

Resettlement and Gender Dimensions of Land Rights in Post-Conflict Northern Uganda

SARAH ADELMAN^a and AMBER PETERMAN^{b,*}

^a *Mt. Holyoke College, USA*

^b *University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, USA*

Summary. — Evidence shows even low levels of land conflict may undermine land governance and management, constrain agricultural productivity, and serve to perpetuate civil violence. This study estimates the effect of conflict-related displacement experiences on gender-differentiated land outcomes in Northern Uganda. We exploit exogenous variation in displacement to identify impacts on land among returning households. Results indicate that although female-headed households are disadvantaged in land outcomes, and land outcomes are affected by displacement experience, there is no joint effect in determining post-conflict land outcomes. Policy and programmatic attention to gender in land governance in Uganda should continue to be emphasized.

© 2014 Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.

Key words — land rights, asset ownership, gender, conflict, Africa, Uganda

1. INTRODUCTION

Starting in 2006, nearly 2 million internally displaced peoples (IDPs) began to resettle ancestral land in Northern Uganda after up to a decade of displacement due to conflicts perpetrated by the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA). As agriculture remains the primary livelihood activity among returnees, access and security of land, as well as capacity to productively use land, are an important determinant of economic stability, agricultural investment, and overall welfare in the region. In this context, narratives of women, and particularly widowed IDPs, highlight the potential for conflict and displacement in reinforcing social, economic, and political inequalities (Immanuel, 2010). Although global interest in land conflict and appropriation has grown considerably in the last decade, particularly around commercial or large-scale land appropriation, empirical research surrounding these dynamics remains limited (WB, 2010). Particular gaps exist regarding micro-level conflict involving disputes between individuals, often within the same community, extended family, or household. Although characterizations of such land conflicts vary, narratives in developing countries typically involve identification of vulnerable groups as marked by poverty or social class, ethnicity, or gender. The experiences of households and individuals in relation to land are often deep-rooted in social and cultural traditions, which play out through the experience of natural, economic, or political shocks, including civil conflict.

Despite the attention to land in Northern Uganda and substantial donor investments in rebuilding communities after resettlement, recent reports give little attention to the role of gender dynamics in land access (NRC, Oxfam and IRC, 2007; USAID, 2007). Although often mentioned as a key “vulnerability,” the depth of the gender analysis is limited to a brief discussion and basic descriptive values (IDMC, 2009; Rugadya, Nsamba-Gayiyi, & Kamusiime, 2008; UNDP, 2007). As a result, little is known about the importance of the gender dimension of land access during resettlement including potential adverse exclusion effects women may experience. This issue is important not only for equity and human rights considerations, but also within the larger gender and development literature which points to efficiency and wealth

gains based on inclusion of women in the agriculture sector or through increases in women's asset ownership (Abu-Ghaida & Klasen, 2004; FAO, 2011; Quisumbing, 2003).

This study estimates the effect of displacement and resettlement experiences on gender-differentiated access to land and exposure to land conflict in former Lira and Pader districts in Northern Uganda. Data were collected in 2011 building on a panel of households formerly living in 32 IDP camps that were surveyed in 2005 and 2007 as part of a randomized impact evaluation of food for education programs. The empirical strategy relies on exogenous forced displacement of households to identify the impacts of displacement as measured by time displaced and distance displaced among a sample of displaced households. We examine four main outcomes: (1) change in area and (2) change in value of land holdings between displacement and resettlement, and (3) experience of and (4) land value lost to land-related disputes by returning households. We hypothesize that longer time periods and distance households are displaced will be associated with poorer land outcomes, and that female-headed households specifically will be more vulnerable to these poor outcomes based on existing economic and social inequalities.

Results indicate that the displacement and resettlement periods yielded significant changes in land access for sampled households. On average, households lost 3.4 acres of land over the approximately seven-year period. Nearly a third of

* We are grateful to Julia Behrman, Todd Benson, Allan Bomuhangi, Amit Grover, Moses Odeki, Jasper Okello, Gayathri Ramani, Todd Smith, and Nelly Tioco for assistance in data collection and grant administration. Kim Lehrer of Oxford University and Daniel Gilligan of the International Food Policy Research Institute are co-Principal Investigators on the study and gave significant contributions to design and implementation of data collection. We thank Krista Jacobs, Agnes Quisumbing, two anonymous reviewers and participants at the World Bank Land Conference 2012 for helpful comments on an earlier version of the manuscript. We gratefully acknowledge the generous support of an anonymous donor and the International Development Research Centre (IDRC) and applaud their emphasis toward better understanding and upholding women's land and property rights. Final revision accepted: June 29, 2014.

households experienced at least one new land-related dispute during the resettlement period, primarily consisting of boundary and ownership disputes rather than large-scale land grabbing, and related losses averaged USD 356 (equivalent to 61% of yearly consumption expenditures¹) for those experiencing disputes. Differences in displacement experiences across households also impacted land access and likelihood of post-displacement dispute and dispute losses. Households that were displaced farther from their homes lost more land during the displacement and resettlement process, had more disputes, and had larger dispute-related economic losses.

