single parent. One of the men told us: “to not have a wife at home causes poverty and you have to do things you weren’t intended for.” This can be understood as spending time undertaking “women’s work”, often at the expense of their productive work. This quote – specifically the words “intended for” – also demonstrates the extent to which the gendered division of labor is naturalized.

This finding resonates with other literature that indicated that single fathers are likely to experience financial difficulties (see Mberu 1999; Ozawa and Lee 2006). Unfortunately, within the economic literature presented in Chapter 3, all MHH were typically grouped together in analyses indicating a bias towards men’s capabilities when it comes to generating income; productive work is assumed to take place in SMHH and in two-parent households as long as a man is present. Again, this bias stems from the lack of value given to reproductive work; FHH are often assumed to be among the poorest in a society because the household lacks a productive worker. The absence of reproductive tasks (more often undertaken by women) has not been thoroughly problematized within humanitarian and development discourses. However, the value of reproductive work is evident among the SMHH interviewed. Their narratives indicated that they perceive their poverty as a direct result of no longer having a wife (i.e., person undertaking reproductive work). Another interesting finding was that, in contrast to FHH, which Sylvia Chant (2003) argues often have working males in the household that potentially contribute to the households overall wellbeing, the single fathers interviewed were almost exclusively the only person in the household earning an income thus contributing to their vulnerability.

In order to deal with the vulnerabilities associated with poverty, the coping strategy most often employed by the single fathers is borrowing from community members or taking a credit from local organizations, resulting in debt. This indicates their determination to provide for their household. While access to credit is crucial for these single fathers and does allow them to undertake necessary actions, including medical procedures, several of the single fathers are in extreme situations (i.e., the single father who recently took out a loan for 1.5 million UGX or approximately USD 449¹¹ and must pay it back within four months including

¹¹ According to Yahoo Finance on June 10, 2016.

interest). In general, the debts that these men have accumulated are not taken out for productive purposes, but simply to fill the gaps that they cannot with their own income.

Borrowing from a shop is perceived as a more respectable option among the single fathers, potentially due to the formal nature, followed by borrowing from friends or neighbors. This is also done under the premise that the money or food will be paid back in a reasonable amount of time. However, this is contradictory to the masculinity norm which dictates that men must provide for their own household as well as give “generously” to extended family and friends (Lwambo 2013, 52). Therefore, the actions taken here demonstrate another dimension of the single fathers’ subordinate form of masculinity. In certain cases, limitations were set on how far they are willing to go. For example, Gilbert said that he “refuses to beg for food on the streets” and instead he only borrows from friends. Begging for food would be the ultimate challenge to the masculinity norm of “provider”. It is also possible that the gender norms have been renegotiated due to the circumstances of living in the refugee settlement; further research should explore this possibility.

Other challenges to their sense of masculinity include their domain of work in Kyaka II and, in rare cases, relying on their children for financial support. During the interviews a few of the single fathers described themselves as “just a farmer” indicating they perceive themselves as doing “less” or more “simple” work than previously. Lwambo (2011) explained that masculinity is constructed more around what men “do” as opposed to what men “are” meaning their income-generating activity is a status symbol. Especially for men who were undertaking work requiring a higher skill level or earning a higher income before settling in Kyaka II, describing themselves as “just a farmer” is a form of self-disapproval. However, the single fathers should not be understood as passive victims of poverty and their circumstances; they actively search for solutions. Their resiliency and determination to raise their children to the best of their ability is demonstrated through their actions to seek out credit options.

CHAPTER 8: FEELING ALONE OR ISOLATED AND SEXUALITY

In addition to the challenges discussed previously, a handful of the men explained that they endure feelings of loneliness and/or isolation, and a few expressed challenges related to sexuality. Because these challenges were more rarely discussed and there are fewer empirical examples, they are grouped together in this chapter.

8.1. Challenges related to feeling alone or isolated: Empirical examples

Several of the men expressed that they miss the emotional connection they had with their wife. Others explained that they enjoyed working next to their wives in the garden, or discussing issues with them in the evening; men and women's complementarity of roles was evident (as noted in Lwambo, 2011). Several men explained that after a long day, they feel sad to go to bed alone; they simply miss their wife's presence.

A few of the single fathers also expressed concern for their children, whom they perceive to feel isolated since the loss of their mother. Bagambe, the single father with one child, explained to us: "My challenge is when my son asks where is his mother. He sees his friends with their mothers and he feels bad. It makes us both feel bad. I don't know what to tell the child. Should I tell him she is dead?"

