Refugee Survey Quarterly, 2021, 00, 1–26
doi: 10.1093/rsq/hdab014
Article

OXFORD

"Littered with Logos!": An Investigation into the Relationship between Water Provision, Humanitarian Branding, Donor Accountability, and Self-Reliance in Ugandan Refugee Settlements

Diana Martin * and Julia Brown**

ABSTRACT

The branding of humanitarian assets and programme signage (often in English) is common practice in displacement contexts. Such visibility is a reminder of the special status of refugee spaces and a requirement imposed by donors. However, such branding, which forms part of the humanitarian organisations' accountability to donors, raises profound issues in relation to the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (CRRF) and the agenda of refugee self-reliance. Drawing on our work on water access in Ugandan refugee settlements for humanitarian NGOs, we present a case study that explores the humanitarian response and its implications on the sustainability of water provision through the lens of branding and accountability. As donors and taxpayers become the (distant) audiences of visibility strategies, we argue that the branding of

* Researcher Field/Legal RECAP Project, Refugee Law Initiative, School of Advanced Study, University of London, Senate House, Malet Street, London, UK. E-mail: diana.martin@sas.ac.uk

** Associate Head (Global Engagement and Education Partnerships) and Senior Lecturer, School of the Environment, Geography and Geosciences, University of Portsmouth UK. E-mail: julia.brown@port.ac.uk. Underpinning research and fieldwork was facilitated by internal funding from the Department of Geography, University of Portsmouth as well as £12,000 allocation to both authors under the University of Portsmouth's QR GCRF Research Project Fund in 2019. The writing up of this article was also supported by the Global Challenges Research Fund (GCRF) as part of the RECAP Project: "Research Capacity Strengthening and Knowledge Generation to Support Preparedness and Response to Humanitarian Crises and Epidemics," grant number ES/P010873/1.

We would like to express our gratitude to all participants in this research for their time and insights, Venture Uganda for the logistical support during the various field trips, and Dr Marije van den Broek, Peter Nzabinita, and Prof. Paul Bukuluki for the insightful conversations and comments on preliminary ideas. We wish to also thank Dr Sarah Singer and Dr Jeff Crisp for their invaluable comments on earlier drafts of this article, and the anonymous reviewers for their helpful suggestions. Mistakes remain our own.

water structures, coupled with the lack of accountability to affected populations (AAPs) potentially undermines refugees' sense of ownership necessary for the future upkeep and maintenance of water sources. The sector may thus compromise the sustainability of programming as advanced by the CRRF. As accountability to donors is prioritised over AAP, we argue that the impact of branding on sustainability of water provision can be better understood by investigating its psychological effects on programme beneficiaries.

KEYWORDS: refugee settlements, accountability to donors, CRRF, self-reliance, sustainability, branding, Uganda, water access

1. INTRODUCTION

Vignette 1: "All the signs"

Can we stop the vehicle? I want to take a picture of all those signs. You can really tell we are in a refugee settlement! (Figure 1)

Figure 1. "All the signs," Kiryandongo refugee settlement, Uganda. Picture taken by J.B.

NGO and donor logos are on virtually everything that had been constructed, from schools and hospitals to water towers. Every water source has a sign telling you who constructed it, with the NGO's logo, who the funder was, and that it was supported by the Office of the Prime Minister (OPM) with obligatory flag of Uganda (see Figure 2). No one needs to read: the logos make it clear who is behind the construction and running of humanitarian programming. The infrastructure had been branded.

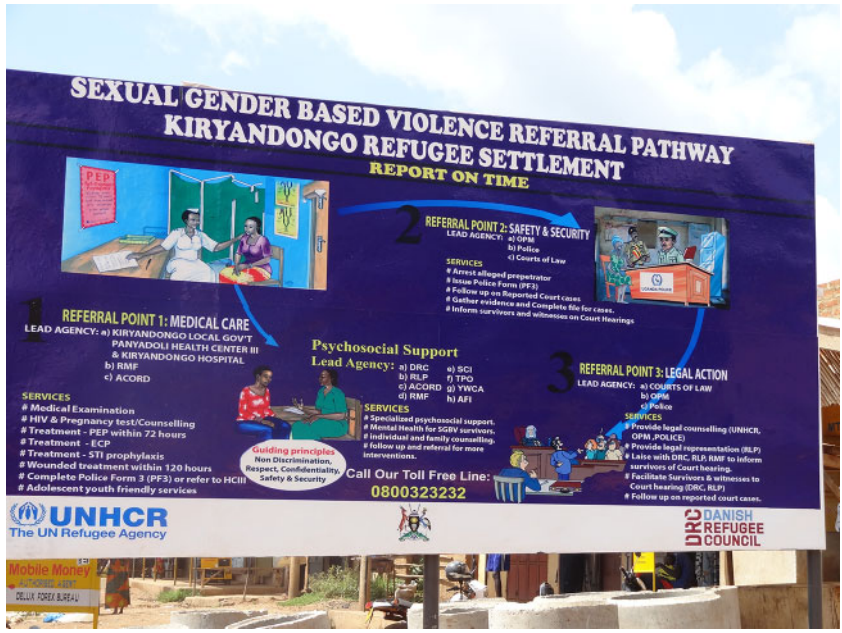
Figure 2. Signage for water system, Rhino refugee settlement, Uganda. Picture taken by J.B.

> Discussion with a collaborator, who had previously worked in settlements for internally displaced persons in Northern Uganda, confirmed they were also "littered with logos!" She recounted how her NGO was responsible for a programme to end open defecation; so-called "Open Defecation Free villages" had signs erected with the NGO's logo: they were effectively taking ownership of and responsibility for peoples' bowel movements!

Non-tangible NGO programming efforts are also made more visible through branded signage. The written communications on the billboards and signs across refugee settlements are mostly in English, for example, telling refugees about their rights; communicating health messages such as "Brush your teeth every day to prevent tooth decay," or discussing referral mechanisms to report sexual gender-based violence (SGBV) (see Figure 3).

We began wondering *who* was the intended audience of these signs and logos? While these signs are inherently part of the geographies of refugee settlements, the intended audiences of the signs may reside far away. As we will show, such visibility and branding are part of the requirements humanitarian NGOs must comply with to demonstrate accountability to donors. The signs and the logos can be viewed as the most immediate evidence that money has been well-spent. However, the consequences of this aspect of accountability to donors are an understudied field.

Figure 3. Billboard to communicate services and referral mechanisms in relation to SGBV matters. Kiryandongo refugee settlement. Picture taken by J.B.



While scholarship has widely explored the relationship between NGO branding and fundraising,[1] in this article we contribute to the debates on accountability in the humanitarian sector by exploring the impact and potential unintended consequences of branding on the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (CRRF) (2016) which promotes refugees' self-reliance and the sustainability of humanitarian response. We do so through the lens of water access in refugee spaces, by drawing on qualitative data (71 interviews, 20 focus groups and observation) from three researches and two NGO commissioned projects investigating the sustainability of water provision in 10 refugee settlements in Uganda between July 2017 and July 2019.

As the global response to large-scale displacement remains inadequate and underfunded, the CRRF calls for "shared responsibility" and greater support for refugees and host countries.[2] It has been rolled out in different host countries, including Uganda where the self-reliance of refugee population has been promoted. In Uganda, more specifically, refugees have been gradually included in national

1 S.L. Huang & H.H. Ku, "Brand Image Management For Nonprofit Organizations: Exploring the Relationships between Websites, Brand Images and Donations", *Journal of Electronic Commerce Research*, 17(1), 2016, 80–96. See also, D. Hommerová & L. Jandac, "Branding as an Opportunity for Non-Profit Organisations", in L. Cechurová (ed.), *Opportunities and Threats to Current Business Management in Cross-border Comparison 2014*, Chemnitz, Verlag der GUC, 2014, 57–62.

2 "Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework" in UNHCR website, available at: https://www.unhcr.org/uk/comprehensive-refugee-response-framework-crrf.html (last visited 15 Jan. 2021).

development plans and enjoy the right to work, freedom of movement, and access to basic services on the same basis as Ugandan nationals. This means that, as Ugandan nationals pay for access to water, soon refugees will be expected to pay for water services too.

Considering these global and national agendas, we explore the association and relationship between a logo, which visibly represents the running of a programme or the construction of structures, and refugees' own feelings of ownership and responsibility towards infrastructure and paying for services. Our findings suggest that humanitarian organisations' accountability to donors, in the form of branding of permanent water infrastructure, may compromise the self-reliance and sustainability agenda. This is because refugees associate an NGO logo with free services and assume this support will be in perpetuum. As refugees are routinely left out of decision-making processes around water provision and infrastructure, the branding of permanent water structures, coupled with the lack of accountability to affected populations (AAPs) potentially contributes towards undermining refugees' sense of ownership and responsibility for the upkeep and maintenance of water sources, something that is not fully appreciated by humanitarian actors. We argue, in this agenda-setting paper, that the impact of humanitarian branding can be better understood through a lens that reveals the psychological impacts of branding on programme beneficiaries and beneficiaries' perceptions of ownership and responsibility over the upkeep of water systems. As we show, the use of branding prioritises "upward" accountability to donors above AAP, in this way limiting refugees' self-reliance and the sustainability of programming as advanced by the CRRF.

