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Regional and Local Development Studies

Refugees and the Environment:
A Case Study of the Uduk Refugees in the
Bonga Refugee Camp, Gambela National State,
Ethiopia.



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July 2003

Declaration

I declare that this thesis is my original work and has not been presented for a degree in any University. All the sources of material used for the thesis are duly acknowledged.

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Refugees and the Environment:

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REGIONAL AND LOCAL DEVELOPMENT STUDIES (RLDS)

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July, 2003

Acknowledgement

I would like to express my gratitude to the many of you who have helped towards bringing this research into reality. I am deeply grateful and indebted to the Uduk Refugees at Bonga, many of whom had opened up their homes to me and made me feel at home during my four years of working in the camp as well as during the five weeks spent doing this research. I would like to extend a special thanks to Rebecca, Urriah, Inke, Pan Jecka, Samule Kona, Titus, Yassir ,Peter, the church elders and community leaders who have facilitated the interview sessions and also gave me their time to answer my endless questions and give me language instructions. There are many others among the Uduk community whose names have not been mentioned here but have contributed in different ways to the realization of this research. Thank you all so much. *Dhalka Arungimis bor um mii dhali sus um pan gana bore ki jahane.*

I am also thankful for ZOA Refugee Care for its assistance in covering some of the expenses of the research and the provision of transport and lodging at the camp. I am especially thankful to all the ZOA staff at the camp level who had made my stay there pleasant and fun. A special thanks to Henock and Yewubdar, Merim and others for their warm hospitality and friendship.

I am deeply grateful to Mr Gerrit Jan Van Uffelen of ZOA-Addis who had encouraged me to undertake this research and also challenged me all the way through the different phases of compiling the data.

I would also like to express my gratitude to my advisor at AAU, Dr Alula Pankhurst, who had patiently and scrupulously read through the various drafts of this paper and given useful comments and suggestions.

I would not have been able to do this research without the support and encouragement of my family and friends. I will not try to say the names here since the list is endless. Thank you so much for your prayers and support.

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Abstract

In Ethiopia, the Gambella National State, due to its geographical proximity to the Sudan, has been host to various groups of Sudanese refugees fleeing their country because of civil war over the last two decades. As large groups of people are settled in an area, they exert pressure on the natural environment. The hosting Regional Government as well as agencies working in the area recognizes the existence of environmental degradation in areas surrounding these refugee settlements. However the extent of the damage varies from one settlement to another. In acknowledging the existence of such damage on the environment, it is important to examine the different factors that contribute to the situation. According to the UNHCR, the major environmental problems related to refugee areas are deforestation, soil erosion and depletion and pollution of water resources.

The main objective of this research is to identify and examine the social, economic, institutional, cultural and motivational factors contributing to environmental degradation in and around the Bonga Refugee Settlement in the Gambella National State, Western Ethiopia. The research looks into the interaction of the refugees with the natural environment at Bonga along with their views towards the environment and the environmental protection schemes undertaken in the camp and its surroundings.

According to the findings of this research, a number of factors at the institutional and community level are currently contributing to the increasing environmental degradation in and around the Bonga Refugee Camp. These factors mainly include the lack of policy guideline in refugee affairs at the regional level, the increasing expansion of agriculture by refugees into the surrounding woodland resulting from their efforts to supplement their food rations coupled with the failure of the existing environmental protection schemes to take into consideration the needs of the community.

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Dedicated to all the Uduk Refugees at Bonga, who wait eagerly for the day they will return back to the Sudan.

Our land has been taken by Al Turabi

My brothers are dead fighting in the bush

Their bodies are being eaten by vultures

Oh America, please come and help bring peace to our country

Our land has been taken by Turabi

My brothers are dying in the bush, what am I to do?

Turabi chased us from our land

We are now in the bush; our houses are made of grass

Our suffering here is great we are in a land that is not our own

The Ethiopians are telling us:

“Do not farm, do not cut trees, this is not your land”

The suffering here is great.

I say let us take the truck back to our country

Oh’ the bus, please come and take us back to our country, the Sudan

Our leaders please talk to the UN

So there would be peace in our country

I want to go back to my country, the Sudan

The women are running to get on the truck back to the Sudan

Oh’ I want to go back to my country.

(An Uduk Song sung by Hosea Chalma, 16/4/2003)

Acronyms

ARRA	Administration for Refugees and Returnee Affairs
EPI	Expanded Programme of Immunization
EWG	Environmental Working Group
IDP	Internally Displaced Person
MCH	Maternal and Child Health
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NRDP	Natural Resources Development Programme
OPD	Out-Patient Department
OAU	Organization of African Unity
OLS	Operation Lifeline Sudan
SIM	Society of International Ministries
SNNPRS	Southern Nations and Nationalities Peoples Regional State
SPLA	Sudan People’s Liberation Army
UN	United Nations
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
WFP	World Food Programme
ZOA	Refugee Care Netherlands

List of Uduk words and Phrases

Leijna – An Arabic word, which is used to refer to a group of 4 or more people who assist the village chief in leadership and decision-making.

Tapa – A term used to refer to the village chief. When literally translated, the word means lord, someone who rules over.

Mmmo kal a'ci piye – means to bring a baby out of the hut. This is used to refer to the ceremony of bringing a new born baby out of the hut for everyone's viewing, about three or four weeks after it has been born.

Mom bor ma Arumgimis – A blessing of God

Maa- porridge made of flour

'tash – a stew which is eaten with the porridge maa. The stew can be made of vegetables, meat, fish or lentils.

Sandu'k – this is an Arabic term, which refers to a box that is used to store valuable objects such as jewellery, money or even cloth. However, the Uduks often use this term to refer to money that is collected from a group of and can be used for meeting the different needs of the community.

Ma'kkama – refers to the refugee court which is often made up of older men .

Shurta- is an Arabic word and refers to me who have been chosen by the refugee community to maintain peace and order in the camp by walking around the villages and catching offenders. Their jobs are similar to that of police men.

Ur am peni buntho – We have been chased away from the land we are cultivating.

Shwakim – refers to an uncle on the mother's side i.e. mother's brother.

Nam- refers to a sister's son or daughter.

Jappa/ - is a traditional stick made of wood or bamboo. And used for hunting. There are about four varieties of this stick, all used for hunting animals of different sizes.

Bampa – refers to an area which has been settled by humans.

Bwasho – refers to an area where there is no human settlement. The term *bwasho* is very often used by the Uduk to describe the area around the Bonga camp, since a large part of this area has not been settled.

Kabath – An Arabic word used to refer to a tree planting project.

Purinye- is a tool that is used by most Uduk farmers to cultivate a field.

Bangap - is a field that is found on the river bank. The main crops planted include maize and okra.

Buntho – Field that is found away from a river. The major crop that is cultivated in this field is sorghum

Malingwol – is a weed that used to appear on a field by the riverbank in the Sudan.

Sakab – is a weed that used to appear on a field far from the river bank in the Sudan

Yol 'cesh – this word literally means to buy or sell land. However, in the context of Bonga, it refers to renting of land from the local people.

'Kabus – is a weed that appears on a field far from the river bank in Bonga

Shube – is a wild fruit out of which oil is extracted for cooking purpose.

Hakkuma – is Arabic word which means government. However, this term is generally used by the Uduks in Bonga to refer to any of the organizations working in the camp.

Mon 'ko bora bor dhali 'te adi shi shi – means 'our stay here is good but the hunger is very bad'. The Uduks say that they have found peace and security since they have arrived in Bonga in 1993. However, the one thing that makes their stay in Bongs

difficult is the problem of hunger that they face due to the inadequacy of the food rations.

E wan is pini mo peni aris to jin kora e/ - means 'you save yourself with the things that you cultivate' The Uduks insist that the only way that they can overcome the inadequacy of the food rations is by cultivating crops outside of the camp.

List of Key Terms

1. **Refugees**
2. **Environmental Degradation**

1. Introduction

1.1 Relevance of the Research

Over the last three decades, different parts of the world have gone through periods of conflict that have forced people to flee their homes in order to find refuge in neighbouring countries. A large part of refugees currently found in the world have found refuge in developing countries. Some of these refugee crises have lasted for more than a decade thus forcing the refugees to stay in the hosting country for a long period of time. Other refugee crises have found solutions within relatively short periods.

As large groups of people are settled in an area, they exert pressure on the natural environment. In the case of refugee situations, at the initial stage of their arrival, the focus of relief agencies is on saving lives through the provision of food, water, shelter and medical services. However, refugees starting from their arrival in an area begin to make use of the natural resources of the area to meet their need for fuel wood, construction and in some cases cultivation. The impact this would have on the environment was not an issue that was taken much into consideration by the UNHCR until 1992 (UNHCR: 1992,5). The environmental impact of refugees was neglected not only at the emergency stage of accommodating but at the following stages of assistance which are carried out after the refugees are somewhat settled down and in a stable condition with regards to security, health and food provision. Nowadays, it is not only UNHCR that is concerned with the impact of refugees on environment, but also governments of hosting countries, agencies working with refugees as well as donor agencies.

Available literature on environmental impact of refugee settlements provides evidences of medium to long-term environmental degradation (Black: 1994, 6). However, the reliability of such findings is contested by other scholars in the field such as Kibreab (1996, 22) who says, “the available literature...abounds with a myriad of

impressionistic and unsubstantiated assumptions such as “refugees damage the environment in the countries of reception”. Kibreab further on argues his point by saying most of these findings are not based on empirical evidence. However, he does not suggest that hosting refugees does not have any impact on the environment, but that one needs to go beyond appearances to find out the real causes of degradation. These factors could be a result of government policy, assistance programs as well as conditions under which refugees are supposed to make a living. Such factors may be outside of the control of the refugees.

In Ethiopia, the Gambella National State, due to its geographical proximity to the Sudan, has been host to various groups of Sudanese refugees fleeing their country because of civil war over the last two decades. By the year 2001, the Gambella National state hosted three refugee settlements namely Dimma Refugee Camp, Bonga Refugee Camp and Fugnido Refugee Camp with a total population of 58,897 (UNHCR: 2001,9).

The hosting Regional Government as well as agencies working in the area recognizes the existence of environmental degradation in areas surrounding these refugee settlements. However the extent of the damage varies from one settlement to another. In acknowledging the existence of such damage on the environment, it is important to examine the different factors that contribute to the situation. Directly addressing environmental issues related to refugee operations is not an option but rather a priority. If it is ignored, it will threaten the very existence of the refugees by affecting the hosting capacity and good will of the hosting population and its government.

The clear identification of the factors contributing to environmental degradation around refugee settlements will better equip all stakeholders to address the problem at its root through effective interventions. This in turn will help to foster good will with the local people and government thus preserving their capacity and willingness to continue to host refugee populations.

1.2 Objectives

This research tries to contribute to the research and knowledge on the issue of refugees and environment in general. More specifically, it hopes to contribute to a better knowledge about the issue of refugees and environment as well as to the factors that are contributing to environmental degradation in the Bonga Refugee Camp, Western Ethiopia. The research looks into the interaction of the refugees with the natural environment at Bonga along with their views towards the environment and the environmental protection schemes undertaken in the camp and its surroundings.

The main objective of the study is to identify and examine the social, economic, institutional, cultural and motivational factors contributing to environmental degradation in and around the Bonga Refugee Settlement in the Gambella National State, Western Ethiopia.

Specific objectives

The specific objectives of this study are:

- To identify the factors that contribute to environmental degradation around the refugee settlement.
- To identify the role of different actors in environmental protection in and around the Bonga Refugee Camp.
- To provide baseline information about the perception of Uduk refugees towards the environment.

In order to achieve both the overall and specific objectives of the study, the following research questions were posed in the study.

- How are the refugees currently relating to the environment in the Bonga camp and its surroundings?
- Is the way the refugees currently relate to the environment influenced by their practices in the Sudan?

- What is the view of refugees towards the natural environment?
- What is the role of the regional government and those involved in refugee work in environmental protection in the Bonga area?
- What is the view of refugees towards the environmental protection schemes being undertaken in the camp and in what ways are they taking part in these endeavors?

1.3 Methods of Data Collection

This research is done in the Bonga Refugee Camp, which is found in the Gambella National State, in Western Ethiopia. The field phase of the research was done for a period of five weeks between March 14 to April 19, 2003. The study was conducted among the major inhabitants of the camp, the Uduk ethnic group from the Southern Blue Nile Province in the Sudan.

The collection of secondary data was undertaken through reference of books, published documents and official reports compiled by the different organizations working in the camp.

The study is largely qualitative in its nature. Therefore in the collection of primary information the main tools that were used were focus group discussions and in-depth interviews. Qualitative information about the refugees' interaction with the environment at Bonga and in their homeland was collected through semi-structured focus group discussions conducted with different groups of refugee men and women. These focus group discussions were guided through the use of a question guide. Since a large part of the refugee population do not speak English, the use of translators to communicate was essential through out the whole period of the field research.

In addition to the group discussions regularly held with various groups of refugees, the researcher also frequently went into the refugee villages to visit and discuss the issues raised in the research with key informants. Since the researcher had previously worked in the camp for four years, it was possible to freely go into the villages to visit old friends who served as key informants during the whole period of the field research.

During these times of visiting old friends over a pot of coffee, people were more willing to discuss about their interactions with the natural environment, their views as well as the problems they encounter.

Among the Uduks, there are some men who play songs on a locally made guitar known as the *deng deng*. The songs sung by these singers often relate to their life, their hopes as well as their disappointments. Most of the songs are about the time they fled from their country and the problems they faced on the road as well as the hope they have to return to their country and resume their life. There are also songs sung about Bonga which describe their life at Bonga and the problems they encounter. I believe these songs clearly depict the life of the people as well as their views towards the different situation they find themselves in. Therefore, recording of these songs was made and some of these songs have been translated into English and included in the research.

At the official level, interviews were conducted both at the camp level and in Gambella with representatives of the regional government in Gambella (2), UNHCR (2), ARRA (3), WFP (1) , NRDP (2) ZOA (1) and the local Kebele (1). The main purpose of these interviews was to identify the part played by each of these actors in refugee work as well as their role in environmental protection in the camp and its surroundings.

The qualitative part of the study was supplemented through the use of a close ended questionnaire which was addressed to 150 randomly selected refugee households in the camp. The selection of the sample size is based on a refugee household data of July, 2000 since that was the most recent data available to the researcher. This questionnaire was not applied in the area of the camp known as block 19, since the residents of this block arrived in the camp only recently. Therefore, this group of refugees have not been included in the study.

In order not to raise up any expectations on the refugees, before the start of the research, the main objective of the research was clearly explained and that there will not be material benefits accruing to them. It was also explained that the name of the informants will be kept confidential.

The focus group discussions were held within the refugee villages, very often under the shade of a tree at a central location. Because of the language barrier, some of the questions had to be repeatedly explained through the use of examples and illustrations. However, the availability of a translator along with the limited knowledge of the researcher in the Uduk language combined together made this undertaking smooth.

1.4 Framework of the Research

Chapter two of this research will provide a brief review of the literature in the area of refugees and environment. Over the last three decades, different parts of the world have gone through periods of strife that have given rise to the influx of large numbers of people into neighbouring countries in search of security. Some of these conflicts have lasted for more than a decade thus prolonging the stay of the refugee population in the hosting country. As large groups are located in an area, they exert pressure on the surrounding environment in their efforts to meet their needs for fuel wood, construction wood and land for cultivation. The second chapter of this research aims to provide a brief background to the current refugee situation in the world along with the view of some scholars about the link between refugees and the environment as well as the factors that contribute to environmental degradation in refugee settled areas.

The third chapter of this research provides a background to the refugee situation in the Gambella National state over the last decade. It discusses about the arrival of the Uduk ethnic group in the Gambella region in the early 1990 and the problems they had encountered in their search for a secure place to live in. The chapter discusses about the problems the Uduks had encountered in their search for a safe place to live in, starting from the time of their arrival in Gambella in 1990 until they were settled in Karmi in late 1992.

Chapters four and five of the research focuses attention on the present life of the Uduk since they had been settled at Bonga in early 1993. Chapter 4 provides a general description of the camp, how the area was selected, and the rationale behind the set up

of the camp as well the services that are being provided to refugees and the local people by the different organizations working in the camp.

Chapter 5 looks into the change in the environment in the Bonga area since the arrival of the Uduks, the role of the various actors in environmental protection and the view of refugees towards these programmes. The Uduks are happy about the relative security they have found at Bonga since they had been settled there. However, over the years, some conflicts of interests have arisen between the refugees and some of the agencies working in the camp. The chapter also looks in detail into the way the refugees used to relate to the natural environment in their home country and here in Bonga. Upon their arrival in Bonga, the Uduks have shown a great deal of determination to become self-sufficient through the production of crops outside the camp boundaries. This chapter will look into the conflict of interest that has arisen as a result between the refugee community and the organizations working in the area of environmental protection.

Finally in chapter 6, a brief summary is provided along with some conclusion and recommendations.

2. A Review of Literature

2.1 Introduction

This chapter aims to give a brief overview about the refugee situation in the world, and the approaches that are often used to meet refugee problems. The chapter also attempts to provide the views of scholars about the link between refugees and the environment. The impact of refugees on the environment and the factors that are often said to contribute to the negative impacts of refugees on the environment will also be discussed in detail

2.2 Forced Migration and Refugees

The International Association for the Study of Forced Migration defines the term forced migration as “ a general term that refers to the movements of refugees and internally displaced people (people displaced by conflict) as well as people displaced by natural or environmental disasters, chemical or nuclear disasters, and famine or development projects” (Quoted from Forced Migration on Line www.fmo.org). Forced migration is a complex and wide-ranging phenomenon in the present world. As a result, forced migration is divided into three main categories based on its cause. These are:

1. Conflict induced displacement – this includes people who have been displaced from their homes as a result of civil conflict, political instability and persecution based on opinion, religious belief, ethnic group, and race... The majority of the victims of conflict-induced displacement often cross international borders to find refuge and security in neighboring countries.
2. Development Induced Displacement- this category mainly includes people who have been forced to leave their homes as a result of development initiatives such as the building of dams, irrigation schemes, introduction of conservation parks, natural reserves and other large infrastructure development projects of the same nature. People who are affected usually remain within the borders of their own

country.

3. Disaster Induced Displacement – This category includes people displaced as a result of natural disasters (earthquakes, floods,), environmental change (deforestation, desertification) and human made disasters such as industrial explosions. (Forced Migration On Line www.fmo.org)

Different terms are applied to describe various categories of forced migrants. Some of these terms include refugees, internally displaced persons, development displaces, environmental and disaster displacees, smuggled people and trafficked people. (Forced Migration on line www.fmo.org)

According to the Geneva Convention of 1951, a refugee is defined as someone who is “forced to leave their homes as a result of a well founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion” (UN: 1951). The OAU Convention expands on this definition by stating that “the term refugee shall also apply to every person who, owing to external aggression, occupation, foreign domination or events seriously disturbing public order in either part or the whole of his country of origin or nationality is compelled to leave his place of habitual residence in order to seek refuge in another place outside his country of origin or nationality” (OAU, 1969).

By the end of the year 2001, there were 12 million persons recognized as refugees and 20 to 25 million internally displaced persons. Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) are those who have been displaced from their homes as a result of natural or man-made disaster and who are within the territory of their own country (UNHCR: 2002). These people are sometimes referred to as 'internal refugees' and have similar needs for protection and assistance as refugees. In most situations, those recognized, as refugees are better off than other forced migrants since they have legal status and fall under the direct protection of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. Unlike refugees, internally displaced persons are not protected by the international law and often are not accorded the same legal status and institutional assistance. There is no specifically mandated body that is responsible to provide assistance to IDPs as there is with refugees. Therefore, very often, the responsibility of caring for IDPs falls on those

who have initially been the cause of the displacement or those that are unable or unwilling to do so (Castles: 2002, 9). Out of the estimated total of 20 –25 million internally displaced persons in the world only about 5.3 million are currently receiving any type of assistance from the UNHCR.

