Refugees, Environmental Degradation and Restoration Options

Lalisa Duguma, Clement Okia, Cathy Watson, Judith Nzyoka

World Agroforestry Centre (ICRAF)

Email: L.A.DUGUMA@CGIAR.ORG

Refugees

- Conflicts induce forced movement of people across borders of different countries.

- Uganda currently is hosting close to a million refugees from South Sudan.

- Most of the refugees are women and children.

- They live in a very poor state since they are traumatized by the experiences they have gone through.

Refugees need residential space, food, wood, water and other ecosystem goods and services

To fulfil their needs refugees use the surrounding natural resources

How are refugees linked with environmental degradation?

- The addition of refugees to the local population increases population density.

- Population increment creates extraction pressure for wood (construction and energy), water, etc.

- The refugees addition into the ecosystem forces conversion of some land covers to land uses. Savannahs to residential areas, savannahs to farm areas

- When utilization is not regulated, environmental degradation occurs.

Environmental degradation is also happening due to ignorance

- Before settling the refugees, trees were marked with different colors.
    - Yellow – only to be cut with permission
    - Red – not to be cut at all.

- However, since the refugees were not told what those colors meant, they cut the trees and in some cases intentionally damage them to dry.

SO HOW DO WE REDUCE THE DEGRADATION?

Option 1: Promoting natural regeneration of trees

- Identify and devise a strategy to care for coppicing tree species

- Educating the refugee community on how to take care of such species

Option 2: Conserving existing trees and shrubs

- Identify and tag all trees in the refugee areas that are of high conservation values

- Sensitize the refugee communities not to damage those trees

- Effective implementation of protecting the trees in the settlement areas

Option 3: Promote tree growing

- Tree planting - most preferred restoration option by the refugees

- On average planting targets were 32-50 trees per household depending on land sizes.

- Most preferred planting areas in the farms – plot boundaries (66%), within plots (33%)
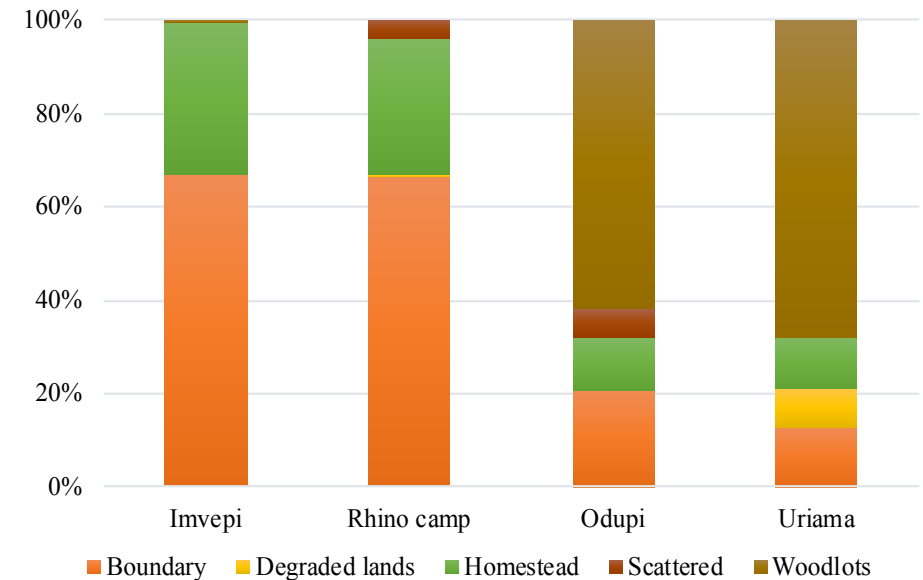
Designing woody plants integration vision

- The emphasis of the refugees at the moment is largely to produce most of what can be consumed by households.

- Plot sizes vary between 30m*30m to 50m*50m currently.

- In such a plot, how do the refugees want to integrate trees?

- Which species do they want to grow and how do the species they want fit in to the landscape? What is the optimum balance between their choices and the ecological balance?