The article proceeds with the presentation of the methodology section. There follows a critical review of the two meta-drivers within humanitarian discourses: first, that of accountability, and secondly, CRRF, the self-reliance, and sustainability agenda. The article then discusses the origin of logos and branding and their role within the humanitarian sector. Our case study explores the humanitarian response in Uganda and its implications on the sustainability of water supply systems through the lens of branding and accountability, with a discussion and conclusion to follow, where we call for further research into the role of branding in humanitarian settings and propose new spaces for AAP drawing on local knowledge.

2. METHODOLOGY

This research was conducted using social sciences methods and utilising a "composite approach," which combines different methodological tools – largely qualitative and ethnographic. Such an approach has proven particularly effective in humanitarian contexts which present challenges in respect of access to information, to research settings, and to respondents.[3]

This article draws on comprehensive qualitative data collected as part of five discrete, though connected projects, spanning five fieldwork trips to Uganda, incorporating ten refugee settlements, between July 2017 and July–August 2019. The data set comprises 71 in-depth key informant semi-structured interviews with Uganda

3 S. Barakat, M. Chard, T. Jacoby & W. Lume, "The Composite Approach: Research Design in the Context of War and Armed Conflict", *Third World Quarterly*, 23(5), 2002, 991–1003.

government, the office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), humanitarian donors, and NGO representatives based in Kampala head offices as well as field staff in the studied refugee settlements and refugee-hosting districts, some of which had prior experience of the Internally Displaced Person (IDP) camps in northern Uganda. Twenty focus groups discussions (FGDs) which each included between four and six refugees of different ages and gender were also undertaken,[4] with non-governmental organisation (NGO) staff translating as required. Additional data collected includes field observations, including NGO visibility and communication strategies with 92 signs analysed; water system site visits and the observation of five meetings (three in settlements, including two technical infrastructure meetings in settlements in West Nile; and two with senior NGO, UNHCR, and government officials); and finally, in terms of primary data, fieldwork dairy entries. Government, donor, and NGOs reports and policy documents were also consulted.

The second author was commissioned by two NGOs to undertake studies into the humanitarian response and sustainability of water supply systems, the first being in July 2017, comprising seven settlements: three in the southwest (long-established Nikivale, Kyaka II, and Kyangwali); mid-western Kiryandongo, and three newly established settlements in the West Nile region of northern Uganda (Nyumanzi, Palorinya, and Bidi Bidi). The second consultancy project, with fieldwork in February and March 2018, focused again in West Nile on the new settlements of Imvepi, Omugo, and Rhino, as well as the established settlement of Kiryandongo. Kiryandongo settlement is the site of a longitudinal study by both authors spanning three fieldwork trips (October 2017, October 2018, and July 2019). The pattern of interaction in all settlements, due to protocols, was as follows: initial courtesy visit and interview with the Office of the Prime Minister (OPM) Settlement Commandant, or assistant; interview with UNHCR settlement water coordinators and then interview-discussions with the water supply implementing partners, in some settlements these meetings also included other water provision operating partners.

Data from FGDs with refugees proved an invaluable insight into the perceptions and views of beneficiaries with regard to branding in the humanitarian settings, while interviews with the UNHCR and NGO staff, and ethnographic observations of meetings shed light on the decision-making process in water provision and the extent to which accountability to donors and to affected populations was considered by key humanitarian actors.

Thematic analysis of the qualitative field data and policy documents has been undertaken, to allow the authors to reflect upon the meaning and potential unintended consequences of the use of branding and logos on refugees' perceptions and self-reliance, and thus the sustainability of water supply systems.

4 Among these, special FGDs were held with groups of women to ensure they felt free to speak with no inhibition which may have been caused by the presence of men or community leaders. FGDs were also conducted with elected refugee representatives who are part of the Refugee Welfare Councils.

3. HUMANITARIAN META-AGENDAS: ACCOUNTABILITY AND SELF-RELIANCE

3.1. Humanitarian organisations and the accountability agenda

Nationally and internationally, NGOs have been playing a growing role in economic and social development and in the provision of public goods.[5] Since the 1950s, in particular, humanitarian agencies and organisations have been assuming more responsibility for the delivery and coordination of emergency relief and longer-term care to refugees and displaced persons.[6] But as NGOs' importance in addressing global challenges increases, so too grows the pressure for being more accountable to donors, taxpayers, and the people they serve.

Following a series of scandals on the misuse of funding or the poor performance of some NGOs in addressing humanitarian crises, the image of humanitarian organisations "doing good" has been undermined.[7] As they embrace business models and compete for funding, humanitarian organisations may be perceived as having abandoned their charitable mission and values.[8] In this context, NGOs' accountability becomes vital to demonstrate to different stakeholders that they are having positive impacts. But what does accountability mean and what does it entail? According to the Humanitarian Accountability Partnership (HAP), accountability is "the means through which power is used responsibly" and "a process of taking into account the views of, and being held accountable by different stakeholders, and primarily the people affected by authority or power."[9]

International Non-Governmental Organisations (INGOs), both in the humanitarian and development sectors, must be accountable to different stakeholders at the same time: international donors; States where they operate; home country public and taxpayers; a series of initiatives and professional standards they are part of or are committed to; and the affected people they serve. Depending on the stakeholder, they also have different responsibilities such as financial responsibilities to donors; regulatory responsibility towards the countries in which they operate; and, last but not least, moral responsibility to the populations they assist.[10]

In the humanitarian sector, in particular, a series of self-regulatory or peer-regulatory initiatives such as SPHERE,[11] the HAP,[12] or more recently the Core

5 B. Ramalingam, J. Mitchell, J. Borton, & K. Smart, "Counting What Counts: Performance and Effectiveness in the Humanitarian Sector", London, ALNAP, 2009. See also M. Blagescu, L. de Las Casas, & R. Lloyd, *Pathways to Accountability: The GAP Framework*, London, One World Trust, 2005.

6 A. Slaughter & J. Crisp, *A Surrogate State? The Role of UNHCR in Protracted Refugee Situations*, Research Paper No. 168, UNHCR, Jan. 2009.

7 A. Davis, *Concerning Accountability of Humanitarian Action*, HPN Network Paper No. 58, ODI, 2007.

8 I.B. Seu, F. Flanagan, & S. Orgad, "The 'Good Samaritan' and the 'Marketer': Public Perceptions of Humanitarian and International Development NGOs", *International Journal of Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Marketing*, 20, 2015, 211–225.

9 Humanitarian Accountability Partnership (HAP), *The 2010 Standard in Accountability and Quality Management*, Geneva, HAP International, 2010, 1.

10 Blagescu et al., *Pathways to Accountability*, 22. See also Ramalingam et al., "Counting What Counts".

11 SPHERE Project and humanitarian standards at https://spherestandards.org/ (last visited 5 Aug. 2021).

12 HAP, *The 2010 Standard in Accountability and Quality Management.*

Humanitarian Standards (CHS)[13] have been promoted in order to increase accountability both "upwards" towards donors and "downwards" towards the affected people.

The most critiqued example of accountability by INGOs concerns accountability to donors (also known as "upward accountability"). This form of accountability is well regulated and legally bound. It often conflates with financial accountability to justify spending and prove that money has been used in the agreed way. It often takes the form performance assessments and reports.

Concerned for their reputation and afraid of losing funding, NGOs in both the humanitarian and development sectors have often focused more on financial accountability, transparency, and disclosure to donors rather than accountability towards affected populations.[14] But accountability cannot be reduced to a mere "financial accounting" exercise.[15] Such an approach risks missing the real impact of aid and would fail to assess its effectiveness, appropriateness, and relevance.

In the past 20 years and following the development sector in this regard, donors and humanitarian organisations have recognised that consulting and involving people affected by crises in decision-making over aid and programming makes humanitarian response more effective, timely, relevant, and appropriate. In order to enhance their "downward" accountability, humanitarian actors and donors have committed to engage affected populations in the design and delivery of humanitarian aid. Participation and participatory methodologies have emerged in the accountability discourse of aid organisations and their donors, and are promoted by many of the standards and initiatives of the sector; the CHS and the Grand Bargain "Participation Revolution" being two key recent examples.[16] Two-way communication, feedback and complaint mechanisms, and community-based approaches, to mention but a few, aim to ensure beneficiaries have the power to influence the decisions affecting their lives. But this also requires organisations to adapt programmes and strategies in response to input from the communities they serve.[17]

Despite a plethora of different initiatives and commitments, however, progress on the AAP agenda has been rather slow.[18] While accountability to donors or States

13 Core Humanitarian Standards (CHS) at https://corehumanitarianstandard.org/the-standard (last visited 5 Aug. 2021).

14 A. Ebrahim, "Accountability in Practice: Mechanisms for NGOs", *World Development*, 31, 2003, 813–829; A. Crack, "Reversing the Telescope: Evaluating NGO Peer Regulation Initiatives", *Journal of International Development*, 28, 2016, 40–56.