Over the last two decades, the number of refugees in the world had increased at an alarming rate. The total rose from 8.4 million in 1980 to nearly 17.8 million at the end of 1992. However, towards the end of the decade, there had been a positive development, which is shown in the decline of the total refugee population around the world to about 12.1 million. This came about as a result of repatriation of refugee populations to their home countries upon restoration of peace. By the end of 2001, Africa hosted 27.5% of the world's refugee population. Ethiopia, Kenya, Uganda, Democratic Republic of Congo, Zambia and Namibia are among the major countries that receive high influx of refugees as a result of political and civil instability in neighboring countries (UNHCR:2002).

2.3 Solutions to the Refugee Problem

Traditionally, there have been three solutions to the problem of refugees. Voluntary repatriation of refugees to their country of origin upon restoration of peace and order is one of the most durable and desirable solutions. Most refugees prefer to return to their home country and do so upon restoration of peace and order. In the year 2001, a total of 404,500 refugees returned to their home countries from exile. About 55 % of the repatriations during this year happened in Africa such as: the return of Sierra Leoneans from Guinea and Liberia, Somalis from Ethiopia, Eritreans from Sudan, etc... (UNHCR: 2002).

Local integration is another solution to the problem of refugees. Two possibilities emerge under this, one of which is where the refugees settle spontaneously among the host population. This situation was observed in the border areas of Zambia, Tanzania, Malawi and Zimbabwe in the settlement of Mozambican refugees. The self settled refugees were able to create small hamlets and survived with the assistance of local people. The Mozambicans integrated into the local way of life and were able to acquire

land from the local chiefdoms as well as take part in trading activities and wage labor (Lassailly-Jacob: 1993, 3). Such a situation is made easy when the fleeing population has some ethnic ties with the hosting population therefore making the integration smooth. The other option to local integration is the setting up of designated or organized settlements. In the set up of designated settlements, refugees are required to reside in specific areas designated by the hosting government where planned and organized settlements have been built up (Eriksson *et al*: 1981). This type of local integration may range from a situation where refugees are fully dependent on outside aid for their survival to another type of situation where refugees are provided with agricultural land and are expected to fully or partially support themselves economically. One such case is evident in Ukwimi, Zambia where an agricultural settlement was established in 1987 to house Mozambican refugees (Lassailly-Jacob: 1993, 6).

The third solution that is possible to solving the refugee problem is resettlement of refugees in second country of asylum. This is a situation where refugees find asylum in countries other than their first country of asylum. Even though many nations around the world open their doors to refugee emergency situations in neighbouring countries, there are only 17 nations that are currently accepting refugees on a quota basis for resettlement in their country. The USA, Canada, Australia and Norway rank high among these countries. In the year 2001, a total of 92,160 refugees were resettled among nine of these countries (UNHCR: 2002). Resettlement in a second country of asylum has been a major solution for Southeast Asian refugees in the 1970s and 80s but its contribution has not been very significant for solving the African refugee problem. This is because the numbers of people who have been resettled in second countries of asylum have been quite small compared to the magnitude of the African refugee problem.

Most refugees and displaced people move from one third world country to another and are found in the poorest parts of the world such as: Burundians in Tanzania, Sudanese in Ethiopia, Kenya, Uganda, Chad; Angolans in Zambia, D.R Congo, Namibia; Congolese in Tanzania, Zambia, Congo; etc... However, when it comes to hosting refugees, a tradition of hospitality and generosity still remains in most African communities. A

Sudanese refugee living in Uganda explained the source of this spirit of generosity by saying "We are visitors in Uganda. Today you help me, because tomorrow you may be a visitor as well"(Ceres: 1995, 50).

Countries that are classified by the UN as least developed host about 80% of African refugees. Unlike earlier forced movements which were solved by repatriation, local integration and at time resettlement, today's refugees come predominantly from poor countries and find only temporary asylum in neighbouring states of similar economic condition.

2.4 Forced Migration and the Environment

Over the last two decades, there have been different views forwarded by scholars regarding the interconnection between environmental degradation and forced migration (Myers and Kent: 1995, Black: 2001) Some scholars argue that environmental changes, whether natural or man made which create circumstances that threaten people' s livelihoods force people to migrate to areas which are habitable and fit for survival. These people are called 'environmental refugees'. Myers and Kent (1995) describe environmental refugees as:

" people who can no longer gain a secure livelihood in their homelands because of drought, soil erosion, desertification and other environmental problems".

These environmental problems force the people to seek refuge at a place which is habitable and more fit for survival. Myers further on argues that millions of people are being forced to flee their homes as a result of natural and man made environmental disasters and estimates their number to reach about 44 million by the end of the year 2010.

Black (2001), on the other hand presents a contrasting argument to the issue of environment and forced migration. He argues that political and economic factors play a major role in giving rise to forced migration. He does not deny that environmental factors do not have a role in this but rather they should be viewed in conjunction to the

other contributing factors and not in isolation. He goes as far as to say that the whole idea of 'environmental refugees' is a myth which has been highly politicized and can be potentially damaging to the existing refugee regime since it presents refugees and migrants as threats to stability.

2.5 Environmental Degradation Defined

Environmental degradation is a result of both natural and human processes. Since creation, human beings have been increasingly modifying environments and creating landscapes. At the same time, the change in the environment also has an influence on human beings since they depend on the environment for their sustenance.

In this study, environmental degradation is defined as “a considerable decline in the productivity of the physical environment, which comes as a result of human activities and the consequence of this decline on the livelihood of the resource users”(Johnson and Lewis: 1995). The majority of Africans depend on the physical environment for their survival from day to day. To the African farmer, environment refers to access to farming land from which to earn a living, access to drinking water, fuel wood and other natural resources which are basic to survival. Therefore in light of this, in this study, the physical changes in the environment around the Bonga refugee camp will be analyzed in terms of the implication on the livelihood of the resource users, which are mainly the refugees and the locals.

According to the UNHCR, the major environmental problems related to refugee areas are deforestation, soil erosion and depletion and pollution of water resources (UNHCR: 1995, 2). However, no two refugee operations are the same. Therefore, the type of environmental problems also differs from one refugee settlement to another. In the context of the Bonga refugee camp, the physical indicators of environmental degradation will be considered in terms of deforestation (mainly loss in vegetation cover), soil erosion and decline in wild life species. These changes will be evaluated in terms of their social manifestations on the livelihoods of the major resource users such as decline in crop yield, scarcity of fuel wood and wood for construction, decline in forest products such as wild roots, tubers, fruits, medicinal plants and decline in the

amount of wild game in the area.

2.6 What Causes Environmental Degradation in Refugee Hosting Areas?

The issue of the potential environmental impact of mass refugee movements and settlements on the environment has been an issue of debate among international organizations although it has received less academic attention (Black: 1994, 4). Increasing environmental degradation can be a result of mass settlement of displaced persons in an area.

Scholars in the area of refugee work have identified a total of about four interrelated factors that very often contribute to the likelihood of environmental degradation in refugee receiving areas (Black: 1994, Byaraguba, Oweyegha-Afunaduula: 1995, Guha-Sabir, Salih: 1995). These are:

1. The length of time refugees stay in an area
 2. The conditions under which the refugees are supposed to make a living
 3. The size of the refugee population
 4. The physical location of the refugee settlement
1. **The length of time refugees stay in an area:** Refugees nowadays are tending to stay in countries of reception for longer periods, which is resulting in an increase in environmental impacts around refugee settlements (Crisp: 2003). Black (1994) argues that the longer refugees stay in an area, the greater the potential of environmental degradation in the area of settlement. However, on the other hand, areas where refugees have been situated for longer time (i.e. for more than five years) may have been given a chance for the development of sustainable ways of using the natural resources thus limiting the damage to a certain extent.
 2. **The conditions under which the refugees are supposed to make a living:** Basically, three distinct situations can be identified: settlement of refugees in camps such as transit camps, settlement in organized settlements and spontaneous settlement. These situations vary from each other in the amount of

aid brought in from outside. Transit camps are temporary in nature and refugees fully depend on aid brought from outside while the other two categories (i.e. organized settlement and spontaneous settlement) refugees have to fully or partially support themselves to survive. The environmental impact of transit camps is in the form of demand for fuel wood, construction material for shelter, extraction of water and other resources. These same impacts are also seen in the case of organized settlements and spontaneous settlements. However, these settlements also pose greater pressure on the environment through the clearing of land for cultivation purposes.

3. **The size of the refugee population:** Sudden concentrations of large populations in a limited area can place pressure on the carrying capacity of the local ecosystem. The majorities of African refugees come from rural background and are normally engaged in agriculture, animal husbandry or related occupations (Crisp: 2000). These populations therefore depend on the immediate environment for their survival. They depend on the immediate natural environment for the supply of firewood, construction materials and land to cultivate and become fully or partially self-sufficient. As large numbers of refugees are settled in a certain area, the resource consumption increases thus creating a pressure on the natural environment, which in most cases results in land degradation in the forms of deforestation, soil erosion and decline in wild life species.
4. **The physical location of the refugee settlement:** At times, the environmental impact of refuges is aggravated by the location of refugee settlements in or close to natural parks or reserved areas. In the 1994 Rwandan genocide, about one million refugees were settled in the Kivu region of Zaire, which is home to two World Heritage sites, namely Des Virunga National Park and Kafuzi Biega National Park. Several refugee camps were set up adjacent to these national parks. In view of the emergency, this choice was unavoidable as the main concern at that moment was the saving of lives (UNHCR: 1995). It is estimated that since the arrival of Rwandan refugees, the Des Virunga Park has lost an estimated 7,000 to 10,000m³ of wood every day (Byaraguba , Oweyegha-Afunaduula:1995, 14).

The impact of refugee operations on the environment can be either short term or long-term. Short term impact mainly refers to the impact of refugees on the immediate environment in the form of: water shortage, food shortage, lack of sanitation, ... Such impacts are the main characteristics of the emergency stage of a refugee operation where large numbers of refugees arrive in an area in weak conditions, and the main focus of the operation is the saving of lives. The long-term impacts of refugee operations are felt through their effect on the physical and natural environment. Such impacts result from refugees' dependence on the immediate environment for the provision of fuel wood, construction material and land for cultivation. The impacts of such activities on the environment are often manifested in the form of deforestation, soil erosion, depletion and pollution of water resources, loss of wild life species. These impacts exist for the whole term that the refugees reside in that specific area and often are felt even after the refugees have left (Guha-Sabir, Salih: 1995)

2.7 Views on the Impact of Refugees on the Environment

Available literature on environmental impact of refugee settlements provides evidences of medium to long-term environmental degradation in refugee hosting areas (Black: 1994). However, the reliability of such findings is contested by other scholars in the field such as Jacobsen (1994) and Kibreab (1996). Jacobsen argues that the "...claims of environmental degradation caused by refugees have often been exaggerated for political reasons"(Jacobsen: 1994, 3). She explains the source of this exaggeration as emanating from a fear of African nations to accept refugees due to the potential environmental impact they may bring about. Crisp (2000), further on explains this by stating the case of Malawi, which was host to large number of Mozambicans. However, as a result of hosting these refugees, the country has faced acute environmental problems which are not currently being addressed since the refugees have now repatriated to their home country and the international community has shifted its attention to other situations leaving Malawi to face the problem by itself.

Kibreab (1996:22) on the other hand says, "the available literature...abounds with a myriad of impressionistic and unsubstantiated assumptions such as "refugees damage

the environment in the countries of reception''. He argues his points by saying most of these findings are not based on empirical evidence. However, he does not suggest that hosting refugees does not have any impact on the environment, but one needs to go beyond appearances to find out the real causes of degradation. These factors could be a result of government policy, assistance programs as well as conditions under which refugees are supposed to make a living. Such factors may be outside of the control of the refugees.

According to the UNHCR, the major environmental problems related to refugee areas are deforestation, soil erosion and depletion and pollution of water resources (UNHCR: 1995,2). However, Black (1994) argues that it is important to place such impacts within their context in order to analyze their effect. In some cases, it has been found out those factors other than refugee flows have had a part to play in the degradation of the environment around refugee settlements. Some of these factors include: the degradation of the hosting areas before the arrival of the refugees, illegal logging of timber and charcoal production by local entrepreneurs who take advantage of the confusion of land rights due to the existence of refugees as well as the development and expansion of commercial agriculture in and around the refugee settlements. In addition to this, refugees, due to their poverty and lack of integration with the local resource management practices may take part in unsustainable resource use practices.

2.8 Concluding Remarks

This chapter started with a brief definition of forced migration, its causes along with a definition of a refugee. Since the mid 1990s, there have been an increasing concern among those involved in refugee work about the impact of refugees on the natural environment surrounding the area they are settled in. As large groups of people are settled in an area, they exert pressure on the natural environment, through their needs for wood to meet their needs for fuel wood and construction. In cases of protracted refugee's situations, the impact of refugees on the environment also takes place as they clear out land for cultivation purpose.

A number of factors contribute to the likelihood of environmental degradation in refugee affected areas. Some of these factors include:

1. The length of time refugees stay in an area
2. The condition under which the refugees are supposed to make a living
3. The size of the refugee population
4. The physical location of the refugee settlement

3. Background to the Sudanese Refugee Situation in Gambella National State

3.1 Introduction

In this chapter, the background of the Sudanese Refugee situation will be discussed. The chapter begins with a brief description of the Gambella National State and its population. This is followed by a description of the flight of thousands of Sudanese refugees (with a specific focus on the Uduk ethnic group) into the Gambella Region in Ethiopia and the refugee schemes that were set up to assist this group since the mid eighties. This chapter aims to provide some information about what the Uduk people had gone through since they fled their country in 1985/86 until they were settled in Bonga in early 1993. The information in this chapter is mostly based on the works of James, who carried out field work among the Uduk in the late sixties and worked as a consultant with the UN during the times the Uduks were displaced from their areas. The chapter is also supplemented with information gathered from Uduk refugees about their memories and experiences of these years.

3.2 The Gambella National State

The Gambella National state is found in the south - western part of Ethiopia, bordered by the Benishangul – Gumuz and Oromiya regions in the North, the Oromiya and Southern Nations and Nationalities Peoples Regional State (SNNRPS) in the east, the SNNRPS and the Sudan Republic in the South and the Sudan Republic in the west. It has a total area of over 25,000 square Km (Gambella: 1999).

The region is home to ethnic groups such as the Anuak, Nuer, Mezengir, Opo, Komo and other tribal groups who have arrived in the area over the last three decades such as the Amhara, Tigray, Oromiya and people from the Southern Nations, Nationalities and Peoples Region (SNNPR). These ethnic groups are found scattered all over the region. During the time of the Derg regime, the Gambella region was one of the

regions in the country where major villagization programs took place. As part of this villagization program, people from different parts of the country were settled in Gambella. The major ethnic groups that were settled in the Gambella region mainly include the Tigray, Oromo, Amhara and people from SNNRPs .

Table (3.1) Summary of Ethnic Groups Residing in Gambella Region, 1994

Tribe	Population	
	Number	Percentage
Anuak	44,581	27%
Nuer	64,473	40%
Majangir	9,350	6%
Opo and Komo	4,802	3%
Amhara	12,566	8%
SNNPR	13,504	8%
Oromo	10,525	6%
Tigray	2,596	1%
Total	162,397	100%

Source: Housing and Population Census, 1994

The Anuaks are mostly settled along the Banks of the Baro, Gilo and Akobo Rivers from which they make a living by fishing and the cultivation of maize and sorghum on fields found along the river banks. The Nuer people are largely a pastoral people whose economy is based on cattle with some crop production. The Anuak and Nuer are found both in Ethiopia and the Sudan. The Majangir people depend on subsistence cultivation of crops supplemented by hunting, and bee keeping.

The ethnic groups such as the Oromo, Amhara, Tigray and those from the SNNRPs who have recently arrived into the region mostly lead a life that is based on cultivation of crops. Many of them live in the urban areas as traders and run some of the major businesses in the region.

Due to its geographical proximity to the Sudan, the region has been home to various groups of Sudanese refugees fleeing from the war in their country over the last two

decades. Some of those fleeing found refuge among their relatives who were found across the border in Ethiopia while many others were settled in organized refugee camps established in the region. In the early years of the Sudanese war which started in 1983, a camp for hosting the refugees was established at Itang in the present Gambella region. In the months between June 1986 and November 1987, three other emergency camps were established at Assosa, Dimma and Fugnido. By the end of the year 1987, it was estimated that a total of 165,000 refugees resided in these camps (Vermeulen,1998:8). The majority of the refugees came from various ethnic groups in South Sudan such as the Dinka, Nuer, Anuak, Mabaan, Uduk, Funy and many others.

As the war continued to rage on in different parts of South Sudan, the number of people fleeing in to Ethiopia continued to increase and reached about 400,000 by the year 1989. The UNHCR along with other aid organizations provided food and medical services to the refugees upon their arrival in the camps. As the situation within the camps began to stabilize, the Derg regime was beginning to disintegrate thus resulting in another threat to the relative safety that the refugees had found in Ethiopia.

3.3 The Years of Wandering

In January 1990, the Tsore camp in Assosa, which was hosting about 42,000 Sudanese refugees (the majority of whom were from the Uduk ethnic group), was attacked by forces opposed to the Derg and the refugees scattered in different directions. The majority of the refugees who were from the Uduk ethnic group were unable to return to their home area in the Sudan because of rising military activity in the area. Therefore, they fled southeast away from the mounting military activity on both sides of the border and gradually emerged at Yabus area, which is found in Sudan. From there, they continued on down to Itang camp in Gambella arriving there after many days on the road. At Itang, the newly arrived refugees were provided with food, clothing and medical attention. However, mortality rates remained high and the condition of the refugees from the Uduk ethnic group did not improve as was expected (James, 1996:188). An Uduk refugee described the situation at Itang by saying “We lost many Uduk people during our time in Itang. During those days, we did not cry when our

relative died because we were too tired to shed tears. We buried 3 or 4 people in one single hole because we did not have any energy to dig graves for each person who died” (Interview with an elderly woman, April 10, 2003).

As the structure of the then Ethiopian government continued to disintegrate, the stability of the camps hosting Sudanese refugees in the Gambella Region was again seriously threatened. Supply routes to the refugee camps were cut; food and other necessary supplies were not able to get through. In March and April 1991, staff of agencies working in the Itang camp were evacuated. As the government structure continued to fall apart, security in the region also started to get worse with fights erupting between the local ethnic groups and also among refugees. Towards the end of May, the refugees began to leave the camp and walk back to Nasir, in the Sudan which offered relative safety. On the trek back to the Sudan, many of the refugees were subject to banditry by the local people.

After a long and tiring trek, the refugees arrived at Nasir in the Sudan where relief was being supplied to displaced persons through the UN programme Operation Life Line Sudan (OLS). By June 1991, it was reported that nearly 100,000 refugees had been registered in and around Nasir. Out of these, 40 % were children, 40 % women and 20 % men. However, this figure does not tell about other groups who had returned but had not stopped to get registered at the reception centres. Rather they had gone and settled in other parts of the Sudan. Ethnic groups such as the Uduk, who had originated further from the Nasir area were entirely dependent on the relief supplies that were being provided since they had no supportive networks of friends and relatives among the local people in the Nasir area (H. Johnson, 1996:180).

The OLS had to repeatedly renegotiate with the Sudanese government about the quantity of relief items to be delivered and their frequency. Food items such as pulses, oil, salt that were needed for a balanced diet were not included in the food basket. The food supplies often failed to arrive on a regular basis and were not in adequate quantities to meet the needs of the affected population. The onset of the rainy season coupled with the reluctance of the Sudanese government to have food aid delivered to returnees in the SPLA controlled area of Nasir, gave rise to an acute shortage of food

among the returnee population as well as the local people who had to share what they had with the returnees.