He continued to explain that his son often feels sad and isolated from other children. These recollections rendered Bagambe extremely emotional; we had to take a break in our interview. After we regrouped, I asked him if he wanted to stop the interview, but he insisted that we continue and told me: "Yes I want to continue, it is just that these questions make my heart hurt". Similarly, Gilbert told us that his children feel isolated when they see other families having an enjoyable moment together.

For the men who expressed that they miss their wife's presence, their coping strategies include "persevering" with the situation, especially until their children are grown. Another strategy is turning to religion. Augustine, like a few other single fathers, told us: "When my wife died I just turned all my problems over to God and I listened to God". Lastly, some of the men rely on friends or family members to help them cope. For example, Maombi told us that he relies on his brother, who also lives in the settlement and is a single father, to emotionally support him: "we help each other in mind and we advise each other."

8.2. Challenges related to sexuality: Empirical examples

Mentions of sexuality were uncommon, however, at least five of the men discussed related challenges. One man, Michael, explained that he became a single father due to a "sexual problem". He was married to two women in Kyaka II,¹² and had one child with each woman,

¹² Polygamy is uncommon in Kyaka II, however, it continues to be practiced. Michael was the only man interviewed who was, at one point, involved in a polygamous relationship.

now aged 10 and 13. However, they both left him because his “penis was not sharp [smart]”. The women said that he was unable to please them sexually, or impregnate them again so they abandoned him for other husbands. Michael says that he does not blame them for leaving him; indeed, he feels that he failed them. The community is aware of his “inactive sex”, but he says that they do not treat him negatively because of this.

Others focused on the lack of sexual encounters. For example, when asked to recount their daily routine, two of the men jokingly said that if their wife was still there they would spend the hot afternoons together in bed. On a more serious note, the other two men expressed outright frustration at a lack of sexual activity. However, all five of the men said that they do not have sexual relationships with women because if they bring a woman to the house it would not be good for their children. As one man said, “If I brought a woman home it would only confuse my children”.

Anastasie, the Rwandan single father with five children, explained to us that since his wife died in 2003, he has remarried once. However, there was a conflict between him and her family and she left him shortly after. He expressed to us that his second biggest challenge (after time poverty) is that he often feels like having sex, but he no longer has a wife. Like other single fathers, he said that he is no longer searching for a wife or a sexual relationship because it would not be good for his children. He said: “It is difficult not to let another woman come into my house. I have tried but there was no good outcome.” When asked how they overcome challenges associated with their sexuality, the men generally responded that they “persevere” and that they will remarry once their children are grown.

8.3. Discussion and analysis of challenges related to feeling alone or isolated and sexuality

The absence of a wife is, for some men, a source of sexual frustration. For others (and sometimes simultaneously), it is also an emotional loss as shown by the single fathers who described their wife as a friend and someone with whom they enjoyed talking and working. Among Congolese men and women, sexuality plays a paramount role in the construction of the hegemonic masculinity. Men are expected to be sexually active and have several sex partners in addition to a wife with whom he fathers children (Lwambo 2013).

For single fathers in general, the absence of a wife would indicate to the community a lack of sexual relations – at least in the home. While most of these men claim that they are not having sexual relationships (“bringing women into the home”) with other women, community members could potentially be unaware. Interestingly none of the derision directed towards the single fathers was of a sexual nature. This is surprising given the emphasis on men’s sexuality in Congolese masculinity.

The case of Michael, whose two wives abandoned him, is interesting because he was unable to sexually please or impregnate his wives – a clear contradiction to the hegemonic masculinity. Michael failed to live up to the masculine norm of fathering children (although he had two children his wives expected more), yet he claims that his neighbors and friends are aware of his “sexual problem” but they do not treat him badly because of this. Instead, Michael expressed signs of “self repression” by claiming that it was his fault that his wives left him, and that he “failed” them; a sign of the dominance of the hegemonic masculinity (Vale de Almeida 1996, 164). However, it seems that other contradictions to masculinity, such as undertaking “women’s work”, are less tolerated socially. Although Michael is only one example.