15 Among others, H.P. Schmitz, P. Raggo, & T.B. Vijfeijken, "Accountability of Transnational NGOs: Aspirations vs. Practice", *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly*, 41, 2012, 1175–1194.

16 CHS at https://corehumanitarianstandard.org/the-standard. The Grand Bargain Official website at https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/grand-bargain (both last visited 5 Aug. 2021).

17 L. Austin, D. Brown, P. Knox Clarke, & I. Wall (eds.), *Humanitarian Accountability Report*, CHS Alliance, 2018, available at: https://www.chsalliance.org/files/files/Humanitarian%20Accountability%20Report%202018.pdf (last visited 15 Oct. 2018); and D. Brown, A, Donini, & P. Knox Clarke, *Engagement of Crisis-Affected People in Humanitarian Action*, Background Paper of ALNAP's 29th Annual Meeting, 11–12 Mar. 2014, Addis Ababa 2014, London, ALNAP/ODI, available at www.alnap.org/system/files/content/resource/files/main/background-paper-29th-meeting.pdf (last visited Feb. 2020).

18 Core Humanitarian Standard (CHS) Alliance, *Humanitarian Accountability Report. Are We Making Aid Working Better for People Affected by Crisis?*, Geneva, CHS Alliance, 2020; and CHS Alliance, *How Change Happens in the Humanitarian Sector*, Geneva, CHS Alliance, 2018; and V. Metcalfe-Hough, W. Fenton, B. Willitts-King, & A. Spencer, *The Grand Bargain at Five Years: An Independent Review*, Humanitarian Policy Group, London, ODI, Jun. 2021.

rests on the presence of strong legal obligations, similar mechanisms are not often in place for other kinds of accountabilities. The lack of contractual obligations with displaced people moves AAP towards being simply a moral principle to aspire to, but without real enforcement. While affected populations provide NGOs with the moral legitimacy to operate and exist, they more often than not do not have political or legal means to hold humanitarian organisations accountable for their operations or any harm caused by their actions. Power imbalances and inequalities still prevent the achievement of a meaningful accounting towards "beneficiaries" of aid.[19] As we will explain below, it is in this context that the CRRF agenda on more durable solutions meets the need to increase AAP for the sustainability of humanitarian aid.

3.2. CRRF and the self-reliance agenda

A global commitment to find more comprehensive and permanent solutions to forced displacement, the CRRF has since 2016 guided the humanitarian response. In particular, since low- and middle-income countries host the majority of the refugees worldwide,[20] the CRRF calls for shared responsibilities to address the plight of displaced people by promoting greater support for refugees and host countries.[21] As the global response to large-scale displacements remains underfunded,[22] in order to find more permanent and comprehensive solutions for displacement, amongst others, the CRRF aims to also support refugees' integration and inclusion within host communities. According to this agenda, refugees should be integrated into national development plans and their self-reliance promoted.[23]

Alongside the CRRF, commitments to make humanitarian aid more efficient were also promoted through the Grand Bargain, launched at the World Humanitarian Summit in 2016. This aimed to "modernise humanitarian responses through greater financial transparency and increased flexibility and multi-year funding" and called for "a greater role for local actors and affected populations themselves through better participation and [. . .] the need to bridge the humanitarian-development divide."[24]

19 G. Agyemang, M. Awumbila, J. Unerman, & B. O'Dwyer, *NGO Accountability and Aid Delivery*, ACCA research report no. 110, available at https://www.accaglobal.com/ie/en/technical-activities/technical-resources-search/2009/december/ngo-accountability-aid-delivery.html (last visited Jan. 2021).

20 United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), *Global Trends: Forced Displacement in 2019*, Geneva, UNHCR, 2020.

21 "Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework" in UNHCR website https://www.unhcr.org/uk/comprehensive-refugee-response-framework-crrf.html (last visited 15 Jan. 2021).

22 In 2019, only 40 per cent of UNHCR's funding needs were met. Ground Truth Solutions, *Uganda: Strengthening Accountability to Affected People*, Ground Truth Solutions, March 2020, available at: https://reliefweb.int/report/uganda/uganda-strengthening-accountability-affected-people-round-three-march-2020 (last visited 10 Feb. 2021); see also UNHCR, *Operational Update: Uganda*, UNHCR, 01–30 November 2019, available at: https://reliefweb.int/report/uganda/uganda-unhcr-operational-update-november-2019 (last visited 5 Mar. 2021).

23 See also Danish Refugee Council (DRC), *Whose Responsibility? Accountability for Refugee Protection and Solutions in a Whole-of-Society Approach*, HERE-Geneva, DRC, 2017; and N. Crawford, S. O'Callaghan, K. Holloway, & C. Lowe, *The Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework: Progress in Uganda*, ODI, HPG Working Paper, London, 2019.

24 DRC, *Whose Responsibility?*, 4. Back in 2006, the Good Humanitarian Donorship (GHD) initiative already called for the participation of affected populations in the design, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of the humanitarian response, and the support of long-term and development solutions. See

Such attention on AAP and on the localisation agenda of the Grand Bargain, in particular, emerges alongside the realisation that humanitarian responses led by international humanitarian organisations are often inadequate and unable to address affected populations' needs, or to find more sustainable solutions to displacement. Self-reliance and long-term solutions cannot occur without the involvement of local actors, which include both affected populations and local humanitarian organisations and authorities. It is argued, in fact, that these are better placed to know what kind of assistance and services can address refugees and host communities' priorities and aspirations.

The CRRF declaration of intention, however, has not been accompanied by clear agreements on what a more permanent and comprehensive solution to displacement may entail in practice.[25] Presented as new concepts, for instance, the bridging of the humanitarian-development gap or refugees' self-reliance is just the rehearsal of older ideas never fully implemented. This is because donor States were often unwilling to provide additional support for development initiatives, and host States had little or no incentive to promote integration and self-reliance.[26]

Challenges with the implementations of the CRRF and the bridging of the humanitarian-development divide remain, and these include the difficulty of promoting self-reliance in remote refugee-hosting areas; humanitarian organisations' lack of experience in handling longer-term and sustainable solutions to displacement; development organisations lacking resources or a clear mandate to assist in crisis situations; lack of costed plans for self-reliance; and, more broadly, a lack of clear additional funding to promote development and socio-economic integration of refugees.[27] Humanitarian assistance in Uganda, for instance, remains clearly underfunded. In 2019, the country's Refugee Response Plan received only 20 per cent of what was actually needed to support refugees.[28] In addition to this, donors do not seem to trust host governments and their abilities to manage funding, and would rather have international agencies and international humanitarian organisations managing donations to avoid any risks of corruption.[29] In this climate, trusting local actors, stakeholders, and affected communities to contribute or drive humanitarian responses seems unlikely. So far, key actors such as refugees, host communities, and

Humanitarian Policy Group (HPG), *Good Humanitarian Donorship: Overcoming Obstacles to Improved Collective Donor Performance*, ODI-HPG, Discussion Paper, London, December 2006.

25 M. Thomas, "Turning the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework into reality", *Forced Migration Review*, 56, October 2017, 69–72.

26 A. Betts, *Development Assistance and Refugees: Towards a North-South Grand Bargain?*, Oxford, Refugee Studies Centre, Forced Migration Policy Briefing 2, June 2019; A. Betts, L. Bloom, J. Kaplan, & N. Omata, *Refugee Economies: Forced Displacement and Development*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2017. On bridging the humanitarian-development gap for returnee assistance programmes see also J. Crisp, "Mind the Gap! UNHCR, Humanitarian Assistance and the Development Process", *International Migration Review*, 35(1),
2001, 168–191.

27 Crawford et al., *The Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework*.

28 *Ibid.*, 10.

29 *Ibid.*

local authorities have been excluded from discussions on the implementation of CRRF[30] or have been involved in a tokenistic way.[31]

The resulting focus on upward accountability risks producing short-sighted humanitarian interventions. The branding of infrastructures and programming, and the need to use visible ways to demonstrate how money has been spent, as we will show, are part of this process of "accounting" rather than being accountable.