Current land use practices

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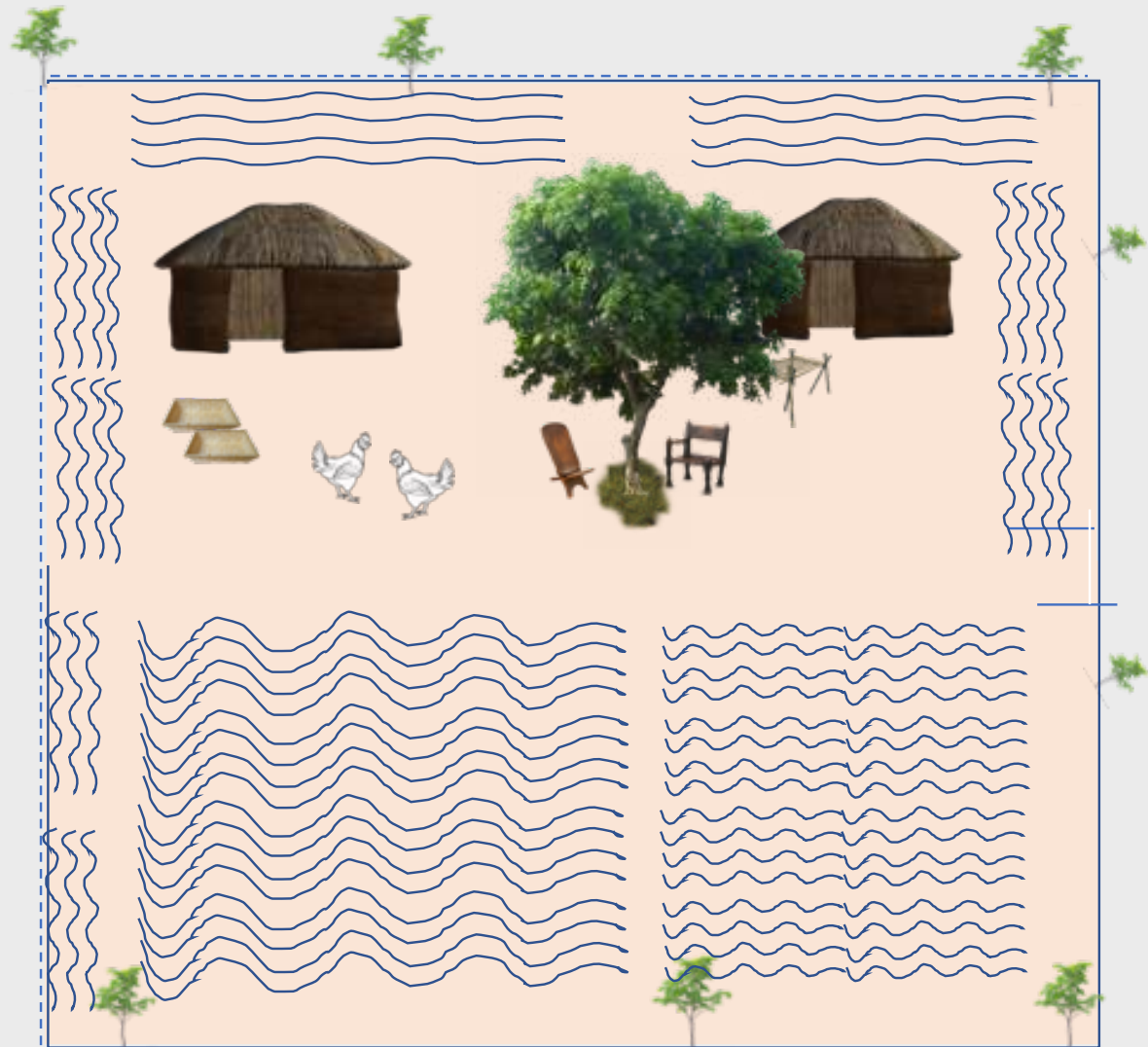
A sample refugee household plot

In 5-10 years time

With diverse trees in and around their plots or homesteads

The refugee household plot once the tree integration is operational

Requirements to operationalize the vision

- Trainings on managing trees and tree seedlings
- Production and provision of seedlings
- Sustained support by key players in the area
- Community mobilization and awareness creation (Youth community facilitators from Refugees).

Why trees and tree-based systems for restoration?

- We **build** with trees (Timber)
- We **cook** with trees (Firewood and charcoal)
- We **heal** with trees (Traditional medicines)
- We **sit on** trees (Wood)
- We **eat from** trees (Fruits)
- We **sit under** trees (Shade)
- We **drink from** trees (Fodder for animals)
- We **enjoy with** trees (Wild animals, aesthetics…)
- …….

Thank you!