Returnee groups such as the Uduk, who could not rely on language affinity or kinship support with the local population, suffered the most during this time. They had to barter non-food items such as clothing, plastic sheets, tents that they had acquired during their sojourn in Itang for food. The Uduk still remember the days in Nasir as the hardest time of their flight. They survived the periods of acute food shortage by digging out wild roots in the forest and by fishing in the river. The local people constantly harassed them when they fished in the river and women were subject to attacks by local men as they went to dig for wild roots in the nearby forest.

Towards the middle of the rainy season, the situation of the returnee population at Nasir worsened. The river flooded wild roots on which many people depended for food, the rations were below the standard amount of 335gm per person/day and only came erratically. At the Nor Deng site where a large number of people from the Uduk ethnic group were settled, a serious level of malnourishment was registered in the month of September and a high death rate was reported within a period of two weeks (H. Johnson, 1995:176). During this time, resettlement options were proposed for this specific ethnic group which could not claim any kinship support among the local population but was rather being harassed and taken advantage of. The proposals mainly focused on the resettlement of the returnee population within the SPLA controlled areas of Sudan, which is accessible for the delivery of relief supplies and where the people would have land to cultivate and become less dependent on external aid which had so far proved to be unreliable and insufficient. All the concerned parties, including the Uduk people, took these proposals wholeheartedly at the beginning. However, obstacles began to arise towards their implementation. At around the same time, the SPLA leadership at Nasir went through a split, resulting in fighting between the two groups. As a result, the whole approach to finding a solution to the problem of the returnee population was changed. The presence of the returnee population at Nasir was used by the SPLA leadership at Nasir as a means to acquiring more relief supplies to the area. Priorities for resettling the returnees in the area were gradually overruled by the new

leadership's wish to establish its economic and political position. As the SPLA continued to build its argument for the heightening of relief supplies and additional investment towards the assistance of the returnee population in the Nasir area, suspicions began to arise among the aid agencies about the SPLA and its priorities and to what extent the aid directed to the returnee population would end up to strengthen the SPLA rather than help the affected groups. In the first four to five months of 1992, various discussions were held among the concerned parties about what should be done about the Uduk people in Nasir. Several proposals were again put forward some of which were refused on the grounds of being too expensive and ambitious and others were refused by the Uduk themselves because of fear of security at the proposed site of resettlement.

In the dry season of 1992, agricultural tools and seeds were distributed to some of the returnee population. Some of those from the Uduk group began to return back to their villages in Southern Blue Nile Province while a large majority of them opted to stay in Nasir and its surroundings to grow some crops that would take them through the rainy season of 1992. But during that year the rains were late resulting in poor harvest. Sources of wild foods such as roots, tubers on which most of the Uduk people depended were gradually depleted and confrontations with the local population over fishing, collection and hunting rights got worse.

By late June 1992, about 13,000 people from the Uduk group decided to return to Itang in Ethiopia. They were later on followed by other ethnic groups such as the Nuer, Dinka and Shilluk. On their way to Itang, the Uduks were looted of whatever property they had with them even to the extent of being robbed of the very clothes on their backs. A few Uduks chose to stay back in Nasir to plant some crops and harvest. However, this group later on joined the others in Ethiopia in late August.

As the Uduk people were heading for Itang from Nasir, they did not know that Itang had been closed down as a refugee camp and that there were no relief activities taking place. However, when they arrived in Itang, a UNHCR officer was present in Itang to take care of the final clearance of the various items in the camp to facilitate the closing down of the camp. He reported the arrival of the Uduk refugees to the UNHCR office in

Addis Ababa. In the days following the arrival of the Uduks and other tribal groups in Itang, the UNHCR arranged the provision of food to the refugees by cooperating with the local government and other charity organizations.

A short while after the arrival of the refugees in Itang, a series of violent incidents erupted among the local people. When the fighting became intense, the Uduks fled again from Itang, this time further from the border towards Gambella. Because most of the Uduks were weak from the food shortage in Nasir along with the trek from Nasir to Itang, many people died from hunger and exhaustion on the way to Gambella. Everyone was weak and they did not have any energy left to carry those who were weaker. Many people were left lying on the roadside and in the Anuak villages along the way where they were given food and cared for.

Upon their arrival in Gambella, the Uduks had to again depend on the little they possessed to get access to food. The town's people were compassionate and generous towards the Uduks. They fed the young children by bringing out food from their own homes. The UNHCR office eventually moved the refugees outside of the town and gradually to Karmi, an emergency camp which was established temporarily 12Kms east of Gambella town.

The Karmi site was considered as a temporary site for receiving the refugees. At the Karmi site, the refugees were provided with food and medical services by the UNHCR in collaboration with the Administration for Refugees and Returnee Affairs (ARRA) of the Ethiopian Government. By October 1992, there were over 13,000 Uduks and a thousand other Nuer and Dinka. By January 1993, the number of Uduks in Karmi remained just about the same while the number of other groups, which are seen as 'Nuer' by the Uduks reached up to 5,000. This was seen as a threat to their safety by the Uduks who had suffered much in the hands of the local people in Nasir who were related to the 'Nuers'. Tensions began to arise between the two main groups in the camp which finally erupted into a full scale fighting on January 23, 1993 (James,1995:...). The day being a weekend, there were no UN or security personnel in the camp. The fighting, which is reported to have started between an Uduk woman and a Nuer woman at the riverside quickly spread to all corners of the camp. Some huts

were burned down and a few people were injured from both sides. Security forces arrived a while later from Gambella and quelled down all the violence. The outbreak of this violence put additional pressure on all concerned parties at the official level to speed up the resettlement of the Uduk people in a certain area.

3.4 Proposals for Resettlement

As the tension between the two groups at the Karmi camp continued to mount, various options were again being considered at the official level regarding resettlement schemes for the newly arrived refugees in the region. It was recognized that the Sudanese problem would not find a solution in a short time and that a long term approach was needed to tackle the refugee problem in the Gambella region. The UNHCR was reluctant to re-establish refugee camps on the model of the Itang camp, which mainly focused on meeting the emergency needs of the refugees and failed to have long-term vision.

Various proposals were sought on the establishment of resettlement schemes for the refugee groups which were found in 'Karmi. Most of the proposals that were put forward were along the same line as those that were proposed at Nasir with a main emphasis on the refugees settling in a certain area along the border in Ethiopia or Sudan and producing their own crops with the main intention of gradually being weaned off international aid and achieving self- sufficiency through crop production.

Three main proposals were put forward, all of which were long distance ones. One proposed the returning of the refugees back to Nasir from where they had fled, another the moving of the refugees to Dimma camp in Ethiopia where a large majority of Nuer refugees were settled while a third one proposed the moving of the refugees to Bambesi in Assosa. However, all of these proposals were ruled out in favour of another proposal for the settlement of the Uduks at Bonga, which is found about 40Kms East of Gambella, deeper into the country (James, 1996:200).

3.5 Concluding Remarks

This chapter discussed about the difficult circumstances that the Uduk people had gone through from the time they left their home areas to when they were settled at Bonga Refugee Camp in 1993. During these years, they had gone through various traumatic experiences of starvation, looting and uncertainty. Over these years, they were part of different assistance schemes, all of which had fallen apart due to political instability in the region. The Uduks mostly survived these periods of uncertainty through their own means by depending on the resources of the natural environment in which they found themselves in. During their one year stay at Nasir in Sudan in 1991/92, various proposals were put forward for settling the Uduks in different sites but none of these proposals came to be. These years of wandering between the Sudan and Ethiopia are still talked of in Bonga and most situations in Bonga are still compared to what they had encountered during these years of flight and wandering. These years of wandering have taught the Uduks to rely on themselves for their survival instead of on outside assistance.



4. Bonga: A safe haven for the Uduks?

4.1 Introduction

The following chapter aims to give an introduction about the Bonga Refugee Camp where a large part of the Uduk ethnic group was settled in early 1993. The chapter will describe how the Bonga area was selected as a site for the refugee settlement, the involvement of the different parties in the selection of the site as well as the main idea behind the establishment of the Bonga Refugee Camp. Following this, the chapter will discuss about the provision of rations to the refugee population, the services provided to the refugee and local communities by different organizations working in the camp along with a brief description of the local population and its trade relations with the refugee community.

4.2 Selection of the Bonga Site

A few days after the fighting between the two groups at Karmi had been put down; the Uduks were moved to a new site which is found 40 kms east of Gambella town, at a place locally known as Bonga. The move to Bonga was partly speeded up by the fighting between the two groups at Karmi and partly by the recognition among the concerned parties at the official level that a durable approach needs to be sought towards accommodating Sudanese refugees in the Gambella Region.

The main factors that were taken into consideration in the selection of a site for the resettlement scheme were the issues of security and the availability of land where the refugees can carry out cultivation to gradually become self sufficient through food production and the availability of woodland which the refugees can utilise to meet their needs for fuel wood and construction (James, 1996:200). The Uduk refugees, despite all the hardship they had gone through in the previous years still had strong morale and high level of determination to become independent of external food aid, which in their experience had proved to be unpredictable.

The physical location of the Bonga area made it an ideal site, which fulfilled all the requirements. The Bonga area had a long history of being home to the Koma people who are linguistically related to the Uduk although very few of the Koma people are now found in the area. In addition, it is located along the main road that connected Gambella town to the other regional towns of Gore, Metu thus facilitating easy access to the camp and reducing the cost of transporting relief supplies. It was also strongly believed that the establishment of a resettlement scheme there would not interfere on the rights of the local people who were mostly from the Anuak and Majangir groups, and mainly depended on riverside agriculture (James, 1996:200). All these factors combined together further affirmed its selection as the site for the resettlement scheme. The local people were consulted about the scheme and they enthusiastically welcomed the idea along with the regional government, which allocated a little over 1,800 hectares of land for the scheme (ARRA, 2003:2). Since it was a few years after the change in government in Ethiopia had taken place, the structures of the Regional Government

were not fully set up to fully cater after the refugee need. Therefore, in the selection of Bonga as a site for settling refugees, the involvement of the regional government was merely limited to that of allocating land without any considerations about what may happen to the natural environment of the area if the refugees stay for a long time. Although the Bonga area was found within the boundaries of the Gambella National Park, this was not taken into consideration (EWCO: 1994).

4.3 The Rationale Behind the Setting Up of the Bonga Refugee Camp

The Bonga Scheme was founded on the basis of the concept of self-sufficiency defined by the UNHCR as ‘the overall objective to promote partial self-sufficiency in local settlements through increased animal/crop production, education and income – generating activities and decreased dependence on external services and supplies’ (UNHCR, 1995). The focus on partial self-sufficiency is meant to avoid the refugees’ total dependency on relief, to create possibilities for gradually reducing the aid and pressure on donors, and includes the idea of assisting local communities in the vicinity of the settlement.

Towards meeting the objectives of partial self-sufficiency, it was reported that plots of land were distributed to 1,516 refugee households. According to a UNHCR report, each Head of Family received a plot of 25m x 25m. In addition to this, each household had a small backyard plot close to its home. And yet, in a report written for UNHCR by Dr Wendy James, she states otherwise. She measured the plots that were given out at the time and had discussions with the refugee committee and found that:

“...the plots on the ground are at most 20m x 20m = 400m². ...ordinary refugees and committee members all insist that the string used in the initial marking out was 20m long. They also point out that several plots were squeezed a little smaller along one side, so that as many people as possible could be given something.” (James, 1994:25)

In the end, 1,600 Heads of Families did not receive any land at all. There are also conflicting reports at the official level regarding the exact amount of land that has been distributed to the refugee households. The size of the land that is reported to have been

distributed varies between 100 hectares, 200 hectares and 400 hectares (UNHCR quoted by Vermeulen, 1998:46).

There has not been any distribution of plots of land for refugee household since the first distribution in 1993. Although the main idea behind the set up of the camp is to attain partial self-sufficiency of refugees through crop production, the regional government has delayed the release of any more land to the settlement. The delay in the release of land mainly emanates from fear that environmental degradation will take place in the areas surrounding the camp if refugees are allowed to cultivate. From a total of 3,116 refugee households in 1993, 48.65% received land while the remaining 51.35% didn't.

Even though additional plots of land have not been made available to the remaining refugee households and to newly formed households since 1993, the amount of food rations that are provided to refugees have fluctuated from time to time, at times being reduced below the standard amount based on the argument that the refugees can supplement their rations from the crops that they produce on the land made available to them (CEDEP, 1998:20). The amount of food rations that have been provided to refugees over the last ten years have not only fluctuated in amount but have also been delayed in their arrival from time to time. In order to overcome these reductions and delays in rations, refugee households have begun to go and clear land for cultivation from the surrounding woodland. Over the years, as new families were formed, they were also forced to look for land in the woodlands neighbouring the camp so as to supplement their rations. From the very beginning, the Uduk people had expressed their strong desire to become independent of food aid through the production of food crops. Their experiences in the previous refugee schemes as well as in Bonga have further made them determined to provide for themselves through crop production. For the Uduks, resuming cultivation at Bonga implies much more than supplementing their rations but also a return to the former way of life, where the father is responsible to provide for his dependents, and the community works together on the field thus resuming some semblance of the way of life before the time of flight (James, 1994:23).

Although the whole concept of achieving partial self-sufficiency had not succeeded due to the problem of availability of arable land to refugee households, the Bonga Refugee

Settlement is still referred to as a local settlement by the UNHCR. However, there is disagreement between ARRA and UNHCR regarding the very definition of 'local settlement'. For ARRA, local settlement merely refers to the production of food crops by refugees on the already allocated land to supplement their food rations. Therefore, the production of food crops outside of the camp boundaries by the refugees is seen as illegal. UNHCR on the other hand defines it as the production of food crops by refugees to gradually substitute their food rations, and become partially independent of the external food aid. ARRA and the regional government insist that UNHCR should provide a higher amount of food rations to the refugee community so that they would not go outside of the camp to cultivate. UNHCR on the other hand believes that the regional government should cooperate in the provision of land to refugees to achieve the goal of achieving partial self-sufficiency (Interview with officials, ARRA and UNHCR 2/4/2003, Regional Government 10/4/2003)

4.4 Physical Setting

The Bonga Refugee camp is found 680 Kms away from Addis Ababa on the road from Metu to Gambella. It is located in a lowland area that is dominantly hilly and mountainous, covered with big boulders of rocks. The hills and mountains form the borders of the camp in the south – eastern side while the Bonga River and the Baro Rivers form the borders on the North and Western side. The Bonga River is smaller in size and flows into the Baro River, which is the largest river in the region and the only navigable one in the country.

The mean annual rainfall in the area ranges from 800 to 1200mm. The lowest temperature ranges from 18 – 20C while the highest temperature ranges from 38- 40C. A variety of trees, shrubs, woods and tall grasses cover a large portion of the area.

The elevation of the camp ranges from 470 - 580 meters above sea level thus being classified in the hot sub-humid lowland agro-ecological zone. The main crops that are suitable in the area are maize, sorghum, groundnut, cassava, banana and other leguminous plants.

The total area of the camp is just over 1800 hectares (ARRA, 2003:2). According to a land use survey that was carried out in the early years of the camp, out of the total area allocated to the camp, 343.5 hectare of land is suitable for agricultural production (UNHCR, 1993:7). The remaining area is used for the building of settlement for the refugee population and other necessary infrastructure.

4.5 The Refugee Community and its Composition

The refugee community at Bonga is largely made of the Uduk ethnic group, which makes up about 91.5 % of the total population. This is followed by the Burun who make up 4.1%. In late 2002, a population of 677 people who are from the tribes of Nuba, Shiluk, Anuak, Equatoria and Uganda were transferred to Bonga Camp from the Fugnido Camp due to inter tribal conflict which threatened the safety of the refugees.

Table (4.1) Tribal Composition of the Refugee Community at Bonga Refugee Camp, March 31, 2003

Tribe	Population	
	Number	Percentage
Uduk	15,672	91.5%
Burun	696	4.1%
Mabaan	78	0.5%
Nuba	268	1.6%
Shiluk	217	1.3%
Anuak	58	0.3%
Uganda	15	.008%
Equatoria	119	0.7%
Total	17,123	100%

Source: ARRA Bonga, March 31, 2003

The Uduks were the first ones to arrive in the Bonga camp followed by the Burun people who originate from the South eastern part of the Sudan and arrived in Bonga in

early 1998. Currently, there are 19 blocks in the camp which serve mainly as administrative units. Each block is administered by a chief (referred to as *tapa* in Uduk) who is assisted by an administrative committee known as *leijna* (Arabic word). The chief and *leijna* reside over and resolve any issues that might arise among the residents in the block.

The Uduks occupy 16 of the blocks in the camp while the remaining three blocks are occupied by the Burun (Blocks 17, 18 and 19) and the new group of refugees who were recently transferred from Fugnido.

In the ten years since the camp was founded, the total population of the camp has fluctuated from time to time. As is seen in the table below (table 4.2), the population gradually increased during the years 1993 to 1996. However, in 1997, there was a rapid decline of the total population by 5,651. There are no explanations offered at an official level regarding this sharp decline. However, during discussions with various groups of refugees, it was revealed that during this time, many of the men left the camp to join the rebel movement in the Sudan. Others also left the camp to settle in their home area in the Sudan upon hearing that it was again captured by the rebels.

Table (4.2)Total Refugee Population at Bonga Refugee Camp between 1993 and March,2003

Year	Population Figure	Figures as at
1993	13,690	
1994	14,952	
1995	16,482	
1996	17,194	
1997	11,543	
1998	11,920	31/3/98
1999	12,595	1/2/99
2000	13,570	

2001	15,097	
2002	14,521	
2003	17,123	31/3/2003

(Data as per 1st of January unless stated otherwise. – source UNHCR)

Since 1997, the population has continued to increase from year to year. Because the Bonga camp is located far from the border as well as the home area of the Uduk people, the number of refugees arriving at the camp every year is quite insignificant. A large part of the increase in population is attributed to new births.

In the year 1995, it was estimated that the total fertility rate at Bonga was 233.6 per 1000 women in reproductive age of 15-45. In the same year, the fertility rate of women in the Fugnido and Somali camps was found to be and ... respectively (UNHCR:1996:101). As compared to the other two camps, total fertility rate in Bonga was found to be very high.

Uduk boys and girls in Bonga get married at a very early age, at times as early as 12 years old. The Uduks do not have a tradition of giving bride wealth to the bride's family as most other ethnic groups do in Southern Sudan. When a boy and a girl want to get married, they make the decision by themselves and the involvement of family and relatives is very small. After a girl has been married, it is widely expected of her to have a baby within a year. Most women who fail to conceive within the first year of their marriage are frowned upon by their in-laws and at times are deserted by their husband for another woman. Women who fail to conceive are often seen as failures by the whole society and have very little chance of holding their marriage together (Interview with elderly women, 12/4/2003).

A large part of births taking place in Bonga is attributed to the Uduks who make up 91.5 % of the camp population. The Uduks passionately talk about the desire they have to replace the population they had lost during their years of flight from the Sudan. They clearly see each child as a gift from God (*mom bor ma Arumgimis*) who should be cared for and looked after by the family and the whole community. The arrival of each

newborn baby is celebrated by its relatives and neighbors during a special feast that is held four weeks after the baby has been born. During the first four weeks of the baby's life, it is feared that the baby may not survive. The mother and the baby are kept inside the house. The mother is allowed to go out of the house to do some house hold work but the baby has to stay inside the hut except during the days when it has to be taken to the health center for vaccinations. When the four-week period is over, the baby is 'taken out of the house' (*mmo kal a'ci ka piye*) and the child is shown around to its relatives.