4. BRANDING AND ACCOUNTABILITY

4.1. Logos and the humanitarian sector

> Logos, by the force of ubiquity, have become the closest thing we have to an international language, recognised and understood in many more places than English.[32]

Historically, logos have been used "to evoke familiarity" and "to counteract the new and unsettling anonymity of packaged goods."[33] They were also used by high street banks and other business premises to help the illiterate to identify and distinguish them. As Barclays suggests, "As very few people could read and write, business houses used pictorial signs to enable their customers to find them easily."[34] A logo is a fast, visible, and immediate form of communication, which is used to differentiate products and to determine associations with companies and ownership.[35] It helps to differentiate goods and services from those of competitors[36] and "aims to trigger perceptions and create associations at a speed in which no other form of communication can achieve."[37] Easy and fast recognition of logos are also facilitated by their repetition and ubiquity.

Although the use of words such as "branding" instils negative feelings because of the association of the word with the corporate sector,[38] logos and brands have become essential components of the non-profit sector too, especially in the context of increasing competition over limited funding.[39] Scholarship on branding within the non-profit sector, for instance, has identified a link between positive brand image and communication of values, and an increase in donations.[40]

30 *Ibid.*

31 Research and Evidence Facility (REF), *Comprehensive Refugee Responses in the Horn of Africa: Regional Leadership on Education, Livelihoods and Durable solutions*, London, EU Trust Fund for Africa (Horn of Africa Window) Research and Evidence Facility, February 2020.

32 N. Klein, *No Logo*, London, Flamingo, 2000, xx.

33 *Ibid.*, 6.

34 Barclays, available at: https://www.archive.barclays.com/items/show/5416 (last visited 10 Nov. 2020).

35 M. Kelly, "Analysing the Complex Relationship between Logo and Brand", *Place Branding and Public Diplomacy*, 13, 2017, 18–33, 22.

36 D.A. Aaker, *Managing Brand Equity*, New York, Fere Press, 1991.

37 Kelly, "Analysing the Complex Relationship between Logo and Brand", 19.

38 See, among others, Seu et al., "The 'Good Samaritan' and the 'Marketer'".

39 P. Hankinson, "Brand Orientation in the Charity Sector: A Framework for Discussion and Research", *International Journal of Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Marketing*, 6(3), 2001, 231–242; H. Stride & S. Lee, "No Logo? No Way. Branding in the Non-Profit Sector", *Journal of Marketing Management*, 23(1–2), 2007, 107–122; B.T. Venable, G.M. Rose, V.D. Bush, & F.W. Gilbert, "The Role of Brand Personality in Charitable Giving: An Assessment and Validation", *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 33(3), 2005, 295–312; N. Kylander & C. Stone, "The Role of Brand in the Nonprofit Sector", *Stanford Social Innovation Review*, 10(2), 2012, 36–41.

40 N. Judd, "On Branding: Building and Maintaining Your Organization's Brand in an AMC", *Association Management*, 56(7), 2004, 17–19; G. Michel & S. Rieunier, "Nonprofit Brand Image and Typicality

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) brand manual is a case in point that demonstrates humanitarian agencies and organisations' obsession with good branding and the display of logos to gain support and for fundraising purposes:

> To show our work in action, capture images of staff wearing or working with branded items or interacting with people forced to flee. An example would be a photo of staff wearing UNHCR branded items offloading an airlift onto a truck with a large UNHCR logo on the side. A UNHCR convoy loaded with supplies moving across rough terrain also works well. UNHCR's logo should be clear.[41]

As Florencia Enghel and Jessica Noske-Turner argue, "looking good" is one of the purposes of communication deployed in the non-profit sector.[42] Adding a logo to brandable programmes and infrastructures is a way to communicate "the good done" to beneficiaries but also distant taxpayers.

Similarly to the for-profit sector, logos in the non-profit sector are signifiers of trust,[43] instruments of recognition and they help position an NGO vis-à-vis competitors. As Hugo Slim posits, a strong brand also assists humanitarian organisations in their operations and the achievement of their goals and mission as "the very emblem or logo of an organisation on its vehicles conveys an enormous amount of meaning before a humanitarian negotiator even opens his or her mouth."[44]

While logos and branding help donors and supporters to navigate the "humanitarian market" by differentiating missions, credibility, and skills, as we will show in the next sub-section, the use of logos in refugee camps is also intimately linked to accountability.

4.2. Branding and logos as components of accountability

As the opening quote of the section suggests, the ubiquity of logos has become a sort of "international language," recognised and understood more than English around the world. Logos could be used strategically to increase protection, as the *Manual on Human Rights Monitoring* of the United Nations Human Rights Office of

Influences on Charitable Giving", *Journal of Business Research*, 65(5), 2012, 701–707; A. Paço, R.G. Rodrigues, & L. Rodrigues, "Branding in NGOs – Its Influence on the Intention to Donate", *Economics and Sociology*, 7(3), 2014, 11–21; Huang & Ku, "Brand Image Management For Nonprofit Organizations". See also M.D. Kim & K.G. Wilkins, "Representing 'Development' on Instagram: Questioning 'What', 'Who', and 'How' of Development in Digital Space", *The Journal of International Communication*, 27(2), 2021, 192–214.

41 UNHCR, *UNHCR Brand Book*, UNHCR, July 2016, available at: https://docobook.com/unhcr-brand-book-situations.html (last visited 23 Apr. 2021).

42 F. Enghel & J. Noske-Turner, "Introduction", in F. Enghel & J. Noske-Turner (eds.), *Communication in International Development: Doing Good or Looking Good?*, Oxon, Routledge, 2018, 1–18.

43 Kylander & Stone, "The Role of Brand in the Nonprofit Sector".

44 H. Slim, *Marketing Humanitarian Space: Argument and Method in Humanitarian Persuasion*, Geneva, Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue, 2003, available at: https://www.hdcentre.org/publications/marketing-humanitarian-space-argument-and-method-in-humanitarian-persuasion/ (last visited 23 Jan. 2021).

the High Commissioner (OHCHR) explains.[45] They could also serve an important role in contexts where literacy levels may be low or multiple languages are in use. In a multiagency setting where several NGOs offer assistance, logos may help refugees identify the different organisations and the services they provide (e.g. water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH), Education, Health, and so on). A fast way to identify who is responsible for service delivery, logo display may actually improve accountability in refugee settings and may be essential to hold organisations accountable for poor services.

But branding and logos are largely also linked to accountability to donors and taxpayers. The visibility manual of the European Commission's Civil Protection and Humanitarian Operations' (ECHO), one of the main donors of humanitarian aid in Uganda, for instance, clearly establishes a link between branding and general principles of accountability, which, amongst others, aim to show where and how taxpayers' money is spent.[46]

The manual discusses obligations and implementation of contractual visibility for implementing partners. This is to "ensure that the public is aware of how the EU is helping," to "provide accountability as to where the funding is going to"; and "foster continued strong support for humanitarian aid amongst key stakeholders and the general public."[47] The EU's contribution to the humanitarian response is ensured through "the prominent display of the EU emblem" (see Figure 2).[48]

All programme assets must be branded. These include infrastructures (e.g. buildings, wells, pumps), shipments and goods (e.g. tents, blankets, and jerry cans), building signage (e.g. health centres and distribution points), operational and outreach materials for beneficiaries, and project staff's clothing (e.g. t-shirts, field vests).[49] Moreover, in interim and final reports on programmes funded, implementing partners must include relevant supporting evidence of branding and field visibility, such as "photos of relevant items (EU emblem on vehicles, supplies, signboards, etc.)" to "demonstrate that the activities committed to [. . .] have been implemented as an integral part of the project and at different stages."[50]

NGOs must also allocate a special budget for branding. For smaller-scale projects, this can be "up to 1% of the direct eligible costs" or up to €10,000.[51] For larger-scale projects, no ceiling for spending on branding is applied. The inclusion of a budget

45 According to this view, the mere presence of national and international humanitarian actors and their logos can have positive effects and provide protection. United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner (OHCHR), *Manual on Human Rights Monitoring. Chapter 30 Using Presence and Visibility*, New York and Geneva, OHCHR, 2011, 3, available at: https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Publications/Chapter30-20pp.pdf (last visited 23 Jan. 2021).

46 The European Commission's Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (ECHO), *Communication and Visibility Manual for European Union-funded Humanitarian Aid Actions*, ECHO, 2021, available at: http://echo.visibility.eu/ (last visited 15 Jan. 2021). Please note that similar provisions are made for other international donors such as the Foreign Commonwealth Development Office (FCDO), see UK Aid, *UK Aid Branding Guidance*, UK Aid, 2020, available at: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/uk-aid-standards-for-using-the-logo (last visited 15 Jan. 2021).

47 ECHO, *Communication and Visibility Manual for European Union-funded Humanitarian Aid Actions*, 5.

48 *Ibid.*,7.

49 *Ibid.*, 9.

50 *Ibid.*, 24.

51 *Ibid.*, 13.

and the significant costs devoted to ensuring branding and adequate visibility clearly indicate that branding is an essential condition for NGOs to receive funding.