The potential coping strategies discussed by several of the single fathers included having a sexual relationship with a woman, or remarrying. However, the majority of the men claim not to have sexual relations with women nor a wish to remarry in the foreseeable future, mainly because of the challenges associated with remarrying and a fear stepmothers mistreatment towards their children discussed in Chapter 4. The challenges related to sexuality are understood as subordinate to the other challenges previously analyzed; an absence of sexual relations is undesirable, but “women’s work”, raising children, time poverty, health complications, and poverty are more pressing challenges.

CONCLUSION

The challenges and coping strategies presented and analyzed in Chapters 4 through 8 provide responses to the two research questions that this dissertation set out to answer. In addition, certain assumptions underlying the previous literature have been proven inaccurate. Most importantly, the experiences of single fathers have been shown to be heterogeneous and are understood to differ greatly from single mothers.

The analysis of the challenges draws from a gender-framework which is particularly useful given the patriarchal context in which the single fathers live. The role of “father” and “husband” are integral to local conceptualizations of hegemonic masculinity automatically rendering single fathers to a subordinate form of masculinity. Through certain actions the single fathers are complicit in upholding the hegemonic masculinity norm. For example, those who relegate typical “women’s work” to their daughters, sisters, or other women in the community in order to avoid “becoming like a woman”. However, in many cases the single fathers’ actions can be understood as defying the hegemonic masculinity. The most telling example is by not remarrying which could, in theory, aid in resolving many of their challenges through the presence of a woman to undertake “women’s work”, help in raising children, particularly daughters, alleviate adverse effects of time poverty, etc. The decision of single fathers to head the household alone challenges the social norm of the “household”, which rests on a two-parent heterosexual model, and what a “real man” should be and do.

Furthermore, the specific context of a refugee settlement limits the single fathers in fulfilling gender norms. Challenges associated with poverty (including health complications and time poverty) derive, at least in part, from the double burden of productive and reproductive tasks and as a result of poor conditions and limited opportunities in the settlement. Despite the hardships they face, the single fathers have developed coping mechanisms in order to raise their children to the best of their ability. Failing to provide certain basic human needs (i.e., regular meals and education) for their children evidently challenges the masculinity norm which dictates that men “provide”. However, further research is needed to explore the ways in which traditional gender norms have been renegotiated following the act of displacement for the refugees living in Kyaka II.

This research is, to the extent of my knowledge, the first empirical research to be carried out among single fathers in a refugee settlement. The findings here are only the beginning of an understanding of the challenges and capacities of single fathers and SMHH in refugee contexts. The following chapter will analyze SMHH from a different level: that of humanitarian organizations and policy.

CHAPTER 9: WHY ARE SMHH NOT CONSIDERED AS AN “INTEREST GROUP” WITHIN HUMANITARIAN AND DEVELOPMENT DISCOURSES?

The SMHH in Kyaka II are clearly facing multiple challenges that derive in part from, and are exacerbated by, masculinity norms and the context of poverty in which they are living. Therefore, why are SMHH not considered as a problem, or “interest group”, within humanitarian and development discourses? Why are the single fathers not organizing themselves to call attention to their challenges? SMHH exist within a policy void: they are rarely acknowledged in policy prescriptions. The answer to these questions is complex and derives from actions at different levels: the single fathers themselves, humanitarian actors, and policy-makers. In reality, the actions are intertwined and influence each other.

9.1. Single fathers are not organized within the community in the way that single mothers are

The general homogenization of all single parents and limited attention to single fathers in the existing literature was highlighted in the literature review. Nonetheless, the single fathers themselves could potentially challenge the ongoing discourse that perpetuates the ideas that SMHH are rare and that those that do exist are able to meet their families needs without challenges. However, single fathers in Kyaka II appeared unwilling to do that, possibly due simply to the pressure they feel to be strong, able providers. SMHH already challenge the social norm of the household and maybe hesitate to call more attention to themselves based on this social anomaly. Indeed, the gender-officer at one of the humanitarian organizations in Kyaka II explained to me that only women (very often single mothers) come to her office seeking counseling and other services because, in her opinion, the men do not need or want to ask for help. This resonates with Mendes’ study among single fathers in the U.S. which noted that single fathers may hesitate to ask for help due to masculinity norms (1976, 441). Paradoxically, the unwillingness to call attention to themselves or seek out assistance contributes to upholding the hegemonic masculinity norm.

During interviews, the single fathers could often name one or two other single fathers living near them in the settlement and also recounted being acquainted with one or more single fathers in their respective village of origin indicating their prevalence and awareness of each other. Despite their awareness of each other, when asked if they communicate with each other, the majority replied that they generally do not. So there is a certain lack of effort among the single fathers to band together and form a “group”.