4.6 Food Rations

Refugees depend on a monthly ration provided by the World Food Program. Beginning from early 2003, every registered refugee in the camp (including infants) is entitled to get 15 Kg of wheat, 1.5 Kg of pulse, 0.9 Kg of oil and 0.15 Kg of salt on a monthly basis (WFP, 2003). In addition, distribution of non-food items such as soap, kitchen utensils and blankets take place occasionally based on the availability.

Rations are often distributed at the beginning of each month. However, delays in the delivery of rations had taken place from time to time over the last ten years. One such instance that is clearly and painfully remembered by the refugees happened during the dry season of 1998 when the rations failed to arrive for a period of three consecutive months. During these three months, the officials at the camp level gave out whatever rations were available in the store but these were not enough for the whole population and did not last for more than a week. Most refugee families survived these days by going into the nearby woods and digging out wild roots. Since the period was very long, the supply of wild roots in the nearby woods was soon depleted and some families had to walk for two to three day to get access to these resources of the wild.

Over the last ten years, the size of the food rations that is provided to each person had fluctuated from time to time; at times being decreased. This has been based on some assessments that are carried out by the UNHCR/WFP and ARRA. These Joint food assessments are carried out on a regular basis to determine the nutritional status of the refugees and decisions are made on whether to keep the same amount of rations increase it or decrease it based on the findings of the assessment. At times, the decisions

to reduce the amount of rations given out to each refugee have been based on the belief that refugees are cultivating in the camp and its surrounding and can therefore substitute for the rations through what they get from their fields (CEDEP,1998:21).

Uduks often complain about the insufficiency of the food rations. They say that the food ration that is given for a month lasts them for a maximum of 20 days. The food ration would last them for a whole month if they supplement it with crops that they cultivate outside of the camp or with wild roots collected from the forest.

The Uduks also try to supplement for the monotony of their diet through the acquisition of spices and vegetables from the local market and the fields that they cultivate. Among the Uduks, the rations are the main source of food as well as a means to acquire these supplementary items that help to improve the variety of their diet. The main items which they acquire from the local market include items such as sugar, tea leaves, vegetables and other items such as soap, clothing etc which are not part of the regular food basket. Items from the ration such as wheat, and oil are the main items that are sold out or exchanged at the local market to acquire those items that are needed by the household. To some extent, the inability of most Uduk families to have their ration last for a whole month is because they use part of the ration to purchase these much needed items.

The wheat which is given as part of the monthly ration is often exchanged for sorghum at the local market by most Uduk households. The terms of exchange however are not favorable towards the Uduks. On approximate, 15 Kgs of wheat is exchanged for approximately 12 Kgs of sorghum. Wheat is also used as a means of bartering within the camp among Uduks.

Oil is another item that is part of the food ration which has a high value of exchange. Usually, oil is sold directly to local traders for cash. Oil that is given to a household is seen as being the property of the wife rather than the husband. Therefore, the wife has total say over the money that is acquired by selling the oil that the family receives every month.

The grain that the Uduks receive as their rations or have exchanged for sorghum is made into flour and is used to make a porridge which is known as *maa*. The porridge is served with a sauce made of lentils or vegetables which have been bought from the local market. The porridge along with the sauce is often made once a day and served later in the day. During days when there is sufficient food in the house, tea is made for all the family members early in the morning and at times served with some home made bread. No meals are served for adults during the day except small snacks such as boiled pumpkin, roasted peanuts or maize which are available during the rainy season. Children will be served leftovers from the previous night's meals in the morning before leaving for play or school. An average Uduk family would eat one main meal at the end of the day. Usually a group of people living as neighbors would share their meals every day. The meal that has been cooked among three or four families is shared among them all, the men, women and children eating separately.

The World Food Programme (WFP), which is the official UN agency responsible for the provision of the food items, insists that the amount of the food ration is sufficient to last a person for a whole month, if properly managed. The WFP along with the UNHCR state that their responsibility towards the refugees is the provision of food and does not extend to the provision of what they call 'extra items' such as sugar, tea leaves, coffee, shoes and at times even clothes.

1.1 Organizations Working in the Camp

There are six organizations involved in the delivery of services to the refugees and the local population. The Administration for Refugees and Returnee Affairs (ARRA) is a governmental organization that is in charge of refugee and returnee affairs all over the country. It works as the UNHCR's main implementing and monitoring partner on behalf of the Ethiopian government. The agency also acts as a link between the Ethiopian government and other Non Governmental Organizations working with refugees.

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) works alongside ARRA in implementing and monitoring refugee programs in the camps. Its role is

mainly limited to financing projects and monitoring their implementation

The UNHCR and ARRA are the main monitoring organizations in the camp. Other organizations working in the camp include Save the Children-Sweden, Society of International Ministries (SIM), Natural Resources Development Programme (NRDP) and ZOA Refugee Care-Netherlands.

Health services are provided by the Administration for Refugees and Returnees Affairs, which is the counterpart of the UNHCR on behalf of the Ethiopian Government. The camp has one health center, which provides services such as Expanded Programme of Immunization (EPI), Maternal and Child Health (MCH), Nutrition Rehabilitation Center, environmental health activities and an Out-Patient Department (OPD). In addition to this, the health center also carries out awareness raising activities in the area of environmental health, sexually transmitted diseases and the use of contraceptives. The health center provides services free of charge both to the refugee and the local populations.

The health center is staffed with one medical doctor along with many other nurses and health assistants. Refugees and local people are hired to work in the health center both as health personnel such as Community health workers, Traditional Birth Assistants as well as support staffs.

Education and Training - The general educational background of the Uduk people is low as compared to most other Sudanese Refugees found in other camps. This is mainly because of lack of adequate educational facility in their home country. However, Uduks have a keen desire to learn and better themselves. They see education as a means through which they can benefit their own people and become influential in matters affecting them both in the refugee camp and beyond.

At the camp, education is provided by different agencies. ARRA runs a school, which currently has grades from one to nine. This school runs in two shifts, one in the morning and another in the afternoon. A large majority of school age children in the camp attend this school. The school is staffed with both Ethiopian and refugee personnel. ARRA in

collaboration with the UNHCR offers regular skill upgrading courses to teachers in the school every summer. This has significantly helped build the morale of the refugee teachers in the school as well as become a motivation for many other young people to have a keen desire to become teachers in the future.

The school which is run by ARRA currently has twenty seven classroom buildings for grades one to eight and three other classrooms for grade nine resulting in a total of thirty one classroom buildings.

Table (4.3) Summary of Students Attending the ARRA School in 2003

Grade	Number of Students			Number class sections
	Male	Female	Total	
1	295	371	666	7
2	363	406	769	9
3	237	188	425	4
4	164	76	240	3
5	284	87	371	5
6	275	25	300	4
7	216	13	229	3
8	181	4	185	3
9	64	3	67	2
Total	2,079	1,173	3,252	

Source: ARRA School, 2003 Bonga Refugee Camp

Save the children-Sweden also runs a preschool programme in the camp for children between the ages of three to five. At the preschool, children are taught how to count, read and write in preparation for entry into grade 1 at the ARRA run school. The pre schools are fully staffed and run by refugees most of whom are women who had the opportunity to go to school in the Sudan.

The Society of International Ministries, a Christian mission organization, which had initially begun working with the Uduk people in Sudan in 1938 as the Sudan Interior Mission, mainly runs the informal education sector in the camp which includes literacy classes for adult men and women in their own mother tongue. One distinct characteristics of the informal education sector at Bonga is the 'under shade shade' (*mo ma warka 'pen cwa*) schools. The under shade schools are classes that are offered under the shade of trees at different locations in the camp. Most of the students in these classes are girls and women and a few older men. These classes are taught by Uduks and the whole community contributes towards their monthly payment. The under shade schools offer classes from grades one to four. Those who complete Grade four at the under shade schools and want to continue on will sit for an exam at the ARRA school and will be admitted to grade five if they pass. The under shade schools are financially and technically supported by SIM through the provision of school materials as well as training to the teachers. The under shade schools provide an opportunity for adults and young people who are unable to go to the primary school because of family responsibilities or other related reasons.

Vocational Skills and Income Generating Activities - Training in different areas of vocational skills is provided to refugees by ZOA Refugee Care in the fields of tailoring, weaving, bamboo crafts, metal works, bee keeping, soap making, embroidery, spinning. Refugees who have been trained in these fields are then encouraged to set up their own businesses at the camp. They are provided with loan by ZOA and also assisted in finding market for their goods at the camp level, in Gambella and Addis Ababa through the set up of shops. ZOA Refugee Care also runs a revolving fund scheme where refugees can borrow money to carry out petty trading activities in the camp.

Table (4.4) Number of Refugees taking part in Income Generating Activities

Activity	Male	Female
Petty Traders	92	74
Tailoring	41	27
Weaving	---	21
Bamboo Crafts	21	16
Metal Works	4	---
Bee Keeping	9	---
Pottery	1	14
Total	168	152

Source: ZOA Refugee Care, March, 2003

Although income-generating activities in different areas are promoted among the refugee community in the camp, the program has come across many obstacles in its progress. One of the major problems has been the Uduk peoples' limited experience in trading coupled with their preference for farming instead of taking part in trading. In addition, most of the products that are produced by those trained by ZOA find almost no market in the camp. Therefore, these products have to be transported all the way to Gambella or Addis Ababa where the main markets lie. Because of this and many other factors, starting up and keeping income generating activities in the camp has been very challenging.

Water Supply - Refugees and the local people use the Bonga and Baro Rivers mainly for washing clothes and bathing. Water wells, which have been dug at different locations in the camp, provide clean drinking water for the refugee population. However, at different instances some of these wells have broken up and the repair has taken many months. During the dry season, some of the wells dry up and most of the refugees have to line up for many hours at the well. This has forced many refugee women to start fetching water from the Baro and Bonga Rivers.

Agriculture - The promotion of agriculture in the Bonga camp is carried out by ARRA's agricultural section, which provides refugees with agricultural tools and seeds. The ARRA office at the camp level has two agricultural officers and five refugee extension workers. At the beginning of each planting season, the agricultural section provides farmers both from the refugee and local population with seeds. During the agricultural season, the farmers are assisted through the additional provision of fertilizer and pesticides free of charge. Selected refugee and local households are also provided with cattle and poultry to assist them in creating additional source of income and nutrition for their families. Veterinary services for these animals are provided by ARRA in collaboration with the regional Bureau of Agriculture.

Table (4.5) Number of Livestock and Poultry Distributed Between 1993 and March 2003.

Type	Number
Cows	277
Oxen/bull	64
Heifer	122
Poultry	7,291

Source: ARRA Bonga, Agricultural Section Report, March 31, 2003.

Based on the physical count of livestock and poultry done in early, 2003, it was found out that there has been an increase in the total number of livestock found in the camp.

Table(4.6)Actual Number of Livestock and Poultry Found in Bonga Upon Physical Counting up to March 31,2003

Type of livestock	Number
Cattle	893
Small ruminants mainly sheep and goats	2,292
Poultry	13,265

Source: ARRA Bonga, Agricultural Section, March 31, 2003

Although since the founding of the camp, there had not been any distribution of small ruminants such as sheep and goats, currently there is a total of 2,292 sheep and goats found in the camp. Refugees have purchased a large part of these from local traders. Uduks in Bonga see sheep and goats as an investment, which they can convert easily into cash during times of need. Their milk is used for supplementing the diet of younger children. Most Uduks prefer sheep and goats to cattle because they breed faster and are easier to look after. Over the last four years, a variety of ducks have also been brought to Bonga by Uduks who have been to visit their relatives at Sherkole Refugee Camp in Assosa. These ducks are now gradually increasing in number, and are highly favored by most Uduks since their meat is larger than chickens.

Livestock are allowed to graze in the camp and its surrounding. Even though there is an area in the Eastern part of the camp (behind Block 3) that has been set apart for the purpose of grazing livestock, most livestock are allowed to graze in any open areas in the camp and its surrounding.

Environmental Protection - The work of environmental protection in and around the refugee camp is done mostly in the area of planting trees in degraded areas, introduction of appropriate technology among the refugees and the local population to reduce the use of resources from the surrounding and awareness raising about the main environmental concerns in the area and encouraging both groups to take an active role in the protection of the environment.

The organizations that are mainly involved in the area of environmental protection in and around the camp are ARRA, UNHCR, NRDEP and ZOA. Even though these four organizations are directly involved in this work, the issue of environmental protection is included in all areas of the whole refugee program such as in the school curriculum.

4.8 Administrative Structure

The refugee community at Bonga is represented before the aid agencies in the camp by a refugee committee, which is made up of 7 people. The members of the refugee committee represent different parts of the society such as the women, the churches, and the minority tribal groups in the camp. The main responsibility of the refugee committee is to represent the community before the aid agencies in matters affecting the community at large. ARRA and UNHCR mainly deal directly with the refugee committee.

Although from the outside it appears that the refugee committee is the final authority within the community, there are other administrative structures, which influence the committee. Among the Uduks, the structure of the refugee committee evolved over the years they were in the various refugee schemes after they had fled from their home areas. Relief agencies working with refugees often prefer to deal with a group that represents the refugees and also speak English or some other language through which communication can be established. This is made necessary mostly for the distribution of relief resources and also the making of decisions that affect the refugee population. The same was found to be true among the Uduk who, before the years of flight had only village chiefs and no organized leadership over the whole community (de Blois, 2001:76).

The old system of administration by a chief, which was common among the Uduks in Sudan, is still in use at Bonga. Each block in the camp is administered by a chief (*tapa*) and a committee of 4 to 5 people that assists him (*leijna*). There are a total of 19 chiefs in the camp. Each block chief along with his *leijna* is responsible to overlook the distribution of rations and other relief items to the members of his block and to report to ARRA any problems that arise in the process. The chief and *leijna* are also responsible for making important decisions that influence the members of the block as well as to maintain peace and order. Some of the chiefs have special funds (*sandu'k*) which is collected from the members of the block. This fund is often used during times of emergency such as when the rations are delayed; the money is used to buy grain from

the local market. At other times, the money will be used to assist a member of the block with funeral and related expenses during times of mourning. The money is also used for happier occasions for example; during special holidays such as Christmas and New Years.

The other important structure that is responsible for maintaining peace and order in the camp is the *ma'kkama*, which is the equivalent to a court. Cases of civil disturbance, such as fighting which has resulted in a person getting wounded, that is beyond the powers of the chief and lejna are handled by the *ma'kkama*. The case is presented before a group of older men and the guilty party is convicted to serve a sentence. The *ma'kkama* has a group of huts in the middle of the camp, which serve as prisons. Sentences that are handed out to offenders differ based on the extent of the offense. Some offenders are allowed to go to their homes during the day and come back and spend the night in the huts while others are required to stay in the huts all day and are allowed out only for a bath in the river, in the company of guards. The *ma'kkama* is also responsible for the administration of the refugee police (*shurta*) who walk around the camp both during day and night, maintaining peace and order. The *shurta* are paid through the contributions made by the larger refugee community.

4.9 The Local Settlement and its Population

The local settlement is found bordering the refugee camp on its southern border. The Bonga River serves as a boundary between the two settlements. During the time of the previous Ethiopian government, the Bonga area was used as a military station and training site for the Sudanese People's Liberation Army (SPLA), which freely operated in the area. There were a few scattered settlements of people from the Anuak ethnic group living on the banks of the rivers that led their lives by small cultivations of sorghum, maize and banana on the riverbanks of the small Bonga River and hunting of wild animals such as oryx and deer that were said to be quite plentiful in the area.

According to the population census of 1994, the total population of the Bonga village was 700 (CSA, 1994). Currently, the population is estimated to be 1,200. The increase in the total population is mainly due to the large number of people who have been

attracted to the area from the highlands due to the prospects of a flourishing trade with the refugee community. The Bonga village serves as the only market for the refugee population as well as for the local people found within a radius of approximately 25 Kms. The population in the local village is made up of the local Anuak, Majangir and highlanders who had come and settled in the area over the last decade. Currently, most of the residents in the local Bonga village make their living through the trading activities they carry out with the refugees.

The local settlement has now turned into a small market town which supplies the refugee population with much needed necessities such as sugar, coffee, clothing as well as an outlet where they can sell part of their produce and other goods.

4.10 Trading Activities

Trading activities within the camp mostly include teashops and the setting up of small stands within the villages where sugar, coffee, tea leaves ... are sold. Refugees with different skills such as tailoring, woodwork, and blacksmithing also offer their services as well as their products within the camp. Most trading activities in the camp are home based; carried out by family members.

Most of the items that are sold within the camp come from the nearby Bonga market. A few refugee traders also go regularly to Gambella to buy goods in bulk and bring them back to sell in the camp. For their own safety, refugees are required to get permission from the ARRA office in the camp to travel to Gambella. The ARRA office puts restrictions on the number of permits granted to each settlement block and the number of trips made by an individual. Therefore, most refugees who take part in trading within the camp often travel to Gambella without getting permission from the office in groups of three or four. They get a ride to Gambella town on the back of a freight truck for 5 birr per trip.

Most trading in the camp is done through bartering. The items that are usually used for bartering are wheat, sorghum and maize. Wheat has more purchasing power than sorghum. This is because a sack of wheat can be easily exchanged for cash at the local

market.

The local market has a variety of goods that range from vegetables, fruits to clothing and battery operated transistor radios. Most of the shops at the local market are owned and run by people who had migrated from the highlands of Metu and Dembi Dolo over the last decade.

Trading at the local market takes place only in cash. However, the local traders often make credit sales to refugees. The terms of these credit sales are clearly known by both parties and failure to pay by the debtor is directly reported to his block chief who is responsible to settle the debt on his behalf.

During times of food shortage, refugees often borrow grain from the local traders. Payment is later on made in kind either in terms of wheat or oil. However, when the refugees later come to pay for what they have borrowed, they are required to give more grain than they had initially borrowed. The terms of exchange at the local market are very rarely in favour of the refugee population which has no other alternative market to buy or sell its goods.

4.11 Concluding Remarks

The Bonga area was selected as a site for the settlement of refugees in early 1993. The main criteria taken into consideration was the availability of arable land which is not claimed by the local population along with the availability of woodland which would serve to meet the refugee populations' needs for fuel wood and construction wood. Although the Bonga area is said to be found within the boundaries of the Gambella National Park, the Regional Government did not take this into consideration. Instead, it merely limited its role to the allocation of land that could be used for the settlement programme.

The main idea behind the setting up of the Bonga refugee camp was the achievement of partial self-sufficiency of refugees through crop production. Towards meeting this objective, plots of land were distributed to 48.65% of refugee households at the time.

However, since then, there has not been additional distribution of land to refugees. But in line with the partial self-sufficiency concept, rations that are provided to refugees have been reduced. There have also been repeated incidents of delays in ration. This has made most refugees begin to go out of the camp boundaries to clear land for cultivation purposes.

5. Refugees, the Environment and Environmental Protection

5.1 Introduction

The following chapter of the thesis aims to first look into the level of degradation in the Bonga area, the different institutional actors, the approaches followed and level of coordination in the area of environmental protection among these actors at the Bonga Refugee camp. Secondly, it will look into how the refugee population interacts with the natural environment at Bonga, how it views natural resources and the environmental protection schemes being undertaken in the camp. In order to be able to clearly understand the way the refugee population currently relates to the environment, this section will also look into the way the Uduks related to the natural environment in the Sudan.

5.2 Environmental Protection in a Refugee Context

There is an increasing realization among all involved in refugee work that refugee situations often have negative impacts on the surrounding natural environment (UNHCR: 1996, UNHCR: 2002). These negative impacts are associated with the refugees' need for fuel wood, construction wood, clearing of land for cultivation and other purposes. The degradation of the natural environment as a result of these activities in turn affects the livelihood of the host population and the economy of the hosting nation at large by resulting in the need for higher investment to rehabilitate these resources.