But donors' logos are not the only ones one can find in a refugee settlement or camp. Buildings, infrastructure, signage, equipment, supplies, and programming more broadly are all branded with donors' logos, UNHCR's logo,[52] and the logo of the NGOs (implementing and operational partners) running a specific programme or sector.

Faced with funding challenges and increasing competition, NGOs use their logos to increase their visibility and "to bring attention to their work in a crowded, chaotic landscape of organisations, programs, and priorities."[53]

Branding programming and infrastructures is promotional, something that has become typical of "market-driven public relations."[54] For donors and NGOs, branding practices are crucial. As "appearing good" rather than "doing good" takes prominence, broader accountability issues in relation to the actual performance of programming fails to acknowledge the real impact of aid on the ground.[55] It is no surprise that, as development communication expert Karin Wilkins asserts, donors may be more likely to fund projects that may be more visible than others and "infrastructure that enables the placement of logos, such as schools and buildings" rather than focusing on human rights or economic empowerment that cannot be as easily framed in a photograph.[56]

As others before us have pointed out, however, the consequences of these communication and accountability practices remain largely under-explored.[57] In particular, the impact of branding and psychological association of logos on beneficiaries of humanitarian aid has never been questioned. By exploring the use of branding in humanitarian spaces as part of accountability to donors, this article addresses this gap. As logos are fast and visible forms of communications and represent marks of ownership, we suggest that the branding of water infrastructures without AAP and meaningful involvement of refugees in decisions over water systems and their maintenance implications may force a psychological dissociative state upon the beneficiaries. This could ultimately undermine the sustainability of water provision. The remaining sections of the article will look at water provision in refugee settlement as a way to understand where accountability priorities lie and to reflect on this under-researched area.

52 UNHCR, *UNHCR Brand Book*.

53 S. Waisbord, "What's Bad about 'Looking Good'? Can It Be Done Better?", in F. Enghel & J. Noske-Turner (eds.) *Communication in International Development: Doing Good or Looking Good?*, Oxon, Routledge, 2018, 170–176, 170–171.

54 F. Enghel & J. Noske-Turner (eds.), *Communication in International Development: Doing Good or Looking Good?*, Oxon, Routledge, 2018.

55 K.G. Wilkins, "Communicating about Development and the Challenge of Doing Well: Donor Branding in the West Bank", in Enghel Enghel & Noske-Turner (eds.), *Communication in International Development*, 76–95.

56 *Ibid.*, 82.

57 Enghel & Noske-Turner (eds.), *Communication in International Development*; and in particular, Wilkins, "Communicating about Development and the Challenge of Doing Well".

5. WATER PROVISION AND ACCOUNTABILITY PRIORITIES IN UGANDA

5.1. Welcoming and pioneering Uganda

Uganda, a landlocked central East African country, makes for a very interesting case study to explore the impact that NGO branding and donor accountability agendas have on attempts to promote refugee self-reliance. Globally, Uganda has the third largest refugee population in the world and the highest in Sub-Saharan Africa.[58] The majority of Uganda's 1.4 million refugee population[59] has been placed into rural refugee settlements, which are managed jointly by the OPM and the UNHCR.[60] Uganda also has a history of internal displacement, particularly in the northern part of the country, due to civil war, which has seen the involvement of UNHCR and international aid agencies providing relief services in the IDP camps.[61]

Internationally, Uganda is widely applauded for its welcoming and progressive attitude towards refugees because of its "no-camp" approach which sees the allocation of plots to refugees for subsistence farming within their designated settlement,[62] and more recently freedom of movement and the right to work.[63] Significantly, Uganda is also a pioneer of the UNHCR's 2016 CRRF that promotes the integration of refugees with host communities and self-reliance. Acknowledging that refugees are often displaced for extended periods of time, in 2016 Uganda formulated its Refugee and Host Population Empowerment (ReHoPE) strategy which sees a greater role being played by line ministries within settlements and the inclusion of refugees in local government development plans.[64] ReHoPE promotes refugee self-reliance and self-sufficiency and stresses that refugees have the same rights and duties as nationals. This has significant implications for refugees in terms of water delivery systems because Ugandans are subject to the user pays principle, meaning refugees, like their

58 UNHCR, *Uganda Country Refugee Response Plan*, Nairobi, UNHCR, 2021, available at: https://reporting.unhcr.org/sites/default/files/Uganda%20Country%20RRP%202019-20%20%28January%202019%29.pdf (last visited 6 Mar. 2021).

59 UNHCR, *Operational Update 1-31 January 2021*, UNHCR, 2021, available at: https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/UNHCR%20UGA_Operational%20Update%20-%20January%202021.pdf (last visited 6 March 2021).

60 Consultancy project undertook in 2017 for a humanitarian agency.

61 K. Blackmore, "Humanitarian Remains: Erasure and the Everyday of Camp Life in Northern Uganda", *Journal of Refugee Studies*, 33(4), 2020, 684–705.

62 Uganda has hosted an average of 1,600,000 refugees since the 1950s and with its 2006 Refugee Act and 2010 Refugee Regulations has been praised for its hospitality. World Bank Group, *An Assessment of Uganda's Progressive Approach to Refugee Management*, Washington, DC, World Bank, 2016, available at: http://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/259711469593058429/pdf/107235-WP-PUBLIC.pdf (last visited 1 Mar. 2021).

63 Betts et al., "Refugee Economies". While recently Uganda has been praised for its welcoming approach, the country has not always granted freedom of movement and the right to work. In the past, the settlement system has undermined refugees' self-reliance see T. Kaiser, *'We Are All Stranded Here Together': The Local Settlement System, Freedom of Movement and Livelihood Opportunities for Refugees in Arua and Moyo Districts*, Kampala, Refugee Law Project, 2005; T. Kaiser, "Between a Camp and a Hard Place: Rights, Livelihood and Experiences of the Local Settlement System for Long-Term Refugees in Uganda", *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, 44(4), 2006, 597–621.

64 N. Crowford, S.O'Callaghan, K. Holloway, & C. Lowe, *The CRRF Progress in Uganda*, London, HPG/ODI, HPG Working paper, 2019; UNHCR, *Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework: Review of Practical Application in Uganda*. Geneva, UNHCR, 2018.

host communities, will be expected to contribute financially towards the upkeep of water delivery systems.

While there has been considerable interest and attention on the self-reliance meta-agenda, concerns about transparency and accountability of donor funding have continued to dog Uganda. For example, the former UK Department for International Development (DfID) suspended aid to the Uganda Government in November 2012,[65] followed by Ireland, Sweden, Norway, and Denmark. Our case study on water provision within Uganda refugee settlements further illustrates how the drivers of donor value-for-money, refugee protection, and self-reliance are at variance.

5.2. UNHCR-directed water provision: accountability to whom?

According to UNHCR policy, during the emergency phase of a new refugee crisis UNHCR directs its Implementing Partners (funded by UNHCR) and NGO Operational Partners to use water trucks to replenish elevated temporary tanks supplying refugees from emergency tapstands. While the focus of any emergency – 0 to6 months – is on "immediate lifesaving interventions,"[66] during the transition phase – 6 months to 2 years – the UNHCR usually directs Implementing Partners to construct temporary piped water networks and to build permanent solar pumped piped networks in the post-emergency or protracted phase – 2 to 20 years.

According to the UNHCR WASH Protection Principles, accountability to affected communities, their consultation, and participation in decision making is essential for "the assessment, planning, design, monitoring and maintenance phases of WASH interventions."[67] Under UNHCR's AAP requirement, refugees would therefore be expected to be involved "meaningfully in key decisions"[68] on the design and planning of any permanent water infrastructure.

At the height of the most recent crises, between 2013 and 2017 Uganda received one million South Sudanese refugees.[69] During fieldwork in July 2017, it was widely quoted in interviews with NGO and UNHCR representatives that UNHCR was spending 100,000 USD a day on water trucking to supply emergency water to recent refugee arrivals, whilst the media ran stories claiming corruption and poor negotiations over water trucking contracts by UNHCR.[70]

65 DfID, "Uganda: UK Suspends Aid to Government", UK Government, 2012, available at: https://www.gov.uk/government/news/uganda-uk-suspends-aid-to-government; M. Tran & L. Ford, "UK Suspends Aid to Uganda as Concern Grows over Misuse of Funds", *The Guardian*, 16 Nov. 2012, available at: https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2012/nov/16/uk-suspends-aid-uganda-misuse (both last visited 1 Mar. 2021).

66 UNHCR, *WASH Manual. Practical Guidance for Refugees Settings*, Geneva, UNHCR, 2020, 14, available at: https://wash.unhcr.org/download/unhcr-wash-manual-part-1-programme-guidance/ (last visited 4 Mar. 2021).

67 *Ibid.*, 10.