It was clear that the single fathers do not consider themselves as a “group” in the sense that the single mothers in the settlement do, who often spend time together due to various initiatives organized by humanitarian organizations. One major difference is the initial support and recognition from humanitarian organizations present in the settlement

encouraging women to come forward: there are resources that will be given in the form of cash support, counseling, shelter etc. for women who make a case for being “vulnerable”. Throughout the settlement there are billboards advertising women’s rights and several of the organizations plan events specifically for women and girls. While single fathers are largely unrecognized, they lack this initial support and encouragement. The next question is: why are there no initiatives undertaken at the level of humanitarian organizations to aid in alleviating the challenges of single fathers?

9.2. In Kyaka II SMHH are overlooked by humanitarian organizations: Labeling and categorizing

While carrying out my research in Kyaka II, employees of various humanitarian organizations made statements to me implying that there are not many single fathers in the settlement. Oftentimes the existence of SMHH was reduced to the fact that “in comparison to single mothers, there are few single fathers”. There is also the assumption that when men are put in the position of being a single parent, they remarry quickly. However, the majority of the single fathers interviewed did not confirm these assumptions.

The confusion surrounding the prevalence of SMHH stems, at least in part, from a lack of available statistics on the household composition of families living in the settlement. As explained in the introduction, when asked about specific statistics regarding households in Kyaka II, several key informants ensured me that they have access to the breakdown of households in the settlement including the specific number of SMHH. However, after contacting numerous staff members over a period of ten months, I have failed to locate such statistics. This bureaucratic shortcoming highlights a lack of interest and limits staff, researchers, and policy-makers from a comprehensive overview of the households in the settlement.

From a gender-perspective, there are also several reasons why SMHH may be overlooked. The local conceptions of masculinity uncovered by Lwambo (2011; 2013) among Congolese in the Eastern part of DRC highlight the fact that men are expected to provide for and be the central figure of their family. Men are expected to have a wife thus eliminating the possibility of SMHH. These gender norms are widespread and were acknowledged and echoed by key figures within the refugee settlement, including the settlement commandant and a UNHCR regional employee. When asked why there is no attention paid to single fathers in Kyaka II by the humanitarian organizations present, the settlement commandant responded:

Number one it’s an oversight. I think that men can cope up. Number two, it’s a cultural thing... that the women are more vulnerable compared to men so when there’s a

single father there, we think he can fend for himself, but we forget that there are certain individuals who are off. Whereas if it's women... then again I will go to gender issues... they are perceived to be the weaker sex so therefore if they're single here they are more vulnerable, they have no male protection and everybody wants to look at that. But, also it's easier to catch funding for women than men. So people focus where they can easily catch funding and do projects. If you happen to propose a project now for single mothers and one for single fathers, the one for single mothers has a high chance of being funded. So that's the reasons why males have not been looked at.

This quote highlights the widespread belief of women as “vulnerable” and men as “provider” and “protector” as well as linked this to the complexities of donor funding from the international community and global gender norms; the gender norm that dictates man as “provider” exceeds this specific context. Similar assumptions were acknowledged by other humanitarian workers. For example, when asked about UNHCR's activities in Kyaka II, a protection officer who is stationed in Mbarara told me:

Our focus in the settlement is single women, the men seem to be on the other side... not much focus has been given to them. UNHCR has their standards for categorizing people, the PSNs [persons with special needs] and the EVIs [extremely vulnerable individuals], but often the single fathers are missing from these lists because people tend to look at men as energetic, able to provide. They don't look at the specific needs of these people [single fathers] because most of the focus is on single women. They don't think there can be a man who is working, who is single, but cannot provide for his family. So sometimes these groups are left out.

This quote clearly explains the importance of categorization and targeting by UNHCR. Only those who fall under a preordained category are likely to receive assistance; the rest fall through the cracks. When asked for information on UNHCR's activities with single mothers in Kyaka II, the protection officer explained the benefits associated with the label “single mother”:

The single mothers usually receive full food rations, just because they are single mothers. They [the humanitarian organizations] don't expect them to be able to meet their demands. They get more support for their children, scholastic materials for their children. They try to level them to the rest of the community because since they are

single mothers, you know? They expect them to be in a lower position than the rest of the community... so we try to level that.