Until the early 1990s, the refugee agency, UNHCR focused all its efforts towards meeting the immediate needs of the refugees, putting aside considerations about the impacts that a large number of refugees would have on the natural environment of the hosting area (Refugees, 2002:20). However, with the onset of the last decade of the century, the idea of incorporating environmental concerns into all sectors of refugee assistance schemes emerged and was strengthened by the design and issue of an all

embracing Environmental Guideline by the UNHCR, in 1996. The main objective of this guideline is to include environmental concerns and measures at all stages of refugee assistance with a main focus on undertaking preventive measures to avert serious environmental damage in refugee hosting areas.

Refugee related environmental problems require the involvement of a number of parties both at the local and international level. The main actors at the local level include the national government at the national and local level, the local host community and the refugees themselves. At the international level, the main parties are the UNHCR, international NGOs and donors. Since environmental issues touch upon different actors, the effectiveness of any intervention in the area is highly dependent on the coordination and cooperation among these actors. This chapter will look at what is being done in the area of environmental protection at the local level in the Bonga Refugee Camp and its surroundings.

5.3 Environmental Degradation in the Bonga Area

The regional government, agencies working with refugees as well as the local people widely acknowledges the gradual change that has taken place in the natural environment of the area since the founding of the Bonga camp in 1993. All the parties concerned perceive most of these changes in the environmental as being negative. The refugees are held to be responsible for a large part of this negative change in the environment through their practices of cultivation and wood collection for fuel and construction. A study carried out by the Ethiopian Mapping Authority in 1999, indicates a change in the vegetation pattern of the Bonga area as compared to the vegetation pattern in 1990 before the arrival of the refugee population and the founding of the camp.

Table (5.1) Comparison of features coverage in hectares

Class Name	Area (ha) In 1990	Area (ha) in 1997	Area difference(ha)
Woodland	25,547.1	19475.4	-6071.7
Scattered Trees	15,523.8	22008.4	6484.6
Riverine Trees/ Vegetation	906.9	866.6	-40.3
Forest	14,838.7	12,518.8	-2319.9
Bare land	6378.08	4176.2	-2201.8
Water	153.2	155.6	2.4

Source: Ethiopian Mapping Authority, March 1999

As seen in table (5.1), the area of land covered by woodland has declined by 23.7% while the area coverage of scattered trees has expanded. The area coverage of forests has also declined by 15% although not at the same rate as the woodland. This is mainly because the forest area is found about 15 to 18 kms from the refugee settlement making it almost out of immediate reach. However, over the years since the study was made, some refugees have begun to go into these forest areas to clear out land for cultivation and to collect wood for fuel wood and construction.

The change in riverside vegetation is reported to be small in the study. However since land by the riverside is often favored by both refugees and local people for cultivation purpose, the vegetation has gradually declined.

The change in vegetation might seem small at first glance. However, since this study has been made, there has been a gradual expansion of cultivation by refugees resulting in the clearing of land along the riverbanks and far away. The population is also

increasing along with its demands for more land, fuel wood and other natural resources that are needed for its survival. In the long-term this results in increasing cutting down of trees, which then gives rise to a chain process of decline in land cover, fleeing of wild life, soil erosion and in the end overall degradation of the area making it unsuitable for humans as well as animal habitation.

Extensive soil erosion is evident on the mountains and hills on the eastern border of the camp. Although the soil type in these areas is shallow and has low agricultural use, grass and bushes growing in these parts are set on fire before the onset of the rainy season to clear the land for cultivation of sorghum. Eroded land on slopes and hills is cultivated by refugee farmers year after year without any fallow period. Neither are refugee farmers familiar with the application of conservation techniques on such plots.

5.4 Institutional Stakeholders and Environmental Protection

5.4.1 The Regional Government

The Regional Government of the Gambella National state is one of the key stakeholders in the issue of environmental management in refugee camps and their immediate surrounding. Currently, there are three refugee camps in the Gambella Region with the opening of a fourth camp under way. Some of these refugee camps are as old as 15 years with the Bonga camp being the youngest which is 10 years. The number of Sudanese refugees hosted in the Gambella Region has varied from time to time ranging from about 300,000 in 1988 to 69,000 in 1996 (CSG, 2001:18)

The Regional government has opened its doors widely for the assistance of Sudanese refugees fleeing their war ravaged country by allocating land to be used to the set up of camps at different locations and facilitate the provision of assistance to the refugee population in cooperation with the international refugee agency, the UNHCR. However, over the years the refugees have found refuge in the region, it is being widely acknowledged by the regional government that refugees are contributing highly to the degradation of the natural environment around the camps in their search for fuel wood, construction wood and in some cases agricultural land. It is estimated that a total of

35,000ha of land has been destroyed by refugees in the region (CSG: 2001, 18).

The Regional Government is involved in refugee related environmental issues through the department of Natural Resources Development Program (NRDP) under the Regional Bureau of Agriculture. The NRDP has been established for the main purpose of preventing environmental damage by refugees and carrying out environmental rehabilitation work in refugee-affected areas mainly through afforestation activities. The NRDP project is fully financed by the UNHCR and technically supported by the Regional Bureau of Agriculture.

The NRDP office at Bonga was started in 1994 and is involved in the afforestation of bare land in the camp and its surrounding. It has a tree nursery in the camp where a variety of local and exotic trees are raised every year. A variety of 13 tree species are raised at the nursery site every year through the use of hired labor both from the refugee and local communities.

5.4.1.1 Tree Planting

Tree seedlings are planted every year on the bare parts of the camp and its surrounding between the months of June to August. The main criteria for the selection of a site to plant seedlings are that the land is bare of most of its former vegetation or that is exposed to erosion. On average, the NRDP office plants between 300,000 to 400,000 tree seedlings every year. The planting of the seedlings takes place in two ways: some seedlings are distributed to refugee households to be planted within the camp, near the homesteads, while another part of the seedlings are planted in bare areas and hills found near the camp through the use of hired labor.

A few weeks before tree seedlings are distributed to the refugees for planting near the homestead, awareness raising campaigns and demonstrations are carried out about tree planting in the different blocks of the camp by NRDP and other agencies involved in the area of environmental protection. It is believed that through these sessions, refugees will have sufficient knowledge about how to plant the seedlings and protect them from harm. Tree seedlings are then distributed to refugee households in every

block and the planting is done under the direct supervision of NRDP staff. Each refugee household that has received a seedling is expected to look after it by building a fence around it to keep away children and livestock and watering it in the dry season. Even though the responsibility of the refugees towards the trees planted in the homestead is clear, there are no clear rules about the ownership of these trees and the right that refugees have towards their use. The NRDP office stated that it has no mandate to approve the use of trees by refugees for fuel wood or construction purpose. Anyone who would like to cut a live tree has to first get a written permission from the Woreda bureau at Itang, about 70 kms from Bonga. The NRDP sees its main responsibility at Bonga as the protection of the environment and its rehabilitation. It sees the cutting down of a tree in the camp and its surrounding as an 'illegal activity' that should be punished.

The planting of tree seedlings in the surrounding of the camp is undertaken by the use of paid labor made up of both refugees and local people. Over the last few years, the planting of tree seedlings in the surrounding camps is said to have extended up to 6Kms in three directions from the camp (towards Gambella, towards Koben and towards Jimma directions). Plantation of seedlings does not take place on the other side of the Baro River since there are no boats made available by the office to transport the workers, seedlings and tools across the river.

Tree seedlings are planted on bare land even if a refugee is using the land for cultivation. Refugees have reported that after planting crops on a piece of plot outside of the camp, they have gone back a few days later to find that the crops have been pulled out and the land has been planted with tree seedlings. When asked about this, the NRDP office responded that it is 'illegal' for refugees to cultivate land outside of the camp. Based on such reasoning, the NRDP sees its actions as being justifiable. Because their crops are being pulled out to plant tree seedlings, refugee farmers have begun to abandon these fields and go deeper into the woodland to clear land for cultivation. This is done so as to be as far away as possible from the reaches of the tree planting scheme which the refugee farmers say is “chasing them from the land they are cultivating” (*ur am peni buntho*). Even though NRDP is planting trees on already

bare lands, the woodland is being cleared of its trees by refugees whose plots are being planted with trees. Here, it seems that the tree planting scheme outside of the camp is in some ways contributing to the further degradation of the woodland by forcing refugee farmers to go further away from the reaches of the tree planting project to clear land for cultivation. The tree planting activity done by NRDP is estimated to cover 6 kms in three directions from the camp. Therefore, it can be deduced that refugee farmers on whose land tree seedlings have been planted are going further than 6 kms to clear land for cultivation. Such an approach is creating a sense of bitterness and irresponsibility on the side of refugee farmers towards the whole tree planting scheme. On a general level, most Uduk farmers see the tree-planting scheme as a threat to their very existence since it is claiming the land they are cultivating to feed their families.

The office estimates the survival rates of its seedlings to be 80 – 90%, three months after planting had taken place. It was not possible to find any formal estimation made about the survival rate of the seedlings after the end of the dry season, where forest fires rage on in the woods. In order to keep these newly planted trees from getting burnt by the forest fires, firebreaks are constructed. These have proved to be effective although not all the time. Some fire still manages to get to these trees and totally burn them down. From personal observation, given the large number of seedlings that have been planted over the last nine years since the start of the project, the number of trees that have survived the years seems to be quite minimal. Most of the trees that have survived are found along the sides of the main road from Bonga to Gambella. As with the trees planted within the camp near homesteads by refugees, there are no clear rules that govern rights of refugees to the use of trees planted in the area surrounding the camp. Therefore, refugees do not feel that they have any responsibility to look after these trees; rather they see NRDP as being responsible through the use of its hired workers.

5.4.1.2 Environmental Protection

The NRDP carries out the prevention side of its work by issuing various rules to the refugee community about the use of natural resources in the camp and its surrounding. These rules are reinforced through the use of 26 forest guards, who come from refugee and local communities.

One of the rules issued by the NRDP along with its partner ARRA (the Administration for Refugees and Returnee Affairs) clearly states that refugees are not allowed to cultivate outside of the camp. The second rule states that refugees are not allowed to cut down live trees from the surrounding woods, either for fuel wood or construction purpose. Instead, refugees are advised to collect dead wood for fuel wood and construction use. These rules are reinforced by deploying forest guards into the surrounding woods to catch offenders.

The forest guards have the authority to confiscate hoes, axes and wood from any refugee that they find cultivating outside of the camp or cutting down a live tree. The offender is then brought to the camp by the forest guard and put in the local jail for a day or two. If the offender is a woman, very often she would be allowed to go home after her tools have been confiscated.

The NRDP's involvement in refugee related environmental issues is limited to its main work of reforestation and environmental protection through the issuing of rules about the use of natural resources at the camp level. However, the enforcement of these rules has been inefficient due to a lack of manpower, shortage of budget and cooperation with the Kebele administration. The regional government, other than working through the Natural Resources Development Program (NRDP), has no involvement with regards to dealing with refugee related environmental problems. Despite being host to Sudanese refugees over the last decade and a half, the region lacks guidelines that set criteria for the selection of a site for refugee settlements as well as clarify refugees' rights over land or resources in the areas surrounding the camp they are settled in. The regional government generally believes that refugees should not be allowed to cultivate outside of the camp boundaries and that UNHCR and its counter part ARRA

should make sure that this is implemented (Interview with Regional Government officials, 8/4/203). However, it does not have any guidelines that would serve to direct the environmental protection work being done by the different agencies in the camp. The regional government also lacks a guideline that would clarify about who owns the trees planted by NRDP, who should look after these trees, who will be responsible to rehabilitate refugee affected areas after the refugees have been repatriated?

The Federal Environmental Protection Agency currently does not have a formal office at the regional level in Gambella. The Regional Bureau of Planning and Economic Development is currently undertaking the work of environmental protection at the regional level until a separate office is set up. However, the bureau has limited most of its responsibility to the areas of the region settled by the local people leaving refugee related environmental issues in the hands of NRDP and the two major refugee assisting agencies UNHCR and ARRA. Currently, there is no mechanism set up to coordinate the interests of this office with the refugee agency UNHCR and its Ethiopian counter part ARRA. The bureau sees its role as being limited to the local population and the areas they occupy because there are no guidelines that have been set by the regional government nor a policy by the Federal government to govern the handling of refugee related environmental issues.

5.4.2 The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)

The role of the UNHCR in the area of environmental protection at the Bonga Refugee Camp is mainly limited to the financing and monitoring of environmental activities undertaken by other agencies.

Environmental programs under the direct financing of the UNHCR cover a wide range of activities; from reforestation schemes to educational programs whose main purpose is to raise the awareness of both the refugee and local communities towards environmental protection. The UNHCR also makes use of high tech satellite imagery to assess the impact of refugees on the surrounding natural environment and identify critically affected areas where reforestation activity should be undertaken. In Ethiopia,

the UNHCR in collaboration with the Ethiopian Mapping Authority has carried out one such study in the areas surrounding the refugees camps in the Western part of the country. The results of this study are now currently being used to guide decisions regarding the location of reforestation and conservation activities.

UNHCR's environmental guideline is used to set the main framework under which all other work in the area of environmental protection activities is undertaken in the camp.

5.4.3 The Administration for Refugees and Returnee Affairs (ARRA)

ARRA's involvement in the area of environmental protection is mainly in the production and dissemination of fuel-efficient stoves among refugees and local host population through its agricultural department at the camp level. In collaboration with NRDP and WFP, it is also involved in implementing a conservation project in some of the most eroded parts of the camp by building check dams, fire breaks, through the use of food for work schemes. The conservation project was started in early 2003 with the main objective of mobilizing both the local and refugee communities to participate through the use of food grain as an incentive. However, since the start of the program, a large part of the participants have been women who come from the local community. The participation of the refugee community has been very insignificant in this scheme.

ARRA being a government organization works alongside with NRDP to make some general rules regarding refugees' access to natural resources in the camp and its surrounding. However, as stated in the previous section, these rules mainly amount to dos and don'ts and fail to give a clear picture of refugees' rights to natural resources.

The ARRA agricultural section also works among the refugee community to improve agricultural practices and outputs. Every year, farmers from the refugee and local community benefit from the distribution of seeds and agricultural tools.

Table (5.2) Refugee farmers benefiting from distribution of seeds and agricultural tools

Tribal composition	Number of farmers	
	Male	Female
Uduk	1,967	1,716
Burun	121	87
Nuba	122	1
Equatorial	32	---
Shiluk	78	---
Anuak	2	---
Total	2,322	1,804

Source: ARRA Bonga. Agricultural Section Report, March 31, 2003

As is seen in the previous table (table5.2) a large part of the farmers (89%) benefiting from the services of the agricultural section come from the Uduk group. Even though back in 1993, only 1,516 refugee households were said to have received plots of land from ARRA, the number of farmers receiving agricultural support from ARRA has currently increased to about 4,125. This ought to make one ask about where these farmers are cultivating and about how they have acquired these plots. In addition to this, are ARRA and UNHCR also contributing to the expansion of the so called ‘illegal expansion of farmlands’ into the surrounding woodland through the provision of agricultural tools and inputs?

Both ARRA and UNHCR have stated that they have not been able to fully implement the concept of partial self-sufficiency at Bonga because of the unavailability of arable land for refugees. However, they have continued to provide agricultural supplies to refugees without considering where the recipients would be cultivating. However they both hold the refugee population largely responsible for degrading the environment through its ‘illegal activities’.

5.4.4 ZOA Refugee Care

ZOA Refugee Care has an Environmental Education Program, which is carried out both among the refugee and local communities. The organization also carries out a program of promoting mud block construction within the camp. As part of this program, some refugees were trained by ZOA in mud block production and the construction of houses from mud blocks. Those involved in the work of environmental protection anticipate that the promotion of this technology will contribute towards reducing the amount of wood cut by refugees for construction purpose.

ZOA and UNHCR assist refugees who are interested to build their houses from mud blocks through providing payment for the masons who builds the house. A mason is paid 90 birr for each house that he builds. However, the production of the mud blocks is the responsibility of the refugee family. Since the start of this program, a total of 182 houses have been built by refugees from mud block through the assistance provided by UNHCR and ZOA.

However, it is a bit early to say that this technology is widely accepted by the community because success should not be measured in terms of the houses constructed but rather in terms of the willingness of the community and its individuals to continue using this technology even after UNHCR and ZOA stop making payment to the masons.

Table (5.3) Total number of Mud Block Houses Constructed up to March 31, 2003

Block Number	No of houses built	Remark
17, 18	32	Non-Uduk
2,3	12	
4,11	3	
7,16	11	
9,15	11	
1,6	13	
10,11	6	
8,14	6	
5,12	5	
19	12	includes 1 church, non-Uduk block
Nuba	11	Includes 1 church and pre school, non-Uduk block
19 Shiluk	23	Includes 1 church and pre school, non-Uduk block
Local Village	15	Local village
Total	182	

Source: ZOA Refugee Care, Environmental Education Programme Report, March 31, 2003.

5.4.5 Environmental Working Group (EWG)

The Environmental Working Group is a forum established at the camp level to coordinate the environmental work undertaken by the different organizations in the camp. The members of this group are ARRA, UNHCR, NRDP and ZOA.

Representatives of each of these organizations meet on a regular basis to discuss about environmental concerns in the camp and coordinate their activities so as to avoid duplication. The group meets on a regular basis with the refugee committee and local representatives to discuss pertaining issues about the environment and pass on

directives about what ought to be done at each level.

In addition to working through the Environmental Working Groups, each of these agencies has a direct relationship with the refugee committee, chiefs and local *Kebele*. The refugee committee and the chiefs are often asked to meet with the agencies or the representatives of the Environmental Working Group to discuss matters that relate to the use of natural resources in and around the camp. During these meetings, the refugee representatives are told to inform their people that farming outside the camp is illegal and that as the leaders of their people, they have to put a stop to it. The refugee representatives often state that they are caught in between the people they represent and the agencies they deal with. They strongly feel that they are not being listened to or understood by the officials in these matters since the major requests of the refugees for land to cultivate or for the provision of sufficient rations is not being paid any attention but rather pushed aside.

5.5 Refugees and the Environment

5.5.1 Interaction with the natural Environment in the Sudan

The Uduk community largely relied on the natural requirement to meet its daily needs such as food, energy and shelter. The Uduks see themselves as agriculturalists who depend on the produce of the land for their survival. Every Uduk man is expected to cultivate the three staple crops; maize, sorghum and sesame. A man who does not cultivate was seen as being lazy and frowned upon by the whole community and called names. Such a man would find it very difficult to find a wife or keep one (James, 1979:88).

A man is expected to cultivate a field for all his dependents such as his own family and sisters, sisters' children (*nam*) and mother if they are living with him. The work of cultivating a field is done with the help of the male family members, relatives and neighbors, where the men would go out into the field to cultivate and weed while the women stay home and prepare food. Most birth groups had their fields close to one another thus reducing the distance the work parties had to travel from field to field and

facilitating the carrying out of work on a number of plots within a day. Women kept small gardens close to the homestead where they planted okra and different varieties of beans which were used for making soup. Boys start going into the fields with their fathers from an early age while girls stay close to the homestead assisting with the household chores of grinding and fetching water.

There were some instances where women had fields, which were cleared out for them by their husband and cultivated through work parties. The produce from such fields belongs exclusively to the woman and the husband could not lay any claim to it. The husband was obliged to cultivate a separate field for his wife and children and another field for his other dependents such as mother and sisters. Women who had such arrangements used the produce from their field to buy a sheep or pig. Whatever property that the woman had acquired through the exchange of the grain from her field belonged to her and that was what she would take with her if the marriage broke up or the husband dies (Interview with elderly women, 12/4/2003).

According to James (1979:87), the Uduks were major grain producers within their area to the extent of supplying other tribes in exchange for cattle, salt, clothing and other necessities. Despite this seeming advantage, the Uduks mainly produced for their own consumption, for the satisfaction of the immediate needs of the community. The idea of selling, at a profit was highly frowned upon by the Uduks. Profit making exchanges among Uduks were totally looked down on and those exchanges with non-Uduks had the general tone of not disappointing the other party and seeking to create good feelings between the buyer and the seller by offering goods of similar value.