68 *Ibid.*

69 BBC News, "Uganda Receives One Million South Sudan Refugees", *BBC News*, 17 August 2017, available at: https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-40959953 (last visited 6 Mar. 2021).

70 2019 saw the suspension of funding to UNHCR over concerns over improper awarding of major contracts, with special reference made by UN auditors to water trucking. They identified "pervasive non-compliance" with regulations on "vast sums" spent on water trucking and that UNHCR paid at least $10 million more VAT than it needed to. The New Humanitarian, "Key donors freeze Uganda refugee aid

Pressure was subsequently applied on UNHCR by its principal donor (ECHO) to phase out water trucking[71] and commence the construction of permanent piped water systems during the emergency phase and under the mantle of providing more sustainable solutions and offering donors better value-for-money.[72] Field visits to newly established settlements such as Bidi Bidi in July 2017 bore witness to wide-scale construction of permanent water systems.

The speed and scale of construction of infrastructure in new settlements, still receiving refugees, raised concern amongst a small number of NGOs over their long-term sustainability implications. Observation of a Technical Working Group meeting, in a newly opened settlement in West Nile, northern Uganda, in February 2018, with representatives of NGOs involved in water provision, made clear the pressure to eliminate water trucking, and fast track the construction of permanent infrastructure, was cascaded from ECHO to UNHCR Kampala and onto UNHCR regional field staff. At the time, only three of the planned 17 systems in the settlement were completed, and water trucking was still required. The UNHCR regional water officer chairing the meeting, which had no refugee representatives, was concerned over the "speed of construction" stressing that the NGOs "were behind schedule" and "we need to phase out water trucking." NGO representatives highlighted that the settlement was still receiving refugees and had not reached any sort of equilibrium. So whilst at the behest of UNHCR, they were busy laying out a permanent piped network, there were concerns that once completed some tap stands would be crowded, and others underutilised. Observation of the settlement confirmed clustering around some sources.

What was of concern to the UNHCR regional official in this meeting was not ongoing operation and maintenance costs of newly-installed water systems, rather that they could report back to their head office that water trucking had been phased out. Experiences of this meeting were mirrored in another settlement visited indicating where accountability priorities lay. A representative of the NGO who was providing water trucking in an interview in February 2018 recognised that: "[T]rucking is not sustainable, but as long as there is no other option it has to happen. We need a gradual phase out:[water provision] should be demand-based, not showing the donors we are cutting costs. We have to think about the beneficiaries."

after UN mismanagement scandal", *The New Humanitarian*, 28 February 2019, available at: https://www.thenewhumanitarian.org/news/2019/02/28/donors-freeze-uganda-refugee-aid-after-un-mismanagement-scandal (last visited 1 Mar. 2021). See also The New Humanitarian, "Audit finds UN Refugee Agency Critically Mismanaged Donor Funds in Uganda", *The New Humanitarian*, 28 November 2018, available at: https://www.thenewhumanitarian.org/news/2018/11/28/audit-finds-un-refugee-agency-critically-mismanaged-donor-funds-uganda (last visited 1 Mar. 2021).

71 The ECHO funding calls for the Horn of Africa states that "[w]ater trucking should only be considered for the shortest time following an event, and as a last-resort lifesaving intervention requiring a clear and concrete exit strategy." Further "[e]nhancement of self-reliance together with community contribution should be fostered as much as possible and a clear strategic plan beyond the duration of a DG ECHO funding should be developed and regularly updated." See the Technical Annex of the funding call, especially page 15, available at: https://ec.europa.eu/echo/sites/echo-site/files/echo_-hf_bud_2019_91000_ta_v3.pdf (last visited 3 Mar. 2021).

72 Piped water systems represent a capital investment of between USD$400 and 800,000. Consultancy report written by Denish Byamukama of WSS Services Ltd for UNICEF and UNDP, and Uganda's Ministry of Water and Environment 2019.

Thus, the visibility of permanent and indeed "brandable" infrastructure, for the benefit of donors, as will be shown below, took precedence over immediate needs in the settlement, and AAP took a back seat.

5.3. On visibility, accountability, and self-reliance

The new water systems in place and those planned had contracts that stipulated the branding of donor logos, and such was the climate of concern over accountability of spent funds, the NGOs were there ready with their own logos to brand the new infrastructure.

An important part of the commissioned study in 2018 was to ask refugees, who were using tap stands free of charge with no restrictions, their views on plans to introduce water user payments (in-line with CRRF and the ReHoPE strategy). Interviews and focus groups were arranged in a refugee settlement whose water provision was managed by an INGO who was in the final stages of connecting a temporary tap stand to the new 11.5 km permanent piped network. The engineer proudly showed off their new water system featuring an 87,000-L raised water tower tank. Fieldwork notes from one focus group with four female refugees assembled around a tap stand, over their willingness to pay for water in the future, noted that the line of questioning was met with laughter. The group of women pointed to the huge water tower that dominated the skyline, emblazoned with the INGO logo: "They will pay"; or "If we are still here, they [pointing to the INGO tower] are waiting for you," the inference being the paternalistic INGO would continue to provide free services. Panning back, the fieldwork diary entry noted the INGO engineer and technicians all in INGO flak jackets, with the obligatory Landcruiser featuring the INGO logo. It was at this juncture that the impact of logos representing the provision of free services in perpetuum, from the perspective of beneficiaries, came into focus. In follow-up discussions with NGO representatives in the field and with Head Office representative, there were no concerns raised over how branding assets and programming signs with their logos could be interpreted and understood by the communities they serve, or whether they were inadvertently facilitating an undermining dependency culture.

As part of a pilot study in October 2018, both authors wanted to better understand the use of logos and signage and interviewed NGO officials based in Kampala as well as field officers in Kiryandongo settlement in mid-west Uganda. We asked what would happen if logos were banned? To everyone we spoke to, this proposal was met with bemused smiles. We were repeatedly told that logos of the donors are a requirement of funding, as Section 4 of this article suggested. Why then, we wanted to know, "does it need the NGO logo?" A humanitarian NGO programme manager, in a follow-up study in July 2019, recounted the following story taken from our field diaries to illustrate why NGOs brand assets, which proved to be very relatable to those we subsequently interviewed.

Vignette 2: If we don't brand, someone else will!

An NGO she had worked for constructed a communal latrine block within a settlement, but did not immediately brand the block with their logo. When

> NGO staff visited the latrine block they saw that another NGO had taken the initiative and branded it with their own logo! She told us NGOs were under a lot of pressure to meet construction targets, so this was not surprising.

As a component of the summer 2019 (July–August) study into humanitarian programme messaging within Kiryandongo settlement, we analysed 92 NGO signage images. It was apparent that the majority were not in the local language of the refugees, they also assumed literacy and knowledge of the English language. Who then was the intended audience of these signs (which included both NGO and donor logos)? Interviews and discussions with NGO representatives we consulted revealed they were widely reproduced in reports for their donors or could be easily pointed out to donor officials on due-diligence settlement flying visits. They were therefore another form of upward accountability, and a visible and understandable representation that donations had been spent as the funders intended.

Several of the humanitarian field officials interviewed, and with whom discussions were held, had previous experience of working in the IDP camps in rural northern Uganda and were keen to share their sustainability concerns over the newly constructed water systems following the South Sudanese crisis.

It is estimated that 1.84 million Ugandans were displaced into 251 IDP camps in northern Uganda at the height of the conflict between the Ugandan Army and the Lord's Resistance Army in 2005.[73] New large permanent and branded piped water systems, supplying free of charge communal water taps, were constructed, and managed by aid agencies. The permanent water systems were handed over to the local government to manage when UNHCR closed its regional office in 2012, which a 2018 study by Oxfam suggests was "practically speaking [...] a form of abandonment."[74] A visit to former IDP camps in February 2018 verified that the water systems were defunct, and the solar panels had been removed.

Reflecting on their IDP camp experiences, NGO representatives felt the systems were not maintained because the implementing agencies did not consider the human and financial capacity needed to keep the water running once they had left. There was no involvement or inclusion of the displaced people over the design and maintenance implications. After 10 years within a paternalistic camp setting, not surprisingly, the displaced users were not willing to pay water fees. The desire, as one NGO representative stated in March 2018 "to avoid the [outcomes of the] IDP camps" was widely shared amongst those involved in the new settlements studied. Officials consulted were acutely aware that the obsolete infrastructure in former IDP camps represented a waste of donor investment. Often only old signage and logos remain as permanent reminders of an unsustainable humanitarian response (see Figure 4).

73 UNHCR, "UNHCR Closes Chapter on Uganda's Internally Displaced People", *UNHCR*, 6 Jan. 2012, available at: https://www.unhcr.org/uk/news/briefing/2012/1/4f06e2a79/unhcr-closes-chapter-ugandas-internally-displaced-people.html (last visited 4 Mar. 2021).