Again, the perceived vulnerabilities of a household stems from the belief deeming households that lack a productive worker, typically a man (i.e., FHH), as automatically “vulnerable” or in a “lower position” while those lacking a reproductive worker, typically a wife (i.e., SMHH), as able to provide and fulfill gender norms. These assumptions have been increasingly challenged (see Marcoux 1998; Chant 2003; Krause 2014) as nuances are uncovered that reveal a more complex picture of vulnerabilities and capacities. Indeed, the research findings presented in this dissertation indicate that SMHH do indeed face severe difficulties thus challenging the gender norm as well as the assumption that single fathers and single mothers have similar experiences.

Processes of categorization and labeling are inherent to development and humanitarian activities. Within humanitarian settings there may be dozens of organizations operating to provide necessary services to the population. Humanitarian organizations define their target population by applying labels, such as “Extremely Vulnerable Individual” or “Persons with Special Needs” as the UNHCR employee recounted. These labels result in assistance and resources that are carefully doled out by humanitarian organizations to those perceived to be in need.

Refugee contexts in particular are recognized as being extremely prone to labeling and categorization: Roger Zetter, professor and former director of the Refugee Studies Center at Oxford University, argues that labels “infuse the world of refugees” (1991, 39). Zetter (1991) explains that the label of “refugee” itself is very powerful because it is associated with a specific legal status. Therefore, within refugee settings, such as Kyaka II, labeling and categorizing are widespread and have positive and negative consequences. The quote by the settlement commandant clearly explained the positive benefits associated with the label “single mother” and explained that single fathers are not afforded the same recognition due to gender norms: the label “single father” is not effective.

9.3. Policy rarely deals with “single fathers” as a category

On another level, the lack of attention to single fathers derives partly from the way in which groups of people are labeled and categorized in policy texts, where SMHH exist within a void. The process of categorizing is central in policy making because it allows policy makers to address a certain group of people for a specific reason. Yet, the act of categorizing people into pre-ordained categories is heavily debated (van der Haar and Verloo 2013), and rightfully so as human beings should not be reduced to simple labels that can serve to reinforce stereotypes (e.g., that all FHH are vulnerable). However, the flipside to specifying

differences and commonalities is the reductionist tendency to equate all men together as strong, able providers, which is also problematic as is shown by the research findings.

Even among policy initiatives aimed at gender equality, acknowledgement of groups beyond general references to “women” and “men” as categories is rare. For example, an analysis on the intersectionalized categorizations made in gender equality policies in several European countries revealed that the policy texts referred to the “generic gender category” of “women” occasionally, and more rarely to “men”. Other intersectionalized categories considering social class, age, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, and marital status were rarely mentioned regarding men (van der Haar and Verloo 2013, 430) highlighting the scarce attention paid to groups such as single fathers. For refugee single fathers to be reached, an intersectional approach using gender, marital status, and refugee status would need to be used.

Questioning the processes of labeling and categorizing within policy and humanitarian activities is important because in Kyaka II, those groups deemed as specific “interest groups” (such as “single mothers”) undoubtedly receive more attention and resources resulting in greater opportunities to alleviate the burden that comes with living in a refugee settlement. Labeling in itself can be problematic, but these processes are already underway and the main problem now is altering them to efficiently target those who are indeed “vulnerable” and not following misled assumptions. The majority of the single fathers interviewed expressed an interest in sharing their stories, burdens, and capacities in hopes of increased acknowledgement and assistance by the humanitarian organizations operating in Kyaka II and the international community more generally. Within humanitarian and development initiatives, every individual including single fathers, should be screened for vulnerabilities in order to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of aid and assistance.

9.4. Conclusion and future research

This analysis concludes that SMHH are not considered as an “interest group” within humanitarian and development discourses due to several reasons. To begin with the single fathers themselves, they do not make much of an effort to create a social “group” to challenge the belief that they do not exist and that they are able to meet their and their children’s needs. They may hesitate to do this in Kyaka II because there are very limited resources dedicated towards single fathers: women, single mothers, and FHH are in the spotlight. Furthermore, many humanitarian staff members are unaware of the prevalence of SMHH because they believe incorrectly that single fathers always remarry quickly. On another level, humanitarian organizations are not initiating programs and projects targeting SMHH due to gender norms and international donor schemes that prefer funding projects targeting women. Lastly, at the highest level of policy, “men” as a category is rarely

acknowledged in policy text, and references to “single fathers” are practically non-existent. These actions occur independently, but they reinforce each other rendering SMHH to a state of invisibility.