5.5.1.1 Fuel wood and Wild Foods

Women went into the surrounding bush of their hamlet to collect fuel wood. Men sometimes assisted them by cutting down the big trees and the women would carry the bundles back home. Standing trees are cut down to be used for building purpose but dead trees are often preferred for fuel wood because they are dry and would burn easily without causing much smoke. Before the onset of the rainy season, women collected large amounts of dry fuel wood in preparation for the rainy days. The women

had some species of trees, which they preferred as being good for fuel wood. This tree known as *wunandara*'c was said to be abundant in their home areas. Since the whole Uduk group was found scattered over a large area of land, access to fuel wood was easy and not time consuming.

In the dry season months of February to April after all the harvest has been brought in from the fields, Uduk men busied themselves through hunting activities. A variety of spears, bows and arrows and hunting sticks known as *jappa* were the main tools used for hunting. Fire was also widely used to chase out game from the woods. The animals that were hunted range from rabbits to wild pigs to wildebeest. Young boys are trained from a very young age how to use the hunting stick to kill small rodents and birds. Hunting was done both in groups and also individually. Hunting parties were organized to hunt down larger animals such as hartebeest. When the animal is surrounded, the area is set on fire and the animal is killed by rocks, spear, arrow, or hunting stick as it tries to escape from the fire. Game that has been hunted down in a group is shared together. However, towards their last ten years in the Sudan, it was reported that the number of animals in the area had sharply declined because of the mounting military activity and hunting parties had to walk further away from their villages to get to where the game was found.

Leafy vegetables, fruits, roots and tubers found in the woods provided the Uduks with additional food during times of food shortage and drought. Some of these were used for spicing up their food, as a source of oil as well as for supplementing the daily diet.

Both the women and men are responsible for the collection of different varieties of wild foods from the bush. Knowledge about these wild foods, such as where they are found, how they should be handled etc... was passed on to the young people from an early age. A root that was found in the bush was at times planted in the small garden behind the huts. However, most people prefer the type that is found in the wild to the one that is planted in the fields. A few people had also experimented with planting of fruit trees (such as mangos and papayas) on their fields. But a large majority of the people did not see a need to plant these on their fields since they were found in plenty in the bush.

5.5.1.2 Forest Fires

Forest fires were said to be common in the Sudan. These fires were started both naturally and also by man. Most Uduks used fire to clear their fields of any trees and bushes. In most cases, if there are no neighboring fields to the land that is being cleared, the farmer would set the grass on fire without any precaution to keep the fire from spreading into the surrounding. Forest fires are also started by people who set fires to hunt down wild animals. This was said to be widely practiced by the Uduks in the Sudan.

5.5.1.3 Access to Natural Resources in Sudan

The Uduk people were found scattered over a large area of land in the Blue Nile Province of the Sudan. Some of the Uduk villages were found close together while others were more than a day's walk from the nearest Uduk village.

Each village consisted of different hamlets where people of the same matrilineal group lived together. Settlement sites for each matrilineal group were cleared in the wood land and the area in the immediate surrounding of the site was cleared of trees and grass to keep away wild animals and reptiles. A few trees were left standing within the middle of the hamlet where people gathered for visiting, drinking coffee and other social occasions. These trees also provided shade during the dry season when the weather is hot and staying indoors is unbearable. A hamlet mostly consisted of a group of huts, and a few animal shades for sheep, pigs and cattle. On average, a hamlet would be located in an area for about three years before it is abandoned to be reclaimed by wild vegetation (James: 1979, 16)

The Uduks classify land into two categories based on its use namely: settlement area along with the cultivated fields (*bampa*) and the woodland or the bush (*bwasho*). The woodland (*bwasho*) mainly refers to land where there is no settlement or cultivation. The woodland is cleared out from time to time for cultivation purpose or for the set up of a hamlet. The old site is left to be reclaimed by the wild vegetation and would eventually be referred to as *bwasho*.

In the areas where the Uduks were living in the Sudan, there were no rules which regulated access and use of natural resources. The Uduks saw the woodland (*bwasho*) as a resource that can be utilized by anyone including other tribal groups who come from outside Uduk area. The Sudanese government had a tree plantation project (known as *kabath* in Arabic) in one of the Uduk villages. The villagers were not allowed to farm in this area or cut down the trees that grew within. However, they were free to do as they wanted with the trees and the land outside of the government plantation.

A piece of land would come to belong to a person after it has been cleared of its vegetation. According to James “ It is the work involved which gives men a right to lands carved out of the bush; but the bush itself is there for anybody to utilize”(1979:93). This applies not only to land but all other resources of the wild such as water, wild foods, firewood, fish, etc...

The Uduks practiced shifting cultivation where a piece of land is cultivated for a few years and left fallow for a period more than it was cultivated. The main tool that was used for cultivation is known as *purinye*, which is a pointed hoe with a metal tip and a wooden handle.

Fields that were cultivated were basically divided into two groups; the *bangap* and the *buntho*; based on their location. The *bangap* is located along the banks of a river or a stream where the soil is fertile and suitable for planting maize, *kala* (a variety of sorghum), and vegetables like okra and tomatoes. The *buntho* is located far away from the riverbanks, in the drier parts of the woodland where the soil is mostly rocky.

When an Uduk identifies a piece of land to use for cultivation, he would first show his ownership of the land by cutting down the trees that would form the border of the field. Trees on cultivation fields are seen as being destructive to crops and therefore are all cut down or set on fire.

A piece of land would be cultivated for as long as it was productive. However, very often the productivity of land was reported to be affected by the appearance of

different types of weeds. One type of weed, locally known as the *malingwol*, often appeared on a river bank field (*bangap*) after about 4 years of continuous cultivation. Land that has been infested by this weed has to be left fallow for a minimum of 6 years before it can be cultivated. Since land by the banks of a stream was scarce, most farmers returned to their plot after 6 years of laying it fallow. During interviews with older men who farmed in Sudan, it was revealed that a man would have at least two river side plots (*bangap*) between which he would shift. The riverside plot (*bangap*) was inherited from father to son or from an uncle to his nephews (i.e. his sisters' sons). When a boy reaches an age where he has to have fields of his own field, his father would give him part of his own field to get started with and clear out new land for himself. The boy can also go to his uncle (*shwakim* i.e his mother's brother) and ask for a piece of land to cultivate

The *bunto*, which was located far from the river banks, is used for producing sorghum, sesame and ground nuts. A *bunto*, on average is cultivated for a period of about 4-5 years before it is infested with a weed locally known as *sakab*. Just like the weed *malingwol* which is common on the river side plot, the *sakab* also sharply reduces the fertility of the soil, thus forcing the farmer to clear out another piece of land. Unlike the *bangap* which was scarce, the *bunto* once it was abandoned was very rarely used for planting. Rather it is left to be totally taken over by the bush. Because there were no competitions in getting access to land, the plots found on the drier parts of the land was often larger in size than the riverside plots. Land was one resource that was found in plenty in the Uduks' home area.

There had been a few disputes among individuals regarding access to land by the riverside. These disputes mainly arose at the initial stage before a piece of land has been cleared and both parties argue that they had gotten there first to claim the land. Such disputes were highly encouraged to be resolved by the close relatives of both parties. At times they were referred to the village chief who made the final judgment. However conflicts over land with neighboring tribes were almost non-existent.

The village chief was responsible for the resolving of conflict over the use of natural resources that might arise between Uduks and other tribes. It was reported that the

most common conflict was between Uduk farmers and the nomadic Arabs who came into the area with their large number of cattle and at times set them to graze in fields cultivated by Uduk farmers.

5.5.2 Refugees' Interaction with the Natural Environment at Bonga

5.5.2.1 Cultivation practices

During the years (1985-1992) that the Uduks had been in various refugee assistance schemes, one of the requests that they persistently put forward to relief agencies and concerned authorities was about access to farming land on which they can raise crops and become self-sufficient. They strived to cultivate crops wherever they had stayed for a reasonable period of time such as at Tsore (1989), Nasir (1991) and now in Bonga.

The Uduks began planting crops a few months after they had arrived in Bonga in 1993. Since the camp was newly founded, the infrastructure at that time was still quite low and the refugees also had to build their huts and villages. Therefore, the cultivation activity during that first year was mostly limited to the backyard plots that were provided by ARRA and within the immediate vicinity of the camp. As the people gradually settled to life in Bonga, more families began to look for land to cultivate within the camp and outside.

It was revealed from the survey done as part of this research that from a total of 150 households interviewed, 141(94%) said they are taking part in cultivation activity while the remaining 9(6%) said they are not cultivating. Out of the nine people who said they are not cultivating in Bonga, eight (88.89%) stated their main reason for not cultivating is because they could not find land. The remaining one person said that she is not strong enough to cultivate by herself.

Type of field cultivated by the 141 respondents who are cultivating in Bonga

Type of field being cultivated by respondent	Frequency	Percentage
Back yard plot	4	2.84%
Riverside plot (<i>bangap</i>)	10	7.09%
Land far from the river (<i>Buntho</i>)	59	41.84%
Backyard plot and river side plot	5	3.55%
Backyard plot and land far from the river	4	2.84%
Riverside plot and land far from the river	55	39%
All three plots	4	2.84%
Total	141	100%

The Uduks still consider themselves as agriculturalists that have to work the land to feed themselves and their families. Unlike in Sudan, cultivation in Bonga is done both by men and women. Men have lost their position as the major cultivator and provider in the household. Women have begun to cultivate their own fields by organizing their own work parties independent of their husband.

5.5.2.2 Access to Natural Resources

a. Land

The main fields that are cultivated in Bonga are the back yard plot, the riverside plot and the plot which is found in the dry part of the area (*buntho*). Currently there are two ways through which an Uduk can acquire land for cultivation purpose. These two options are either to rent land by the riverside from a local person or to clear out land from the surrounding woodland.

When the Uduks first settled in Bonga in 1993, plots of land that were 25m x 25m were distributed to 1,516 households. These plots were to be used by the households as a backyard plot where some crops can be cultivated. The back yard plot is found within the settlement area, very often in the immediate vicinity of the huts. It is used for planting *kala* (a variety of sorghum), and different types of beans. A woman with the help of her younger children cultivates the backyard plot.

Out of the total 150 respondents in the survey, 72 (48%) replied that they had received a backyard plot in 1993 while the remaining 78 (52%) replied that they didn't. Out of the 72 who received a plot, 45 (62.5%) are still cultivating the land while the remaining 27 (37.5%) are not currently farming the land. Out of these, 10 (37.04%) responded that the land they had received was taken from them and put for other uses while 6 others (22.22 %) said the land had declined in its productivity, another 6 (22.22%) said they gave the land to a relative who did not have any, while the remaining 5 stated that the land they received was too small to cultivate.

Over the last ten years since the camp has been founded, the size of the backyard plot has declined from time to time. Most of the space that is set out for backyard garden within the settlement area is now slowly being turned into a residential area where new families are building their huts. In addition to this, land within the settlement is being used for the construction of facilities such as preschool, distribution centers and offices. Although these facilities are providing various essential services to the whole refugee community, they are being built on land that is being used as a backyard plot. When the land is put to another use, the person who used to cultivate that land often cleared out land in the wood lands to use for cultivation purpose. No alternatives are offered to the person whose land has been taken.

The tree planting scheme by NRDP also plants tree seedling within the settlement, at times on backyard plots that are being cultivated by refugees. When trees are planted on a piece of land, refugees are told not to plant crops on this land. Therefore, most people who had back yard gardens have been forced to abandon them because of the trees that have been planted there. However, when this happens, most of them opt to go far away from the camp and clear new land for cultivation.

b. Land rent arrangements with the local population

Before the arrival of the refugees, land on the banks of the Bonga river was used by the local Anuak people for the cultivation of maize, sorghum and bananas. There were also a few scattered hamlets of the Anuak people who were also settled along the banks of the Baro River. With the arrival of the refugees and their need for land along the banks of a river, a land use arrangement evolved between the two communities. The local Anuaks began to rent the land along the banks of the Bonga River to refugee farmers on a seasonal basis. Over the years, the amount of land that is being rented out to refugee farmers by the local Anuaks has extended to reach about 6 kms outside of the camp, along the banks of the Bonga River.

The land rent arrangement between a refugee farmer and a local Anuak lasts for a single planting season. Payment for the land rent is made for in cash or in kind in the form of wheat, sorghum or maize. The amount of payment depends on the size of the land and its location but on average ranges from 20 birr to 60 birr for each planting season. Land by the riverside is often planted twice a year, once between April-November, the second time between December- February. During the first planting season, maize is planted. In the second planting season, okra and tomatoes are planted.

Land rent arrangements between Uduk farmers and the local Anuaks are purely individual undertakings where neither the chiefs, refugee committee, aid agencies nor the local Kebele administration are involved. The arrangement takes place in the following manner: An Uduk farmer who wants to cultivate on the bank of the Bonga River would go into the local Anuak village and ask around for someone who has land to rent. The local Anuak would then take the Uduk farmer out to the field and there they would discuss about the amount of the rent. When they reach an agreement, the Uduk farmer would make the payment or at least part of it in cash on the same day. After the rent has been paid, the Uduk is free to do as he wants with the trees and all other vegetation on the land. It is generally believed by Uduk farmers that trees on the crop land are destructive to the crops because they keep sunlight from reaching to the crops and also because they are home to birds which destroy the crops. Therefore,

when an Uduk identifies land for farming purpose, most of the trees found on it are completely cut down and burnt. At times, these trees are collected for fuel wood by the women. As a result of such a view towards trees and indifference on the side of local people, riverside forest along the banks of the Bonga and Baro Rivers are quickly diminishing. The local people claim that the Bonga area has been home to their ancestors for a long time and that they have the final say about how the resources are to be used. However, the land rent arrangement lacks any environmental component where the person renting out the land would impose obligations on the one renting the land to use the land and its resources in a sustainable manner. Rather, the main concern of the land rent arrangement is the accruing economic benefit in terms of additional income regardless of any damage that might happen to the land and its resources. The local Kebele administration is fully aware of these arrangements and the lack of environmental concern within the arrangement but they are doing very little to prevent it.

These land rent arrangements are not free of problems that often give rise to arguments between the two parties. Out of the 141 household covered in the survey, who are cultivating in Bonga, 62% expressed the view they face problems from the local people while the remaining 38% said they don't face any problems because they don't rent land from the local people. The problems that often arise with the local people at times are related with theft of crop (44%), destroying of crops on the field (23%), simultaneous renting out of the same plot to two or three Uduks (21%) and verbal threats (12%). Most of those who are facing problems from the local people are people who are renting land from a local person. Those farmers who cultivate far from the river often have peaceful relationships with the local people since the locals do not lay claim to land that is found far from the riverbanks.

Uduk farmers who rent land from local people report that after they have made an arrangement with a local person to rent a piece of land and made payments, when they go out to cultivate the land, they find out that the land had been simultaneously rented to at least one or two other Uduks who have also made payments to the local person. This often results in arguments among these people. They then in turn go back to the

local person who rents out the land and demand their money from him. Sometimes, they manage to get their money back and one person from among them gets to cultivate the land. Other times, the local person is unable to give them back their money because he has already used it up. In such instances, one person from among them who really wants to cultivate the land is required to give back money to the others in order to keep the land for the planting season. Uduk farmers also complain about repeated incidents of theft of crops during harvest time from fields they have rented from the local people. They say they are afraid to sleep in the field as they used to in the Sudan to guard the crops because they are afraid that if they catch the thieves, it will result into a full scale fighting between the communities.

c. Clearing out of land from the wood land

Another option that is open to Uduk farmers who want to acquire land for cultivation purposes is to go into the nearby woodland (*bwasho*) outside of the camp territory and clear out land. The clearing of land for cultivation purpose is done by a man or group of men, by cutting down most of the trees on the identified field and setting them on fire. However over the years, due to an increase in the distance that women have to travel to get fuel wood, these trees are being collected by women for fuel wood purpose.

Acquisition of land for cultivation by refugees

Type of acquisition	Frequency	Percentage
Renting from local people	14	10%
Land provided by ARRA	10	7%
Clearing of the woodland	80	57%
Renting from local people and land provided by ARRA	4	3%
Renting from local people and clearing of woodland	17	12%
Land provided by ARRA and clearing of woodland	6	4%
Land provided by ARRA, renting from local people and clearing of the bush	7	5%
Other – Received land from relatives	3	2%
Total	141	100%

From among the 141 households in the survey who are cultivating in Bonga, 57% of them stated that they acquired a plot by clearing out land from the woodland. An additional 12% stated that they both rent land from a local person and also acquired another plot by clearing out the bush. Upon discussions with refugees who are currently cultivating in Bonga; as in the Sudan, the resources of the woodland (*bwasho*) are still seen by the Uduks as belonging to everyone. They acknowledge that Bonga is not their homeland and that they are temporarily being hosted by the local people and the Ethiopian government. But since the local Anuak people do not lay claim to land that is found far from the riverside, the Uduks feel that they are free to use it. The clearing of fields for cultivation purpose outside of the camp settlement started a short time after the camp had been founded. Over the years, as the Uduk population gradually increased, some villagers began to go across the Baro River to clear land for cultivation. Most of the cultivation that is done in this part is carried out by men because women do not know how to swim and are afraid to cross the river on a canoe during the rainy season. Land that is found on the other side of the Baro river is largely unoccupied by the local people and mostly flat. Most people prefer to cultivate in this area because it is free from the supervision of forest guards who are quite common in the other areas and chase people out from their fields. In the early years of the camp, most households cultivated within an hour's walk from the camp. Currently, some households travel about three hours to get to their fields in the woodlands. Fields are cultivated in all four directions from the camp.

The size of a field that is cultivated by a person is determined by the person's own strength. Some men claim to have fields about the size of a football field (which would be around 50m x 25m) while others have bigger ones. Fields that are cultivated by women are usually smaller in size because of the work involved in a larger field.

In Bonga, a piece of land found far from the river (the *buntho*) can be continuously cultivated for about 3-4 years before it is infested by a local variety of weed known to the Uduks as '*kabus*. When this weed begins to appear on a field, the productivity of the field sharply declines thus forcing the farmer to look for another field. The Uduks have no mechanism other than abandoning the land to overcome this weed. Uduks

who had started cultivating in the early years of the camp often have two fields side by side among which they alternate to overcome the weed infestation. However, those people who had started cultivating later have only one field and are forced to completely abandon their land until the weed disappears. Over the years, land in the woodlands has become quite scarce. Those who are in search of new land and those whose land has been taken over by weeds compete for access to new land to clear for cultivation. Nowadays, the Uduks report that some people are walking as far as three hours to get new land to clear and cultivate. Others are going as far as 18 Kms to the nearest Mezhinger village of Koben where land by the river side is available free of charge.

About 91% of the respondents in the survey expressed that they do not have enough land to farm in Bonga because all the available land in the area is already taken up or planted with trees by NRDP.

5.5.2.3 Why are the Uduks cultivating in Bonga?

The Uduks clearly explain that they are cultivating in Bonga because the rations they are receiving are not enough to last them from one month to another. According to WFP, the rations that are provided to the Uduks in Bonga are based on the standards to satisfy a person's daily calorie requirement.

There is a general feeling of distrust among all Uduks, based on their past experience in Bonga and elsewhere that they can not fully rely on the provision of food from outside. Over the last ten years in Bonga, there have been repeated incidents of delays in rations as well as reduction in the amount of rations given. Therefore, most Uduks who are cultivating in Bonga clearly state that even though they know they are disobeying the orders of NRDP and ARRA by going outside of the camp to cultivate, they feel they have not been given any other option. The grain that they produce helps supplement the rations they receive and also provides them with a little extra with which to buy other much needed items. The feeling of most Uduks towards cultivation in Bonga and the problems they face is clearly depicted in one song that is sung by a man who is well known for his songs. A translation of the song is given as follows:

They (the local people) make us pay for the land

Why are you (NRDP) telling us not to farm?