74 See consultancy report I.K. Nabide, *Operation, Maintenance and Management Framework for Ensuring Sustainable WASH Facilities in Refugee Settlements and Host Community Contexts*, s.l., Oxfam, 2018, 5.

Figure 4. Old signage from a redundant water source in a refugee settlement, Uganda. Picture taken by J.B.

6. DISCUSSION AND CRITICAL REFLECTION

The case study presented shows how governance failings, coupled with an underappreciation over how the branding of assets contributes to a dependency culture amongst beneficiaries, as they associate logos with free services, is thereby potentially compromising the long-term sustainability of water systems and the very self-reliance agenda the sector is promoting. We have identified two areas of significance that we will reflect upon below: first, how upward accountability may undermine the implementation of CRRF, and this reinforces extant literature that argues that upward accountability remains the focus of humanitarian actors at the expense of AAP.[75] Secondly, our major contribution questions the psychological and dissociative impacts of living in spaces that are "littered with logos."

6.1. Donor diktats and how upward-accountability potentially undermines self-reliance

The case study highlights two intertwined donor diktats that underline their dominant role: the first being the importance of demonstrating value-for-money through

75 Among others Blagescu et al., *Pathways to Accountability*; Agyemang et al., *NGO Accountability and Aid Delivery*; J. Daun, "Humanitarian Accountability: A Conceptual Analysis", RLI Working Paper No. 41, 2020.

the phasing out of water trucking; and the second being the requirement to brand permanent infrastructure, both of which, we argue, may undermine the self-reliance agenda.

NGOs and the UNHCR in Uganda find themselves in what has been termed a "reputation trap" of accountability: to survive financially they align their mission and purpose to that of donors and their wishes and focus on producing tangible (and indeed "brandable") and more readily accountable results, to maintain their reputation with donors and taxpayers.[76] The construction and branding of permanent water systems are a case in point.

6.1.1. Value for money

UNHCR's failure to demonstrate value-for-money over emergency water trucking was to be remedied with the construction of permanent water systems. The case study highlights the pressure on UNHCR regional field staff, by its primary donor via the UNHCR head office, to expedite the end of water trucking. For donors with an emergency remit, such as ECHO, piped water systems represent a tangible nod to sustainability, but then become "someone else's problem" when their upkeep no longer falls within their remit. It is important to recognise that the UNHCR regional official had to publicly side-line his own concerns to promote the agenda from head office. The disconnect between the experiences of field staff, aware of the legacy of the sustainability failures in the IDP camps, and those based in Kampala, is an area we explore in our final section where we discuss new spaces for accountability.

Phasing out water trucking and pacifying their major donor became UNHCR's priority and superseded creating the time and space necessary for NGOs to carefully consider the sustainability implications of their infrastructure choices. Water trucking is never meant to be a permanent solution, but it creates time to plan systems that are reflective of demand, and vitally to engage with refugees and undertake some capacity building if needed. However, as observed during infrastructure planning meetings across two settlements in February 2018, refugees or their representatives were not engaged or consulted about the design implications in terms of operation and maintenance of the piped water systems. By pushing for construction whilst still in the emergency stage, UNHCR was side-lining its own WASH manual policies in terms of AAP participation (Section 5.2) and leapfrogging stages.

The case of Uganda illustrates funding dependence is key in determining which kind of accountability is prioritised as "the push for accountability tends to focus on immediate, tangible successes instead of the overall long-term program impact."[77] The case study shows how the humanitarian accountability to donor agenda supersedes AAP and the CRRF self-reliance agenda with donors focusing more on what they think is the best value for money rather than effectiveness of aid. The sustainability failure of the infrastructure in the IDP camps is a salutary lesson over what

76 S.E. Gent, M.J.C. Crescenzi, E.J. Menninga, & L. Reid, "The Reputation Trap of NGO Accountability", *International Theory*, 7(3), 2015, 426–463. See also Davis, *Concerning Accountability of Humanitarian Action.*

77 Gent et al., "The Reputation Trap of NGO Accountability", 432.

happens when agencies no longer have the budget to finance the running costs of systems that bare their logo.

6.1.2. Branding on permanent infrastructure

As discussed in Section 4, it is increasingly acknowledged that NGO and donor visibility has grown within humanitarian settings. Given the predominance of English on all the signs, we concur that donors and taxpayers are the distant audiences of visibility strategies we have identified in the Uganda water sector and beyond (see, for instance, Figure 3). This is reinforced by ECHO's manual which clearly indicates that "The primary target audience of Partners' communication actions should be the general public, both in the European Union and in third countries where EU-funded actions are carried out, while duly respecting and protecting the safety and dignity of beneficiaries."[78]

As Vignette 1 and 2 illustrate, logos demonstrate accountability to donors and taxpayers, the achievements realised with the funding received and the NGO's good work, to the point that some would even be tempted to brand something they have not built or contributed to. Evidence that money has been well spent is materially shown through photographs and snapshots, and "banked on" for future funding calls. As NGOs and donors focus on the "looking good" aspect of branding, there seems to be no concerns over the actual effectiveness of the intervention and, in the words of Wilkins, "[t]his interest in the spectacle of public appearance may result in a lack of accountability towards solving significant global problems."[79]

Significantly, within the Ugandan humanitarian water sector and broader literature consulted, there is no recognition over the potential impact of branding and logos on refugees' sense of ownership over systems, and thus both acceptance and ability to pay user fees for complex water supply systems in the future. This was vividly portrayed by the focus group discussion with refugees pointing to the highly visible branded water tower. The IDP camps, however, indicate that once donors stop funding NGOs the systems fail rapidly, in part, because users have become accustomed to water-free at the point of use.

Our study adds to the body of evidence over how accountability towards donors is resulting in perverse outcomes. Agyemen et al. argue that while fiscal accountability is important, equally "important [is] for governments and other donors to be aware of the potentially damaging and counterproductive impact of some of the upward accountability mechanisms."[80] Branding, as a requirement of upward accountability, has the potential of undermining the sustainability agendas espoused by UNHCR and donors themselves under CRRF, which we now discuss.

78 ECHO, *Communication and Visibility Manual for European Union-funded Humanitarian Aid Actions*, 16.

79 Wilkins, "Communicating about development and the challenge of doing well", 76; see also F. Enghel, "A 'Success Story' Unpacked: Doing Good and Communicating Do- Gooding in the Videoletters Project", in Enghel & Noske-Turner (eds.), *Communication in International Development*, 21–38.

80 Agyemang et al., *NGO Accountability and Aid Delivery*, 10.

6.2. Ownership and psychological effects of logos and branding

We argue that the psychological impacts on refugees of living in a branded space are an academically under explored theme, particularly with regard to the self-reliance agenda.

Not only does branding and costs related to branding potentially reinforce the idea that humanitarian organisations have become commercial enterprises, but they could potentially lead to confusion over authority and responsibility for the humanitarian response and service provision. While discussing the role of state authorities and UNHCR in the management of displacement, Amy Slaughter and Jeff Crisp, for example, suggest that the ongoing branding of infrastructures and services may be misleading:

> The ubiquity of UNHCR's personnel, offices, vehicles and logo in many long term refugee camps often leads to confusion on this matter, a situation exacerbated by the fact that many government assets also carry the prominent inscription, "donated by UNHCR". When coupled with the physical separation of refugee camps, it is hardly surprising that refugees, local people and government officials should perceive such locations as extra-territorial entities, administered by an international organisation with greater visibility, resources - and even legitimacy - than the state.[81]

The extra-territorial status of Uganda's refugee settlements, managed by the OPM and UNHCR, has lately seen some integration with local government as a results of the ReHoPE and CRRF agenda, but the "logoisation" of programming, assets, and services may still influence perceptions over ownership and responsibility.

While the psychological association NGOs wish to construct seems clear in relation to the accountability towards donors and taxpayers, the psychological constructs of branding in the field of operations and of primary stakeholders using branded infrastructures, goods, and equipment remain largely unknown. It is, therefore, essential for humanitarian organisations, and for future research, to consider the psychological construct of branding and the impact that such construct may have on their social missions, organisational agenda, or global agendas they subscribe to.

There is, we argue, a dark side to this all-pervasive branding as we are witnessing the marketisation of humanitarian spaces and indeed the "logo-isation of poverty."[82] Again, we have to refer to the powerful role played by the donors in perpetuating this: ECHO, for instance, will exonerate implementing partners from branding equipment or project assets and request alternative arrangements only "in contexts where the visibility activities may harm the implementation of the Action, or the safety of the staff, of the partner or its co-partners and implementing partners, or the

81 Slaughter & Crisp, *A Surrogate State? The Role of UNHCR in Protracted Refugee Situations*, 12.

82 I. Kapoor, "Humanitarian Heroes?", in G. Fridell & M. Konings (eds.), *Age of Icons: Exploring Philanthrocapitalism in the Contemporary World*, Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 26–49. See also L.A. Richey & S. Ponte, *Brand Aid: Shopping Well to Save the World*, Minneapolis, MN, University of Minnesota Press, 2011.

safety of beneficiaries or the local community."[83] Refugees' perceptions of rampant "logo-isation" of their spaces and assets remain unquestioned.