In most cases, the effects of displacement experience on land access and disputes were the same for male- and female-headed households. The one exception is that, female-headed households were more disadvantaged by time displaced than male-headed households for outcomes of total land area. However, female-headed households continued to be generally disadvantaged held smaller land area and land value compared to male-headed households, and experienced more new disputes and dispute-related losses during resettlement than male-headed households. Thus, gender-differentiated land outcomes appear related to existing unequal social and economic structures, and we do not find evidence of additional inequalities attributed to LRA conflict experiences.

(a) *The gender, land, and conflict nexus*

According to the *World Development Report* (2011), more than 1.5 billion people, or greater than one-quarter of the global population live in conflict-affected and fragile states or in countries with very high levels of criminal violence.² The experience of conflict in general has wide reaching repercussions for human development and economic stability. In conflict situations that include displacement, land loss, which has severe livelihood repercussions, is more probable because land often represents the most valuable and immovable asset of rural households. Although there has been a sharp increase in the gender and land literature in the past decade, there remains very little literature in the nexus with conflict situations. In general, the micro-level gender and land literature can be characterized by several themes. First, globally, women typically have lower “bundles of rights” in land access and ownership, both legally and, more often, as implemented by customary practice (Doss, Kovarik, Peterman, Quisumbing, & van den Bold, 2013; Gray & Kevane, 1999; UN-HABITAT, 2006). Second, titling and certification schemes have often been found to have adverse effects on women as compared to men, based on existing power structures (Lastarria-Cornhiel, 1997; Whitehead & Tsikata, 2003), however, there are some recent indications that joint titling and certification initiatives have been more successful in securing property rights for women (Deininger, Goyal, & Nagarajan, 2010; Holden, Deininger, & Ghebru, 2011). Evidence surrounding alternative policy instruments such as reforming inheritance law and land governance bodies, as well as programmatic work on will writing and legal aid has been mixed (Ali, Deininger, & Goldstein, 2011; Jacobs, Siggers, & Namy, 2011). Finally, a growing consensus across land and asset research points to the importance of family law and classifications of marital regimes in securing land rights and access for women (Deere & Doss, 2008; Kumar & Quisumbing, 2012).

Literature on the nexus between gender, land, and conflict specifically is limited largely to qualitative studies, technical reports, and working papers, though a few exceptions exist. Bruck and Schindler (2009) examine smallholder land access in Northern Mozambique and find that female-headed households and households with low asset endowments and more

limited social networks are disadvantaged as compared to their male-headed counterparts. Deininger and Castagnini (2006) examine the effect of the Land Acts (GoU, 1999, 2003) on land conflict in Uganda and find that the probability of experiencing land conflict increases 14% for households headed by a widow and 48% for households headed by a woman who is separated from her husband. Both Sorenson (1998) and Rose (2004) present ethnographic studies of post-genocide Rwanda focusing on conflict-related changes in household and family structures. Although single females generally have lower land access, especially due to the disruption of important social networks, Rose (2004) finds certain benefits and freedoms accrue to women as they assume the role of household head and subsequently as economic providers. In addition, the UNDP published a reader of case studies on women's land rights and conflict including those in Burundi, Haiti, Columbia, and Palestine, among others. Although case studies depict women, and especially widowed or single women as being chronically disadvantaged, none of the studies include empirical analysis to ascertain whether the arguments are based on worse case scenarios, are a phenomenon caused by conflict itself, or are simply a byproduct of existing pre-conflict social, cultural, and economic factors (UNDP, 2001). Given the variability in nature of conflicts, and underlying social structures which may influence gendered-land dynamics, the evidence base, especially for empirical evidence on the intersection with conflict, is thin.

(b) *Context: Northern Uganda conflict and gendered land dynamics*

Between the mid-1980s and approximately 2006, Northern Uganda was the site of an ongoing conflict between the government of Uganda and LRA, a militant group under the leadership of Joseph Kony. While the purported aim of the LRA was the overthrow of the Ugandan government, the group's political and ideological philosophy remains poorly defined. In 1986, the culmination of Uganda's civil war, which put in place the current ruling party, led to widespread discontent in Northern Uganda, paving the way for the emergence of the LRA's military insurgency. Civil unrest continued over the next 20 years in Northern Ugandan districts, including Pader, Gulu, Lira, Amuru, Kitgum, and Kotido and extending to the Eastern districts of Soroti, Kaberamaido, Kumi, and Katakwi.³

The conflict in Northern Uganda gained global attention in part due to the LRA's brutal tactics of war, which centered on terrorizing local civilian populations through coordinated raids, mutilations, rapes, killings, and abductions of children and adults (particularly to serve as soldiers). More recently, the LRA has been the subject of media attention due to the outstanding International Criminal Court warrant on leader Joseph Kony and international push for his capture and imprisonment. Ultimately, the conflict would devastate social services and physical infrastructure in the region, kill an estimated 300,000 civilians and displace up to two million people, or approximately eighty percent of the Northern population, into government-sanctioned IDP camps (ICG, 2004). Although IDP camps were able to provide a greater degree of security against the LRA rebels, camps were characterized by rampant diseases, lack of food, water, shelter, and livelihoods.

During 2006–08 a series of peace talks between the government of Uganda and the LRA were held in Juba, Southern Sudan. The Juba Peace Talks, which initially appeared promising, produced a cease fire in September of 2006, however Kony refused to sign an eventual peace agreement in 2008. Nonetheless, by the 2006 cease fire the government of Uganda had largely succeeded at ousting the LRA from Northern

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/7394943>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/7394943>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)