They (NRDP) take axes from our men and women

They plant trees where we cultivate and chase us away saying

“ Go away from our land. You destroyed all our trees

you have done bad to us”

I want to go to my country Sudan

The suffering here is great

I will write a letter to our refugee chairman

So he would inform the UN about our suffering

They are taking our axes and telling us not to farm.

Sung by Timothy Rehan, 16/4/2003

The undertaking of cultivation among the Uduks assists not only in supplementing their food rations but also implies a return to a life style that somehow resembles how they lived in the Sudan. Among the Uduks, a man who does not cultivate is labeled as being lazy and looked down on by the whole community. However, when they became refugees, the role of the man as the main provider of the house was taken over by the whole assistance scheme where food for the family is provided by the relief agencies and not by the man of the house. As a result, men have become marginalized within their own families and community because the women can now do without the assistance of the man (James, 2000:26). However, a return to cultivation in Bonga in some ways is helping to keep the men busy and productive at least for some parts of the year. Over the years since the camp has been founded, there has been a gradual return to

the old way of life through work parties organized for men working on the fields and for threshing of sorghum after it has been collected. Men who have had a good harvest are known as being strong and their wives, sisters and mothers are satisfied because there will be some food in the house to take them through the days when the rations are delayed or reduced.

Uduks who cultivate use their produce to feed not only their immediate family but other extended relatives such as sisters, nephews, uncles and aunts. The culture of sharing of food and other possessions among people of the same matrilineal group is still widely practiced in Bonga. Out of the total of 141 people who responded in the survey that they are cultivating in Bonga, 62 (43.97%) expressed the view that they share part of their harvest with relatives and use part of it for personal consumption while 32 (22.7%) people responded that they sell part of their produce, consume some and give some to relatives. Another 32 (22.7%) people responded that they consume all of what they produce while the remaining 15 (10.63%) respondents stated that they sell part of their harvest and consume the rest.

5.5.2.4 Collection of wood

In Bonga, wood is put to a variety of uses such as for cooking, building, making of agricultural tools and furniture. Fuel wood collection is a task that is undertaken by women. Women often go into the woods in groups of two or three to collect fuel wood that would last them for a few days. From a total of 141 women who regularly go into the woods to collect fuel wood, 88 (62.41%) go twice a week, another 38 (26.95%) go only once as week. The remaining 15 respondents (10.66%) go three times or more in a week.

Every respondent, meaning 100 percent, stated that over the years the distance they have to travel to collect fire wood has gradually increased. Out of these, 71 percent said that they now walk between 1-2 hours to get to where they get fuel wood while another 24% have to walk for more than two hours. Only 5% of the respondents expressed the view that they walk for less than an hour. It is estimated that on average, every Uduk woman spends about 14.74 hours per week in the collection of fuel wood (ZOA: 2003,

Annex1)

Fuel wood collection is done in all directions from the camp, including across the Baro River, both on land that has been recently cleared out for cultivation as well as in the woods. Women are at times assisted by men in chopping down trees, but the task of carrying the bundle home is always the work of the woman.

In addition to cooking food, fuel wood is often used for lighting at night and also for generating heat in the rainy season when the weather gets a bit chilly. At night time, it is quite common to see Uduk families gathered around a fire chatting and drinking coffee. According to ARRA (2003, 8), per capita fuel wood consumption at Bonga is 2.15Kgs per day.

Wood that is needed for the construction of huts is cut down by the men and carried home by the women. Grass, bamboo and wood are the main items that are used for the construction of huts. Bamboo is obtained about 3 hours' walk into the hills. Recently, wood for construction purposes has become scarce and most people have to travel more than three hours to get it.

It is widely acknowledged by the UNHCR, ARRA and other organizations working in the camp that the consumption of fuel wood in the camp is having a noticeable impact on the surroundings. In order to overcome this, ARRA with UNHCR undertook the production of fuel efficient stoves in the Bonga camp in 1998. Between the 1998 and 2002, a total of 3,953 fuel-efficient stoves have been produced and distributed to refugee and local households. The stove is made of cement and sand and weighs a total of 9.5Kgs (ARRA, 2003: 3).

Most Uduk women who have received these stoves say that these stoves use less wood than the traditional three stove stone, which is used by all refugee households. However, they state that the one disadvantage of these stoves is that they are heavy to move from place to place and that they are not made to fit small pots, tea kettles and coffee pots. Therefore, they use these stoves only when they cook with big pots. Otherwise, they use the traditional open fire, three stone stoves which is light and easy to move from place

to place. It is estimated that about 57.2% of refugee households who have received the fuel efficient stoves are currently using them (UNHCR: 2003, 8).

Some Uduk women have found an alternative source of income from selling fuel wood for the local population and the workers of the agencies in the camp. A bundle of wood is sold for 5birr. Charcoal making is practiced by very few refugee women. These women often make the charcoal to sell to refugee traders who have teashops within the camp. Other than for use at these teashops, charcoal is not used by refugee households. The local population on the other hand as well as people who have migrated to the area from the highlands have now begun to make charcoal in the areas surrounding the camp and sell it in sacks along the road from Bonga to Gambella. It has now become common to see sacks of charcoal and piles of wood by the roadside on the way to Gambella.

There is a general rule set out by agencies doing environmental protection work in the camp (mainly NRDP) that refugees are allowed to cut down only dry trees. Anyone who is caught by the forest guards cutting down live trees will have any other tools (such as axe) that he may have with him confiscated.

For the purpose of construction, most Uduk men prefer live trees which are Y- shaped. To construct a hut, on average one would need about 12 of these Y- shaped logs, which form the major pillars on which the roof of the hut is put. Since it is difficult to find these types of dead trees, most refugee men go as far away as possible from the forest guards to cut down the live trees of this kind. After cutting down the trees and piling them close to the camp, they quietly sneak back at night time to bring them into the village. Refugee men state that over the last four years, they have had to go deeper into the woodland in order not to be caught by the forest guards who are now found within a radius of 5Kms from the camp. The assignment of forest guards within a 5 Km radius from the camp is done so as put into effect the regulation that says “refugees are not allowed to cut down live trees”. It is expected that the deployment of the forest guards within this radius will force the refugees to stay within the camp boundaries. However, this plan seems to work against its own goal by forcing the refugees to go beyond where the forest guards are found so as not to be caught.

Despite the suggestions of a land use assessment team in 1993 for the establishment of a fuel wood plantation plot which can be used by the refugee population to meet its wood requirement, the establishment of the plantation did not take place until after 9 years in 2002. The plantation is still at an early stage. Therefore, refugee households depend on the immediate environment for the supply of fuel wood, wood for construction and other purposes. There is no mechanism that has been set up by the Regional Government, local Kebele administration or the agencies working with refugees to allow for an organized cutting down of trees for construction purpose for use by the refugees. Refugees are generally told not to cut down live trees. The local Kebele administration states that it does not have the mandate to allow for the cutting down of trees by refugees. Instead a representative stated “if a person wants wood for construction purpose, he has to write an application to the Wereda Bureau at Itang” (Interview with Kebele Chairman 6/4/2003). However, this is not a procedure that is practical within the refugee context given the fact that the Wereda Bureau is found about 70 Kms from the camp and that refugees are not allowed to travel outside of the camp.

5.5.2.5 Wild Foods, Hunting and Fishing

The Uduks in Bonga use their wide knowledge of wild foods to supplement their diets as well as a major source of food during times of food shortage. Men, women, boys and girls all take part in the collection of these wild foods at different levels. The younger boys and girls are often responsible for the collection of fruits such as the *shube* out of which oil is extracted for cooking purpose.

The men are mostly responsible to collect wild foods that are found a long distance from the camp. The men are, however, accompanied by women who will carry the food home. Some of these wild plants, such as the root known as the '*cuu*' are found about four hours walk from the camp in the mountains.

The Uduks in Bonga refer to the dry season months between March –May as the 'dark days of hunger' when most families run out of the sorghum and maize that they have produced from their fields and fully depend on the rations that they receive which does

not last them for more than 20 days of the month. During these months, most families survive by going into the woods, sometimes as far away as 18 kms (up to the areas locally known as Baro Kela, Koben) to dig for wild roots. Men and women often go in groups of four to six and spend three to four days in the woods digging out enough roots to last them for about two weeks. While they are on these expeditions, they mostly survive by eating wild roots, fruits and hunting small animals such as rabbits and squirrels.

In April, 2003, there was an incident when a group of four young boys between the ages of 10 to 14 went into the surrounding woods to dig for wild roots to bring back home to their families. They went far into the mountains, about 4 hours from the camp, where there was no water. One of these boys died in the woods from lack of water, another one was unconscious while the other two were very weak by the time search parties had found them two days after they left home.

Over the years, the Uduks have to walk further and further from the camp to get wild roots and fruits. Fishing is done mostly younger boys. However, adult men also take part in fishing activities to some extent. Fishing is a major activity that is undertaken by Anuak men. However, there are repeated complaints from the local Anuaks that Uduk boys are fishing young fish which would eventually grow into big fish. The local Anuak complain that since the arrival of the Uduks, there are less fish in the river than before and there are no wild animals to be hunted down in the surrounding woodland. In the early years of the camp, a little bit of hunting was done by Uduk men in the woodland surrounding the camp. However over the years, the amount of wild game in the area has sharply declined. Nowadays, the only wild animals that are found in the Bonga area mostly consist of small animals such as rabbits, squirrels and baboons.

5.5.2.6 Refugees' View

In the survey done as part of this research, all of the respondents, meaning hundred percent expressed a fear that there will not be sufficient wood for construction or fuel wood purpose in the Bonga area if they stay at Bonga for another ten years. Among the Uduks, there is a general worry that if they stay in Bonga for a few more years, there will be problems with the local people as well as with the government (*hakkuma* as they refer to it in Arabic). Their fear mainly comes from the rules that are issued in the camp prohibiting them not to cut down trees or cultivate outside of the camp. Yet, they don't see themselves being offered any other alternatives. They all wait eagerly for the day when they can go back to their country. However, they are afraid that if they can not go back to the Sudan in the near future, they will be evicted from the Bonga area because of the damage already done to the environment. They acknowledge the existence of degradation in the area but they define degradation in a way that relates to their livelihood such as having to walk further from the camp to collect wood, infestation of agricultural land with weeds resulting in the decline of land productivity year after year.

During discussions with both refugee men and women, one view that they repeatedly raised up was regarding the conflict of interest between the refugees and NRDP about the utilization of natural resources outside of the camp. Most of them expressed that they are fully aware that they are breaking the rules of the government (*hakuma* as they refer to it in Arabic) i.e. NRDP when they go outside of the camp area to cultivate as well as to collect wood for fuel or construction purpose. They sincerely talk about the peace and security they have found since they have been settled in Bonga. However, the one problem that they have faced from time to time at Bonga is the problem of inadequacy of the rations to meet their daily needs (*Mon 'ko bora bor dhali 'te adio shi shi/*). They argue that they can not stay in the camp as they are instructed to when there is no food in their house or when they don't have money with which to buy the much needed items for their families. Therefore, for most Uduk families, the choice is between obeying the rules and facing problems of food shortage at home or disobeying the rules and producing some grain to supplement the rations and meet other necessary

needs.

5.5.2.7 Refugees and Environmental Protection

The participation of the Uduks in the area of environmental protection is mainly limited to the planting of tree seedlings near the homestead. From a total of 150 respondents in the survey, 122 (81%) expressed that they have planted trees close to their houses while the remaining 28 (19%) said they didn't. A large part of the tree planting in the camp is done under the supervision of NRDP during the months June to August. During this period, tree seedlings are distributed to each refugee household to be planted near the homestead. Each refugee household is expected to care for these seedlings by building a fence around it and watering it.

Have you ever planted trees close to your house in Bonga?

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	122	81%
No	28	19%
Total	150	100%

Have you ever planted trees far from your house in Bonga, at your own will?

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	9	6%
No	141	94%
Total	150	100%

About 81% of the respondents replied that they have planted trees close to their house while only 6% expressed that they have planted trees far from the settlement. Out of those who expressed that they have planted trees close to their house, 114 (93%) stated

that they planted the trees to provide shade, 5 (4%0 said they planted the trees for their medicinal value while the remaining 3 (3%) expressed that they planted the trees to use them for building purpose when they are fully grown.

Reason for planting trees close to the homestead

Reason for planting trees	Frequency	Percentage
To provide shade	114	93%
Because of their medicinal value	5	4%
To use them for construction when fully grown	3	3%
Total	122	100%

A few Uduk families have begun to experiment with planting fruit trees close to their homesteads. Although the number of Uduk families who are doing this is quite small in number, this is an undertaking that ought to be encouraged and built on. While doing this research, I came across an Uduk man who had planted fruit trees such as mango, papaya, guava and coconut close to his house. He had acquired some of the seedlings from the NRDP tree nursery and the coconut seedling he got from the other side of the Baro River. He has built fences from bamboo around these trees to keep away animals and younger children. He and his family water the trees every day with waste water from the house. When asked about why he had planted these trees, he stated that he hopes to benefit from the fruit of the trees if he stays long enough in Bonga. He expressed regret that he had not planted the trees when he first arrived at Bonga in 1993 because by now he would have benefited from them. He planted the trees close to his house because it is easier to look after them and he felt that he can lay claim to the fruit they bear. Although the number of people who are undertaking such projects on their own is quite small in the camp, this is an effort that ought to be encouraged by all those working to protect the environment in the Bonga area.

Reason for planting trees far from the settlement

Reason for planting trees	Frequency	Percentage
To eat the fruit they bear	2	23%
Because of their medicinal value	1	11%
To use for building purpose when fully grown	3	33%
To provide shade	3	33%
Total	9	100%

As is evident from the previous tables (), refugees' participation in the planting of tree seedlings outside of the settlement area is quite insignificant. This is because of various reasons.

Reasons for not planting trees far from the settlement area

Reason for not planting trees	Frequency	Percentage
Trees are not useful outside of the village	38	27%
I am afraid the seedling will be destroyed	67	48%
It is difficult to care for the seedlings	17	12%
I can not find the seedlings	9	7%
I don't know how to plant trees	5	3%
Other -	5	3%
Total	141	100%

Out of the total 141 respondents who replied that they have never planted trees far from the camp at their own will, 67 (48%) replied that they have not planted trees because they are afraid that the seedling will be destroyed. It was revealed during the survey that one of the problems encountered by refugees when they plant trees close to the homestead is that most of the seedlings are destroyed by animals and young children.

Therefore, most of the people are very skeptical about the survival rate of tree seedlings planted far from the settlement. Another 38 (27%) of the respondents replied that trees are not useful outside of the settlement area. Such a view towards trees comes from a general belief that one can not plant crops on a field which has many trees since the trees will prevent rain and sunshine from getting to the crops and attract birds that will destroy the crops. Such beliefs can be overcome through educating the farmers and also carrying out practical demonstrations. However at Bonga, teaching farmers through demonstration is not practiced by the concerned agencies.

The Uduks also see trees as taking up land which can be planted with crops. This is because of the increasing scarcity of farming land in the Bonga area. Refugees generally see the tree planting scheme as being inconsiderate towards their needs since it is taking up land that they have cleared up for cultivation purpose. As the land they have cleared out for cultivation is planted with trees, they go further into the woodland to cut down older trees and cultivate the land. Even though the tree planting scheme is now said to cover a 6Km radius in three directions from the camp, the refugees are going beyond it to clear out the untouched woodland. Such an approach to tree planting, which has failed to take into consideration the needs of the people, has resulted in a chase and run scenario where the refugees are going ahead to clear out woodland for cultivating and the tree planting scheme is catching up on them and planting the 'bare' area with young trees. The refugees feel that the tree planting scheme is not sensitive to their needs but is there to harass them by chasing them away from the land they clear out for cultivation. Instead of creating a sense of responsibility, such an approach is forcing the refugees to be more destructive in their interactions with the natural environment.

The planting of tree seedlings outside of the camp is undertaken through the use of hired labor from refugees and the local population. Voluntary participation of refugee or local communities is almost none existent except through those who are paid. Therefore, most refugees do not feel a sense of responsibility to care and look after these seedlings. Among the refugees there is a great deal of uncertainty about their rights to these trees since they did not plant them. The NRDP does not have a mandate

to allow refugees to make use of the trees they have planted. Its role is mainly limited to the planting of tree seedlings and looking after them.

The NRDP seedling nursery was started soon after the camp was founded. However after ten years, the nursery is still being planted by paid laborers. There does not seem to be any effort towards the decentralization of the tree seedling raising activity to the village level where refugees can have a first hand knowledge and experience about how to raise seedling and look after them. The centralized approach to the raising of tree seedlings is not passing on knowledge and expertise to refugees or the local population about what it takes to raise seedlings and how it is done. Such an approach, other than being dependent on the fund supplied by the UNHCR, which is often said to be insufficient, also fails to create a sense of responsibility and care towards the seedlings that are raised. In some ways, it also limits the survival rate of the seedlings since most people will not care for the trees they have planted or those planted by the NRDP since they have not made any investment in time, energy or other resources to raise the seedlings. Such an approach is not sustainable since the refugees have no sense of ownership towards it.

5.6 Concluding Remarks

The chapter discussed mainly the work that is being done by the different stakeholders in the area of environmental protection. The chapter also discussed in detail about the interaction of the Uduk people with the natural environment. Looking on the past experiences of the Uduk in natural resource management, it can be deduced that the way the Uduk in Bonga relate to the natural environment is highly influenced by the way they related to the natural environment in the Sudan. In their home country, they saw the resources of the woodland as being open to everyone including others. In the context of Bonga, since the local people do not lay claim to the resources of the woodland found far from the riverside, the Uduks feel that they can use it. As a result, cultivation of crops by refugees has gradually expanded into the woodlands found close to the camp.

The major environmental protection scheme that is undertaken at Bonga is the

reforestation scheme which plants trees in the camp and the bare land found in its surroundings. Refugees perceive this tree planting scheme negatively since it is planting trees in land they have cleared for cultivation purpose. As a result, refugee farmers are forced to clear new plots of land to replace the plot that has been claimed by NRDP for planting trees. Such an approach, instead of fostering a sense of ownership and responsibility on the refugees to look and care after the seedlings are creating a feeling of bitterness. In protracted refugee situations such as Bonga, an approach which aims to empower both refugees and local people with regards to managing natural resources would be more sustainable.

The concept of achieving partial self-sufficiency by refugees through crop production, which was the main idea behind the set up of Bonga Camp has been deterred because of the unavailability of land by the regional government the main reason behind the regional government's reluctance to release land for cultivation by refugees has been a fear that the area would be degraded. At the official level, refugees are prohibited from farming outside of the camp. Although land has not been officially made available to the refugees, there have been repeated incidents of delays in rations provision as well as reduction in the amount of rations provided refugees on the assumption that refugees can supplement their rations with what they produce. Even during times that the rations are provided on time, refugees find it hard to get their rations to last them until the next distribution. All these factors combined together have made the refugees more determined to rely on their own means through the clearing of land in the woodland, far from the reaches of NRDP and its forest guards.

6. Summary ,Conclusion and Recommendation

6.1 Summary

Until the beginning of the 1990's, most refugee programs did not take into consideration the impact of refugees in the areas surrounding a refugee settlement. The major focus of refugee assisting schemes was the saving of lives and the protection of refugees by settling them in a safe area. In the selection of potential sites for a refugee settlement, the main issues that were taken into consideration were the issue of security, availability of water and wood which the refugees can utilize for the purposes of cooking and construction.

After the Rwandan genocide of 1994, the impact of refugee populations on the surrounding environment came widely into focus both among refugee hosting governments, the UNHCR and its partners. In the same year, the UNHCR designed and implemented an environmental guideline which provides some guidelines that ought to be implemented in the area of environmental protection in refugee areas.

