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**Assessment of the Implementation of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees' Mandate of Protecting and Promoting the Rights of Refugee Children: A Case Study of Nakivale Refugee Settlement**

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) has been given a mandate to provide international protection to refugees and seek permanent solutions to their problems through its statute, adopted by the UN General Assembly in December 1950. Action to protect refugees encompasses all activities that aimed at ensuring the equal access to and enjoyment of the rights in accordance with the spirit of relevant bodies of law. UNHCR protection interventions often include action with an assistance component, including providing non-food items, building infrastructure, schools and providing services such as education, health care and security from violence and exploitation. Despite the UNHCR mandate of protecting refugees, a study conducted by raising voices revealed that girls and boys between 8 and 17 years of age reported experiencing physical, emotional and economical violence as regular features in their lives. Girls described experiencing the constant threat, and common occurrence of sexual violence against them. The study, therefore, assessed the implementation of UNHCR mandate of promoting and protecting the rights of refugee children by answering the following questions: What are the UNHCR interventions that are meant to promote and protect the rights of refugee children in Nakivale refugee settlement? What are the challenges faced by UNHCR in promoting and protecting the rights of children? What strategies are being used in addressing the challenges faced by UNHCR in promoting and protecting refugee children? Through self-administered questionnaires filled by 4 UNHCR staff, focus group discussions with 100 refugee children and interviews with 40 refugee adults living in Nakivale refugee settlement, the respondents gave their experience and views which produced reliable findings with clear indication that various interventions such as education services, health care, international legal standards, child and adolescent development, voluntary repatriation, resettlement, working with children, situational analysis and community mobilisation have been used to protect and promote refugee children's rights. These interventions have resulted into improved protection and programming, including advocacy, improved partnership and team-working, great engagement with people of concern, improved communication and outreach, awareness of protection risks, domestic violence and sexual exploitation and value for learning by doing. However, it must be concluded that, amidst the interventions made, UNHCR still faces many challenges in its efforts to protect and promote refugee children's rights among which the major challenges were noted as relief for the victims of gross violations of human rights, poverty and people on the move. This, therefore, limits children's enjoyment of their rights as refugees since the UNHCR's efforts are hampered by the challenges identified. It was recommended that UNHCR should economically empower refugee families to enable them afford to meet the basic necessities of children, bridge communication gap between UNHCR staff and beneficiaries and improve the monitoring system to check whether the services are reaching the expected beneficiaries and track the quality of the provided services. Significantly, UNHCR should negotiate with government to recognise academic credentials from the country of origin of refugee children.

**Key words: Refugees, Rights, Children**