

Returning Home: Post-Conflict Livelihoods in Northern UgandaExtended Abstract

Wars and civil conflicts have substantial destructive impacts. In addition to the direct consequences, conflicts often cause mass displacement, both during and for some time after, the cessation of hostilities. Conflict-induced displacement is a reoccurring phenomenon. In 2005, there were 8,661,994 refugees worldwide (UNHCR 2007). At the same time, the number of internally displaced people at 23,700,000 (Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre 2005), far exceeded the number of refugees. Uganda had the third largest population of internally displaced people in December 2005 with 1,740,498 people internally displaced according to the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian.

Given the number of displaced people worldwide and the major changes associated with displacement and resettlement, the transition from Internally Displaced People's (IDP) camps home and the determinants of livelihoods in this setting are crucial for guiding appropriate policy responses.

This paper investigates the labour market changes associated with displacement and resettlement from Internally Displaced People's camps in Northern Uganda. In 2005, 911 households who were living in 32 IDP camps in Northern Uganda were sampled and interviewed by the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI). These households were re-interviewed in 2007 during a period of transition and resettlement in the region. At that time, some sample households had already relocated home, while others were in temporary satellite camps, and others remained in one of the original IDP camps. These households were interviewed again in 2011, several years after resettlement. Therefore, the panel dataset contains information from households while they were displaced, during the transition home, post-resettlement, as well as recall data from before displacement.

The findings suggest that unemployment remains high amongst formerly displaced individuals; the percentage of individuals, aged 15-65, who participated in any income generating activity in the 7 days prior to being interviewed is 69%. Unemployment remains virtually unchanged from 2005, when individuals were largely confined to the boundaries of the IDP camp in which they lived.

## Setting

Since 1986, Northern Uganda has been the site of a rebel group insurgency that, at the height of its intensity, displaced over one million people. In August 2006, the Government of Uganda and the rebel group, the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA), signed a Cessation of Hostilities Agreement. Further negotiations continued until February 2008. However, in April 2008, Joseph Kony, the leader of the LRA, failed to appear to sign a final peace agreement. Nevertheless, the security situation in Northern Uganda has significantly improved since the signing of the Cessation of Hostilities Agreement. The LRA is no longer operating in the region and people living in IDP camps have left, with most returning to their ancestral homes. However, the LRA has not been defeated and has since attacked villages in the Central African Republic, Sudan, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

In this fragile post-conflict environment, individuals are returning home after years of living in IDP camps. There have been many challenges surrounding this return. Issues have arisen regarding land rights, the provision of social services, including health and education, and changes in livelihoods. Occupations changed dramatically while people were displaced. Prior to displacement, the large majority of individuals in rural Northern Uganda practiced small-scale agriculture (Lehrer (2010)). During displacement, land access was restricted and individuals relied heavily on aid, particularly food aid, and entered into different income generating activities.

Lehrer (2010) finds significant changes in the labour market behaviour of both men and women once displaced. Prior to displacement, women generally did not perform income generating activities but were responsible for household tasks, including the growing of crops for household consumption (Bøås and Hatløy 2005, p.16). Agricultural land, livestock, and the income they generated were predominantly controlled by men. Men also made decisions about all family income including that earned by their spouses (El-Bushra and Sahl 2005, p.15). However, roles changed significantly with displacement.

In the IDP camp setting, women continued to perform the majority of domestic tasks while most also participated in income generating activities. In 2005, 71 percent of women participated in some form of labour market activity in the 7 days prior to the interview date. The primary activity of 58 percent of those women was in agriculture while the remainder

were casually employed brewing, collecting firewood for sale, selling food, as a porter, and performing odd jobs. Furthermore, 17 percent of women whose primary activity was farming had also performed non-farming related work in the past 7 days.

In the sample, men's labour market participation practically mirrored that of women. 72 percent of men in the sample were involved in any labour market activity in the 7 days prior to the interview, with the primary activity of 55 percent of them in agriculture. The remaining 45 percent were casually employed brick making, making handicrafts, in security, as a porter, burning charcoal, collecting firewood, and performing odd jobs.