Over the last decade, there have been two major views that are forwarded by scholars regarding the link between refugees and the environment. Myers and Kent (1995) argue that environmental changes, whether man made or human which create circumstances that threaten people's livelihoods force people to migrate to areas which are habitable and fit for survival. Such people are labeled as 'environmental refugees'. Black (2001) on the other hand argues that political and economic factors play a major role in giving rise to forced migration. He does not deny that environmental factors have a role in this but they should be viewed in conjunction to the other contributing factors and not in isolation.

The refugee agency, the UNHCR, identifies the major environmental problems that occur in refugee areas as deforestation, soil erosion and pollution of water resources (UNHCR: 1995). However, since not all refugee situations are similar, it is important to see the change in the environment within the context of each settlement. In this

research, environmental degradation is evaluated mainly in terms of its social manifestations on the livelihood of the resource users i.e. the Uduk refugees, in terms of scarcity of fuel wood, decline in forest products such as wild foods and wild game.

A number of factors contribute to the likelihood of environmental degradation in refugee affected areas. Some of these factors include:

1. The length of time refugees stay in an area
2. The condition under which the refugees are supposed to make a living
3. The size of the refugee population
4. The physical location of the refugee settlement

Over the last two decades, the Gambella region in Western Ethiopia, due to its geographical proximity to the Sudan has been host to large groups of Sudanese Refugees fleeing the war in their country. Since 1984, a number of refugee assistance schemes have been set up within the Gambella region to assist these refugee groups. The Uduk ethnic group is one such group that had fled the war in the Blue Nile Province in Sudan and came into the Gambella Region in 1990 in search of a safe place. Between the years 1990-1993, the Uduk people along with many other ethnic groups were part of a number of refugee assistance schemes set up in Gambella and the bordering area in the Sudan. However, due to the political instability in Ethiopia at the time, the Sudanese refugees found in the Gambella region were forced to flee from the camps where they had found food and security. The assistance schemes that were set up in the Nasir area in the Sudan were also unable to meet the needs of the returnee population. Therefore, in mid 1992, most of the Uduk people decided to flee back to Itang in Gambella Region where a previous a refugee assistance scheme was set up by the UNHCR.

During these years of wandering between Ethiopia and the Sudan, the Uduks had gone through various traumatic experiences of starvation, looting and uncertainty. Most of the assistance schemes which they were part of had fallen apart due to political instability. The Uduks mostly survived these periods of uncertainty through their own means by depending on the resources of the natural environment in which they found

themselves. During their brief stay at Nasir, in the Sudan in the early 1990's various proposals were put forward for the resettlement of the Uduk people in an area where they can cultivate and become self-sufficient through crop production. However, none of these proposals came to be and the Uduks were forced to flee back to Gambella, due to hunger and shortage of food at Nasir.

These years of wandering have taught the Uduks to rely on themselves for their survival instead of on outside assistance. The Uduks at Bonga still discuss about these years of wandering and most situations in Bonga are still compared to what they had encountered during these years of flight and wandering.

Upon the arrival of the Uduk refugees in Gambella in late 1992, they were settled in an area known as Karmi, close to Gambella town. While they were in Karmi, they were joined by other Sudanese refugees of various ethnic groups. As the number of refugees from other ethnic groups began to increase, tensions begun to arise between the Uduks and these ethnic groups, mainly the Nuer. This tension later on broke out into an all out fighting between the two communities which was later put down by the intervention of the Ethiopian military and police force.

A few days after the fighting had been put down, the Uduk refugees were moved to the Bonga area, which is found about 40 kms from Gambella town. The decision to settle the Uduk people in the Bonga area was speeded up due to the fighting that had just erupted at Karmi. The main factors that were taken into consideration in the selection of a site for settling the refugees were the issues of security and the availability of land where the refugees can carry out cultivation to gradually become self-sufficient through food production and the availability of woodland which the refugees can utilize to meet their needs for fuel wood and construction. Although the Bonga area is found within the boundaries of the Gambella National Park, the regional government at that time did not take into consideration the impact that the settlement of refugee population would have on the natural vegetation as well as the wildlife. The Uduk refugees, despite all the hardship they had gone through in the previous years, still had still had strong morale and high level of determination to become independent of external food aid which in their experience had often proved to be unreliable.

The local people in the Bonga area were consulted about the scheme and they enthusiastically welcomed the idea along with the regional government which allocated a little over 1,800 hectares of land for the scheme.

The main idea behind the set up of the Bonga Camp is to promote the production of crops and animal , provision of education and the promotion of income generating activities among the refugee community so that they will be independent of external aid and gradually become partially self sufficient. The focus on partial self-sufficiency is meant to avoid the refugees' total dependence on relief, to create possibilities for gradually reducing the aid and pressure on donors.

Towards achieving the objective of achieving partial self-sufficiency, plots of land were distributed to only about 49% of refugee households. However, since then there have not been any more land distributions to refugee households. At the official level, there are conflicting reports about the amount of land distributed to refugees. But in line with the concept of partial self-sufficiency, rations that are provided to refugees have been reduced from time to time. At times, there have been delays in the distribution of the monthly rations. Based on their experiences at Bonga and elsewhere, the Uduks have very little trust on the rations that they receive since often times these rations have been delayed for months and at times reduced. Therefore, most refugees have opted to go outside of the camp border to cultivate crops which they can use to feed themselves and their families.

Although the whole concept of achieving partial self-sufficiency had not succeeded due to the problem of availability of arable land to refugee households, the Bonga Refugee Settlement is still referred to as a local settlement by the UNHCR. However, there is disagreement between ARRA and UNHCR regarding the very definition of 'local settlement'. For ARRA, local settlement merely refers to the production of food crops by refugees on the already allocated land to supplement their food rations. Therefore, the production of food crops outside of the camp boundaries by the refugees is seen as illegal. UNHCR on the other hand defines partial self-sufficiency as the production of food crops by refugees to gradually substitute their food rations, and become partially independent of the external food aid. ARRA and the regional government insist that

UNHCR should provide a higher amount of food rations to the refugee community so that they would not go outside of the camp to cultivate. UNHCR on the other hand believes that the regional government should cooperate in the provision of land to refugees to achieve the goal of achieving partial self-sufficiency.

Although land has not been officially distributed to more than 50% of the refugee household, decisions to reduce the amount of rations provided to refugees have been based on the belief that refugees can supplement the reduction in food rations from what they are producing on the fields they have cleared out beyond the camp boundaries. The cultivation of crops by refugees is seen by ARRA and the Regional Government as an illegal activity that should be condemned.

Agriculture occupies a central role in the life of the Uduks. An Uduk man who does not cultivate a field is insulted by his peers and the community thus finding it hard to keep a wife. In the context of Bonga, the Uduks see the undertaking of cultivation as the main means to overcome the inadequacy of the food rations and as a way of acquiring some resources which they can use to exchange for spices, and clothing at the local market. However very often, the terms of exchange at the local market are not in favor of the Uduks.

There are a number of organizations in the Bonga Refugee Camp that provide various essential services to the refugee and local community in the areas of health care, education, water, vocational training, income generating activities, agriculture and environmental protection.

The regional government, agencies working with refugees, the refugees themselves as well as the local people widely recognizes the gradual change that has taken place in the natural environment of the Bonga area since the founding of the Bonga camp in early 1993. All the parties concerned perceive these changes in the environment as being negative. A study carried out by the UNHCR and the Ethiopian Mapping Agency in 1997, indicates a reduction in the vegetation cover in the areas surrounding the Bonga area. Extensive soil erosion is also evident on the mountains and hills in the eastern border of the camp. However, these areas are being constantly cultivated by refugee

farmers without the implementation of any conservation techniques.

Refugee related environmental issues require the involvement of a number of actors such as the national and regional governments, the local host community, the refugees as well as the UNHCR and other agencies working with refugees.

The Regional Government of the Gambella National State is one of the key stakeholders in the issue of environmental management in refugee camps and the surrounding areas. The Regional Government is involved in refugee related environmental issues through the department of Natural Resources Development Program (NRDP) under the Regional Bureau of Agriculture. The NRDP has been established for the main purpose of preventing environmental damage by refugees and carrying out environmental rehabilitation work in refugee-affected areas mainly through afforestation activities. The NRDP project is fully financed by the UNHCR and technically supported by the Regional Bureau of Agriculture.

The NRDP office at Bonga was started in 1994 and is involved in the afforestation of bare land in the camp and its surrounding. It has a tree nursery in the camp where a variety of local and exotic trees are raised every year. A variety of 13 tree species are raised at the nursery site every year through the use of hired labor both from the refugee and local communities.

The planting of tree seedlings within the camp is done by refugee households every year. Each refugee household is required to plant trees near his/her homestead and care for it. Even though the responsibility of the refugees towards the trees planted in the homestead is clear, there are no clear rules about the ownership of the trees and the rights the refugees have towards their use. The NRDP office had no mandate to approve the use of these trees by refugees for fuel wood or construction purpose. Instead this mandate belongs to the Wereda bureau which is found about 70kms from Bonga and does not have any dealings with refugee issues. The NRDP sees its role in the camp as being mainly limited to the protection of the environment and its rehabilitation. It views the cutting down of a tree in the camp and its surrounding as an 'illegal activity' that should be punished.

The planting of trees outside of the camp is done mostly on areas that are bare of vegetation. However, most of the areas that are seen as bare by the NRDP are areas that are being cultivated by the refugees. Since the NRDP views the cultivation of crops outside of the camp as an illegal activity that should not be tolerated, the planting of seedlings takes place even in an area that has been already planted with crops. In most cases, refugees have reported that their crops have been pulled out by the tree planting crew and the land they had cleared out had been planted with tree seedlings. When this happens, most refugees choose to leave the land they have cleared out, and go further away from the tree planting scheme into the woodland to clear more land for cultivation purpose. It is estimated that the tree planting outside of the camp is done within a radius of five to six kilometers from the camp. Therefore, most refugee farmers on whose land trees have been planted are now going beyond the radius to clear out more land for cultivation purpose.

The NRDP has 27 forest guards which walk in the area surrounding the camp to confiscate wood or tools from refugees who have been caught cutting down a live tree or clearing land for cultivation outside of the camp. Most refugees, in order not to be caught by the forest guards go beyond the areas covered by the camps to cut wood or cultivate.

The Uduks passionately explain that the only way that they can survive in Bonga is if they produce some crop outside of the camp to supplement their rations. They acknowledge the existence of a negative environmental change in the Bonga area and they define this in the way it relates to their own livelihood such as having to walk longer distance to get wood for construction and fuel wood, lack of wild game and the infestation of farming land with weeds resulting in crop yield. They also realize that when they go outside of the camp they are disobeying the orders of ARRA and NRDP. However, they do not see themselves as being offered any other alternative. For them, the choice is between obeying the orders and facing hunger or disobeying the order and acquiring some crops to feed the family and buy some items needed by the household.

Over the years, a land rent arrangement has gradually evolved between the local and refugee communities where refugee farmers would rent land by the river bank to

cultivate for a season. The local people are mostly interested in the economic benefit of these land rent arrangements. These land rent arrangements lack any obligations which are imposed on the refugee farmers not to cut down trees or prevent erosion.

In the Sudan, the Uduks were found scattered over a large area of land. Land was one resource that was found in plenty in their homeland. There were no rules that governed access and use of natural resources. They saw the resources of the woodland as being open to everyone including others. In the context of Bonga, since the local people do not lay claim to the resources of the woodland found far from the riverside, the Uduks feel that they can use it. As a result, cultivation of crops by refugees has gradually expanded into the woodlands found close to the camp. In the Sudan, the Uduks used shifting cultivation, where a piece of land is cultivated for a few years and left fallow for a period more than it was cultivated. The Uduks believe that trees should not be left standing on an area which is to be used for cultivation purpose. Therefore, when an Uduk farmer identifies land for cultivation purpose, he would cut down the trees on the land or set them on fire. In the context of Bonga, most Uduks farmers prefer to cut down the trees and leave them to be collected by the women for fuel wood purpose. Looking on the past experiences of the Uduk in natural resource management, it can be deduced that the way the Uduk in Bonga relate to the natural environment is highly influenced by the way they related to the natural environment in the Sudan. Although many of them state that land is scarce in Bonga, they do not have practices that help to conserve the land they are using. Rather, when a piece of land is eroded or infested with weeds, the only option they see it to leave the land and walk further (sometimes as much as 3hours) to clear out more land. However, the gradual increase in the refugee population along with the increasing restriction imposed on refugees by the forest guards had made it very difficult for most refugee farmers to acquire land for cultivation within walking distance from the camp. Most of the refugees see their future in Bonga as being bleak and look forwards to returning back to their country where they say they can farm freely without constantly being hassled about cutting down of trees.

6.2 Conclusion

This research has tried to look into some of the factors that are contributing to environmental degradation in the Bonga Refugee Camps and its surrounding.

The concept of achieving partial self-sufficiency by refugees through crop production, which was the main idea behind the set up of the Bonga Camp has been deterred because of the unavailability of land by the regional government. The main reason behind the regional government's reluctance to release land for cultivation by refugees has been a fear that the area would be degraded. At the official level, refugees are prohibited from farming outside of the camp. Although land has not been officially made available to refugees, there have been repeated incidents of delays in ration provision as well as reduction in the amount of ration provided to refugees on the assumption that refugees can supplement their rations with what they produce. Even during times that the rations are provided on time, refugees find it hard to get their rations to last them until the next distribution. All these factors combined together have made the refugees more determined to rely on their own means through the clearing of land in the woodland, far from the reaches of NRDP and its forest guards. This has contributed highly to the degradation of the environment since refugees are going further and further from the camp to clear out more land.

In the context of Bonga, since the local people do not lay claim to the resources of the woodland found far from the riverside, the Uduks feel that they are free to use it. As a result, since their arrival in the area in 1993, refugees have gradually expanded their cultivation activities by clearing out the surrounding woodland for farming purpose. The agencies working in the area of environmental protection see these activities as being destructive to the environment and therefore label them as illegal by setting out rules prohibiting refugees not to farm and not to cut down live trees outside of the camp. These rules are passed on to the refugee community through the refugee committee which feels caught between the agencies and the people it represents.

The refugee committee feels that the agencies who are passing these rules are not taking the needs of the refugees into consideration. Rather, they focus only on the

implementation of these rules without taking into consideration the consequences it would have on the refugees. Therefore, the refugee committee feels helpless in getting the people it represents to obey these rules. The refugees argue that they can not stay in the camp as they are instructed to when there is no food in their house or when they don't have money with which to buy the much needed items for their families. Therefore, for most Uduk families, the choice is between obeying the rules and facing problems of food shortage at home or disobeying the rules and producing some grain to supplement the rations and meet other necessary needs. . For the Uduks, cultivation is undertaken not only to supplement their food rations but also implies a return to the former way of life which had been disrupted due to the flight. Through cultivation, men can resume their former positions as the main provider of the household and their families thus gaining respect within the community.

The major environmental protection scheme that is undertaken at Bonga is the afforestation scheme which plants trees in the camp and the bare land found in its surroundings. Refugees perceive this tree planting scheme negatively since it is planting trees on land they have cleared for cultivation purpose. As a result, refugee farmers are clearing new plots of land to replace the plot that has been claimed by NRDP for planting trees. Such an approach, instead of fostering a sense of ownership and responsibility on the refugees to look and care after the seedling is creating a feeling of resentment. In protracted refugee situations such as Bonga, an approach which aims to empower refugees with regards to managing natural resources would be more sustainable.

Refugees take part in tree planting within the areas close to their homestead. Each refugee household is expected to look after these seedlings by erecting a fence around them and watering them during the dry season. However, the right of refugees towards the trees they have planted is not clearly known. This highly affects the motivation of refugees towards planting trees. The NRDP which is one of the major stakeholders involved in environmental protection in the area does not have any mandate to allow the refugees to use these trees. Rather, the mandate lies with the Wereda bureau at Itang which is found 70 kms from the camp. The regional government, other than working

through the Natural Resources Development Program (NRDP), has no involvement with regards to dealing with refugee related environmental problems. Despite being host to Sudanese refugees over the last decade and a half, the region lacks guidelines that set criteria for the selection of a site for refugee settlements as well as clarify on refugees' rights over land or resources in the areas surrounding the camp they are settled in. The regional government generally believes that refugees should not be allowed to cultivate outside of the camp boundaries and that UNHCR and its counter part ARRA should make sure that this is implemented. However, it does not have any guidelines that would serve to direct the environmental protection work being done by the different agencies in the camp. The regional government also lacks a regulation that would clarify about who owns the trees planted by NRDP, who should look after these trees and who will be responsible to rehabilitate refugee affected areas after the refugees have been repatriated?

A large part of the tree planting scheme outside of the camp is carried out through the use of hired labor from the local and refugee communities. Therefore, most refugees do not feel a sense of responsibility and care towards these trees since they have not made any investment in time, energy or resource. Rather, refugees feel that the responsibility of planting trees outside of the camp lies with the NRDP and not with them. Therefore, the voluntary participation of refugees in planting trees outside of the camp is non-existent. The use of hired labor to carry out tree planting makes the NRDP dependent on the fund allocated from UNHCR year after year which is often said to be insufficient.

In the end, it is worthy to say that the Uduk refugees have persistently tried to become self-sufficient through their efforts to produce crops to feed themselves and their families. Although they call themselves orphans in a foreign land (*cingina*), they have somehow managed to lead a meaningful life in the camp through the resumption of community life and the pursuing of education and training to better themselves. The efforts of the Uduks to become self-sufficient should be encouraged through the setting up of an appropriate framework of guidelines which would assist them to relate in a constructive way with the surrounding environment.

6.3 Recommendation

1. The partial self-sufficiency approach which was the main rationale behind the set up of the Bonga Refuge Camp in 1993 has noble objectives which in the last ten year period have not been achieved. The Uduk refugees, starting from their arrival in the Bonga camp have consistently expressed their desire to cultivate food crops to become independent of external food aid. However, this has been hindered through the lack of cooperation among the implementing actors, mainly ARRA, UNHCR and the Regional Government. Therefore, it is imperative at this stage to look into the practicality of the implementation of the concept of partial self sufficiency given the reluctance of the regional government to make additional land available.
2. From the findings of the research, it can be concluded that the main reason that is contributing towards environmental degradation is the refugees' unsustainable use of the natural resources in the area in their search for land to cultivate. The major environmental protection schemes that are being undertaken in the area mostly consist of tree planting, issuing of rules to refugees and awareness raising about trees and their use. However, none of these schemes are working alongside the refugees to enable them to use the limited land made available to produce different varieties of crops throughout the year. This can be done through developing demonstration gardens within the refugee villages.
3. The tree planting scheme that is being undertaken by the regional government through the NRDP currently makes use of hired refugee and local laborers to raise the seedlings and plant them outside of the camp. However, such an approach is dependent on the budget that is made available by the UNHCR, which is often said to be insufficient. In addition, it fails to pass on skill and knowledge to the refugee population on how to raise tree seedlings and look after them. Therefore, efforts should be made to decentralize the seedling raising activity to the community level and encourage refugees to establish tree nurseries where they

will raise tree seedlings of different varieties. The undertaking of the raising of tree seedlings at the community level will pass on skill and knowledge to the refugees and also establish a sense of responsibility where they willingly look after the tree seedlings after they have been planted.

2. The regional government, despite two decades experience of hosting refugees, lacks a framework which sets up a guideline about the criteria that need to be fulfilled in the selection of a site for a refugee settlement and also clarify on the rights of refugees' access to natural resources surrounding the camp. The region also lacks a mechanism where it directly deals with refugee agencies in environmental matters relating to refugee settled areas. Therefore, it is recommended here that the regional government focus its attention towards the designing of such guidelines.