Policy-makers as well as development and humanitarian actors should generate policies and initiatives based on empirically documented results of vulnerabilities and challenges. Oftentimes single fathers are facing challenges that humanitarian and development initiatives target for alleviation (e.g., food rations), yet they are overlooked due to misled assumptions (e.g., single fathers are scarce) that are rooted in gender norms (e.g., all men fulfill masculine expectations to “provide”).

In order to further explore questions that were raised as a result of this study, future research is needed in several areas, including: how are single fathers socially excluded and included by other men and women in the settlement? Do single mothers experience the same responses from community members when they undertake reproductive and productive tasks? Are they also pressured to remarry by community members? In what ways have gender norms been renegotiated following the displacement process? An increased understanding of the experiences of single fathers and SMHH will serve to inform humanitarian and development initiatives and alleviate single fathers from the policy void that they currently occupy.

APPENDIX

Semi-structured interview guide

Introductions: Explain who I am and who Raymond is, why I am here, the purpose of my research. Explain the interview format and ensure privacy (pseudonym) if desired. Ensure they agree to be interviewed. Tell them they are free to stop or not answer a question at any time.

I. Assets including education and skills

- 1. How long have you lived here?*
- 2. How does your house (and household items, assets) compare to what you had before in Congo?*
- 3. Do you feel safe and secure in your house here?*
- 4. Where do you come from in Congo? Why did you leave?*
- 5. What items did you bring with you from Congo?*
- 6. What would you buy for yourself if you had the chance? For your children?*
- 7. Are your children in school regularly? If no, why not?*
- 8. Did they go to school in Congo?*
- 9. How long did you yourself attend school?*
- 10. What are your most useful skills?*

II. Income/poverty/Labor market participation

- 1. How do you make a living?*
- 2. Have you done this job since you arrived in Kyaka?*
- 3. How does this compare to what you did before in Congo?*
- 4. Do you enjoy your job?*
- 5. Do you think your wage is adequate?*
- 6. How would you describe a typical working day (for you and your children)?*
- 7. What are the positives and negatives of this job?*
- 8. Have you faced any difficulties finding a job? If yes, how did you deal with this challenge?*

9. Do you currently have any debts? If yes, where, with whom, since when, the payment plan etc.

10. Are there other people in the household that earn a wage? If yes, who, how much, what job etc.

11. Who takes care of domestic tasks? Washing, cooking, fetching water etc.

12. Can you recount everything that you (and your children) ate yesterday?

13. How does this compare to what you used to eat in Congo?

III. Health

1. How is your health?

2. The health of your children?

3. If there is a problem: Did you/the child have this problem in Congo?

4. What could be causing this problem?

5. Have you been to the health clinic in Bujubuli? If no, why not?

IV. Time poverty/Father-child relationship

1. Can you describe a typical Saturday?

2. Do you spend much time alone?

3. When you have free time what do you enjoy doing?

4. What do you enjoy doing with your children?

5. What do you NOT enjoy doing with your children (can ask about specific children if he mentioned their name)?

6. How long have you been a single parent?

7. What is the biggest challenge in being a single parent? How do you deal with this challenge?

8. If there are girl children, ask what the biggest challenge is in raising a girl? How do you fix her hair? Is there an adult woman with whom she spends time?

9. What tasks did your wife complete that are now left to you?

10. When you are doing these tasks, how do your neighbors react? Has there been any specific incidents?

11. Do you plan to get remarried?

12. *Can you tell me what it was like when you first became a single parent?*
13. *Has it become easier over time?*
14. *Do you know other single fathers here in Kyaka? Back home in Congo?*
15. *Do you (or other single fathers) receive support from the local humanitarian organizations (Office of the Prime Minister, UNHCR, Africa Humanitarian Action, Danish Refugee Council etc)?*
16. *Can you describe an enjoyable moment that you had recently with your child(ren)?*
17. *How do you imagine your child(ren)s future?*
18. *Is there anything else you want to share with me?*

V. Demographic & Background information to ask if it's not clear following the interview

1. *How old are you?*
2. *How long have you been a single parent?*
3. *How did you become a single parent?*
4. *How many children do you have?*
5. *What are their ages/sex?*
6. *How long have you lived in Kyaka?*

VI. Ask if they would like to participate in taking photos. If yes, give them the Kodak camera and instructions on how to use it. Tell them when I will come back to retrieve it.

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