Vignette 1 emphasised that all the water infrastructure within the settlements had been branded. A logo is a visual shortcut for beneficiaries: it is the visual cue that helps refugees know who is in charge of what and identify the provider of poor services. In this way, logos can enhance humanitarian organisations and agencies' accountability.

However, the literature on NGOs' branding also suggests that "brands represent a mark of ownership"[84] and, as such, it may force a dissociative state upon the beneficiaries. In this case, logos may represent free service, reinforce a culture of dependence, and ultimately undermine the CRRF, self-reliance, and sustainability agendas.

Donor and NGOs' logos are a visible reminder that this water source is "not mine" and therefore "not my responsibility." This, coupled with the lack of AAP and refugees' engagement in decision-making, may inadvertently discourage the affected communities from forming a strong sense of ownership over services and water sources, and ultimately affect their willingness to pay for its ongoing upkeep. Not only do the branding of assets instil a dissociative feeling for beneficiaries, but logos seem to serve more the "feel-good-purpose" for distant audiences such as taxpayers and individual donors, who do not question the root causes of forced displacements but feel satisfied with and proud of their involvement in humanitarian responses or their private donations.

Not only does "littering" refugee settlements with logos risk seriously undermining any sense of local ownership, but it also raises important questions on international organisations and donors' commitments towards the Grand Bargain localisation agenda to which formally they subscribe. Often the international community and donors decide how to respond to crises, how to deliver aid, and simply expect refugees to be part of those solutions, propositions, and expectations.[85] However, if there is no AAP and refugees are not involved in the setting up of water sources and the decisions about their management, it is unlikely they will feel ownership and the humanitarian response may be rendered unsustainable.

83 ECHO, *Communication and Visibility Manual for European Union-funded Humanitarian Aid Actions*,10.

84 G. Hankinson, "Relational Network Brands: Towards a Conceptual Model of Place Brands", *Journal of Vacation Marketing*, 10(2), 2004, 109–21; C. Blain, S.E. Levy, & J.R.B. Ritchie, "Destination Branding: Insights and Practices from Destination Management Organizations", *Journal of Travel Research*, 43, 2005, 328–338.

85 In 2019, Ground Truth Solutions found that in Uganda "Fifty-six percent of refugees do not see themselves as becoming self reliant" and "Forty-three percent of refugees do not feel their views are considered in decision about aid." Ground Truth Solutions (GTS) and Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), *Uganda: Field Perspectives on the Grand Bargain*, Findings from round 2, Feb. 2019, 3. See also the last independent report on the Grand Bargain, Metcalfe-Hough et al., *The Grand Bargain at Five Years;* Plan International, *Putting the CRRF into Practice: General Issues and Specific Considerations in Tanzania and Uganda*, Plan International, 3 Jul. 2017, available at: https://plan-international.org/sites/default/files/field/field_document/2017-07-03_putting_the_crrf_into_practice.pdf (16 Feb. 2021). On the imposition of aid, see B.E. Harrell-Bond, *Imposing Aid: Emergency Assistance to Refugees*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1986.

7. CONCLUSIONS: NEW SPACES FOR ACCOUNTABILITY

This article has been concerned with initiating a discussion over who the intended audience of all the logos and signs in humanitarian settings is: why and how has this situation arisen and what are the consequences to refugees and the broader CRRF agenda? Our article investigated how humanitarian branding and logos – a form of upward accountability to donors – can limit self-reliance and the sustainability of water provision in refugee settlements, especially if affected communities are not consulted.

Our study in Uganda supports the growing body of literature that suggests that NGO accountability is out of balance, with upward accountability to donors dictating NGO programming. The case study highlighted two donor concerns: the importance of value-for-money through the phasing out of water trucking; and the requirement to brand permanent infrastructure, which we argue, potentially undermines the CRRF, self-reliance, and the sustainability of the humanitarian response in Uganda.

We have also explored the potential consequences of branding and the proliferation of logos in refugee settings and suggested that more research is needed in this area: donors and NGOs have never questioned the potential dissociative effects that their practices may have on refugees and the CRRF agenda. Refugee settlements should not be a PR exercise for NGOs and donors. This is dissociative for beneficiaries but also deeply distasteful. When schemes fail (see the case of IDP camps in Uganda) the logos remain a visible manifestation of failure and the lack of sustainable interventions, as well as wasted funding and the lack of accountability to beneficiaries.

Our research has started highlighting a potential pathway to further explore the relationship between branding, sense of ownership, and responsibility. Further research should consider the psychological effects of branding in refugee settings and consider the following research questions: How does branding affect refugee self-reliance and sense of ownership? How do refugees feel about living in spaces where logos proliferate but their conditions (and rights) do not change? Moreover, taxpayers are often referred to when justifying the branding of assets and programming. If taxpayers, for instance, were made aware that their money has been spent, in their name, branding assets which undermine the sustainability of the humanitarian response, what would their reaction be? How would they respond if they saw the abandoned water infrastructure in former IDP camps in northern Uganda, the physical evidence that donations were not value for money and sustainable? There must be other ways to report back to both donors and taxpayers. While donors' guidelines already include exceptions in the use of logos and branding often based on security, other considerations on exceptions must be taken into account as well. If the end goal is sustainability, then factors that impair this, such as logos and branding, may need to be researched and reconsidered.

Given the findings, we argue that NGOs, UN agencies, and donors should reflect more on their practices and how upward accountability, when not accompanied by other kinds of accountabilities, may be undermining key agendas they are trying to pursue. As Dorothea Hilhorst reminded us, accountability in humanitarian settings is complex and humanitarian organisations are not the only actors who should be accountable. While NGOs' accountability has been widely debated, other kinds of accountabilities have been overlooked. Actors such as donors, international government organisations, and the UN, "all have roles and responsibilities in determining

the quality of assistance,"[86] and the effectiveness and sustainability of the humanitarian response.

We are interested in creating new spaces for accountability, especially concerning donors' accountability. And by this, we do not mean "accountability *to* donors," but "accountability *of* donors." Only if donors change their requirements will NGOs be incentivised to change their practices. As we have shown, AAP is an essential element for a sustainable humanitarian response. Rather than making branding as essential condition for funding, donors should include AAP as an essential requirement. Donors such as Denmark and the Netherlands have made it compulsory for NGOs to engage affected communities at all stages of programme cycles. Only such an approach and more flexible funding schemes, as included in the Grand Bargain commitments, can make humanitarian responses more relevant and sustainable.[87] We recognise that the involvement of affected populations in the planning of sustainable water sources in the emergency phase is challenging. But following existing policies and guidance would be a good starting point. UNHCR's WASH manual, for instance, gives 2 years before it recommends decisions over what kind of permanent infrastructure to install. This time needs to be used to train refugees and their representatives or community-based volunteers in water system design and technology choices, and their on-going operation and maintenance implications. In this way, affected communities can consciously decide on the technology they will be paying for in the future – provided the self-reliance agenda is successful in granting refugees livelihood opportunities and the means to live in dignity.

A significant role in understanding and implementing sustainability can also be played by local field staff and, in particular, field staff with experience from the IDP camps and also the development sector. In line with the localisation agenda commitments of the Grand Bargain, power rebalances between local organisations, and international organisations and donors are much needed. An area that we feel needs more consideration is the accountability towards field staff who invariably understand the local context and realities on the ground and whose views are often left out of official reports.[88] The engagement of affected populations and local field staff could also address the overly general international standards offered by donors' regulations and peer-regulatory initiatives which riskreducing humanitarian responses to mere technical support that can be applied anywhere at any point in time.[89] We argue that only accountability to and participation of local actors, both affected populations and local field officers, factoring in their experiences and knowledge, can generate ownership of projects resources and enhance the long-term effectiveness and sustainability of aid.

86 D. Hilhorst, "Being Good at Doing Good? Quality and Accountability of Humanitarian NGOs", *Disasters*, 26(3), 2002, 193–212, 204.

87 V. Metcalfe-Hough, W. Fenton, B. Willitts-King, & A. Spencer, *Grand Bargain Annual Independent Report 2020*, Humanitarian Policy Group, London, ODI, June 2020, 80.

88 Agyemang et al., *NGO Accountability and Aid Delivery*.

89 C. Dufour, V. de Geoffroy, H. Maury, & F. Grünewald, "Rights, Standards and Quality in a Complex Humanitarian Space: Is Sphere the Right Tool?", *Disasters*, 28(2), 2004, 124–141.