These statistics suggest a change in gender roles since displacement. In addition to their domestic tasks women's participation in the labour market was comparable to that of men. Furthermore, the World Food Programme, which provided 50-75 percent of food requirements to households in the sample in 2005, only provided food rations to female household members (unless the household consisted only of men and boys). So, in addition to men being 'unable' to provide for their families through traditional means, they could not collect aid either. As such, according to El-Bushra and Sahl (2005), women gained a certain degree of economic power (p.20). Yet these daily behaviour changes had not changed attitudes and values toward gender roles and ideologies (p.23). According to Bøås and Hatløy (2005) (p.18), the shift in activities and any resulting changes in economic power do not appear to have empowered women. El-Bushra and Sahl (2005) come to the opposite conclusion claiming women's decision-making power has increased since displacement (p.22).

Moreover, Lehrer (2010) finds that men in older IDP camps were significantly less likely to work than those in newer IDP camps and that displaced men were significantly influenced by the behaviour of other men in the IDP camp in which they lived regarding labour market participation. This response was not observed in women.

### Methodology

The impacts of the resettlement process are identified using the panel aspect of the data and the exogenous nature of the conflict, displacement, and resettlement in Northern Uganda. The panel dimension of the data allows for the identification of changes over time in

variables of interest, including labour market participation, while controlling for time-invariant individual and household characteristics. The exogenous nature of the conflict and resulting displacement have previously been argued and demonstrated by Lehrer (2010), Blattman and Annan (2009), Adelman (2008), and Bøås and Hatløy (2005). The LRA lacks clearly defined motives and objectives and, as such, attacks by the rebel group appear to be exogenous of individual and household characteristics. The fact that the LRA operates in many small units resulted in different areas being attacked at different points in time. This in turn led to differences in the timing of displacement across the region. Similarly, the timing of resettlement, which was largely dictated by the timing of the closure of IDP camps, is also likely to be exogenous of individual characteristics. As such, the identification of consequences of the timing of resettlement and the total amount of time displaced can be identified.

### Research Questions

Changes in livelihoods since the closure of the IDP camps have not yet been investigated. This paper examines these changes in livelihoods and addresses the following questions.

- Have men and women returned to the traditional roles that existed prior to displacement?
- Do any observed changes in labour activities differ by gender, by other individual or household characteristics, or by their experiences during the conflict, including how directly they were affected by the insurgency and the length of time they were displaced?
- Have the changes in occupations observed during displacement and the diversification of income generating activities persisted after resettlement?
- Have individuals returned to their ancestral lands in rural areas and to farming? Which households have not returned home?
- Have households changed composition and either split up or reformed into larger households? Have younger household members left farming and migrated? Are they sending remittances?
- Building on the research of Lehrer (2010), are men still significantly affected by the labour market behaviour of their peers? Is this the case for both men who returned to more rural areas where there are fewer peers nearby and for those men who remained in semi-urbanized areas?

- Have households returned to the wealth/well-being that they had prior to displacement? Has there been a permanent downward shift in the wealth distribution? Have there been changes in relative wealth across households in the region? Are these changes dependent on conditions/behaviour while displaced?

All of these questions have significant impacts on the livelihoods and fragility of households in post-conflict Northern Uganda.

### Preliminary Post-Resettlement Findings

Preliminary findings suggest that, after resettlement, the primary occupation of both men and women remains in agriculture, as it was prior to displacement. Farmer, livestock owner, or agricultural labourer was the primary occupation of 93% of women and 91% of men aged 15-65 who stated that they had an occupation<sup>1</sup>.

After resettlement, at the time of the survey, 74% of sampled individuals between the ages of 15 and 65 engaged in some form of income generating activity in the 30 days prior to being interviewed. Of the individuals who did engage in any income generating activity, the mean number of days worked was 23 out of the previous 30. There are no significant differences in the likelihood of working or in the number of days worked between men and women in the sample.

The percentage of individuals aged 15 to 65 in the sample who were involved in any labour market activity in the 7 days prior to the interview is similar in 2005 and 2011. In 2011, 69% of individuals aged 15 to 65 in the sample engaged in any income generating activity in the 7 days prior to being interviewed, with no differences between men and women. In 2005, the corresponding percentages were 72% for men and 71% for women.

However, unlike the 2005 results presented in Lehrer (2010) while individuals were displaced, the age of the Internally Displaced People's camp in which the individual resided in 2005 has no impact on the probability of engaging in income generating activities in 2011, for either men or women.

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<sup>1</sup> Excluding individuals who listed their primary occupation as student.

These preliminary results suggest that working age individuals are no more likely to be employed in 2011, years after resettlement, than they were when living in an IDP camp in 2005. The paper investigates the determinants of labour market participation since resettlement, particularly its relationship to conflict and displacement experience.

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