

# Social network dynamics and food security among formerly displaced people in Lira, N. Uganda

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# Displacement...a global tragedy

- Internal displacement has emerged as one of the great human tragedies of our time (Annan 1998).
- Displacement by armed conflicts, civil strife, and systematic violations of human rights have become pervasive.
- The plight of the displaced poses serious challenges for humanitarianism and international development (Cohen and Deng 1998).



People fleeing from the city of Kibati to Goma, D.R.Congo  
(Photo: Reuters/Stringer, courtesy [www.alertnet.org](http://www.alertnet.org),  
October 2008)

26 million people are internally displaced in  
52 countries around the world (IDMC 2009)

# Displacement...a global tragedy

- IDPs are disproportionately found Africa - 11.6 million (UN 2008).
- 24 countries have new or ongoing conflicts or violence which generated internal displacement in 2008 (IDMC 2008).



# Displacement in northern Uganda

- During two decades, a brutal conflict in northern Uganda between the gov't and rebel Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) caused immense suffering and displacement of 1.8 million people (Oxfam 2008; IDMC 2008).
- As a result, the region has suffered:
  - Property destruction (farms, cattle, housing)
  - acute food insecurity
  - killings, maiming, rape
  - excessive alcohol consumption
  - child abuse and other crimes
  - social and cultural breakdown
  - loss of respect and family breakdown (IDMC 2007).



# Background to displacement in northern Uganda

- The conflict began 1986.
- A history of antagonism between north-south.
- Since 1988, the LRA under Joseph Kony has been waging a brutal guerilla war by abducting, killing, maiming and looting.
- In 1996, people were forced into displacement camps (IDP).
- The policy of forced encampment drastically increased vulnerability.
- By 2005, 1.8 million had been forced to leave their homes (IDMC 2008).



# Background...

- Devastating effect on children as 25,000 were abducted at the beginning of the war in 1986 (UNICEF 2007).
- Peace talks have repeatedly collapsed.
- In August 2006, the gov't & LRA signed a landmark Cessation of Hostilities Agreement.



# Background...

- Large numbers are leaving displacement camps.
- Displacement camps in Lira were closed in 2008.
- As increasing number of IDPs return to their land, the number of land disputes is rising (World Bank 2008).
- Widowed women face attempts by in-laws to deny them access to their deceased husband's land ....18% of women 30-49 years are widows.
- The 1.2 million returnees remain highly food insecure.



In Uganda's conflict-affected northern region, restricted freedom of movement, high unemployment, a breakdown of traditional social structures and values and abuse of alcohol, all contribute to high rates of violence in and around displaced persons camps.





# International response..

**How can communities be best assisted to attain food security as they emerge from protracted conflicts?  
What are the key considerations from perspectives of social science researchers?**

- Responses to such crises are typically distribution of food during the emergency phase followed seeds and inputs.
- This strategy criticized for failing to address causes of vulnerability among the displaced and ignoring their resilience, capabilities and ingenuity (Longley 2001, 2007)
- Leading critics call it 'imposing aid' (Harrell-Bond 1986).



# International response..

- Calls for livelihood analysis and program efforts to emphasize asset vulnerability and capabilities of different actors to manage risks and cope with livelihood shocks and stresses (USAID 2008)
- Increased emphasis on the development of small-scale farmers' institutions...formation of networks and working groups.
- How well people do depends on their connections. Better connected people enjoy better health, faster access to info., stronger social support and greater ease in dealing with crises (Small 2009).



# Travel to Uganda (May 17 – June 27, 2009)

## Purpose:

- Visit northern Uganda to meet key project personnel, know the research area, collect background information, and observe food security related project activities.
- Carry out discussions and interviews with VEDCO staff, international organizations with food security interventions in Lira.



# Food Recovery Security Project by VEDCO (Ugandan NGO)

- Goal: improved food security, nutrition and incomes
- 4 Interventions:
  - farmer group development and transformation
  - Improved agricultural production.
  - Improved nutrition and food preparation.
  - Improved access to markets for agro-based products.



# Group development

- VEDCO organizes farmers into groups of 30 members.
- They are trained on how to work in groups.
- Seven Farmer Trainers selected from the communities.
- Farmer Trainers and Lead Farmers are selected at parish level. 39 lead farmers head 3 groups each.
- Trainers collect critical field level information.
- Lead farmers help with input distribution, setting up of demonstration gardens, and facilitate trainings.





Community Meeting  
Muhuri's Group  
1. Luma Akpaka  
2. Gidi Akpaka  
3. Buro

# Increasing production

- Group demonstration gardens for recommended practices
- Regular trainings on agronomy of selected crops, natural resource mgmt., post-harvest handling, value addition.
- Equip farmer leaders with communication and record keeping skills.
- Lead farmers trained and supported to facilitate farmer-to-farmer agricultural extension.
- Farmer HHs provided with some inputs: 10 kgs of groundnut seed, 10 kg of bean seed, 2 orange tree seedlings, 2 hoes and 1 panga (machete).





**USAID**  
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE



*Improving Livelihoods Through  
Sustainable Agriculture*

**FOOD SECURITY RECOVERY PROGRAM**  
**Demonstration Garden**



# Improving access to markets

- Training farmers to engage in farming as a business, marketing and negotiation, savings and credit management.
- VEDCO also provides market price info.



# Other organizations

- FAO works through smaller organizations to provide assistance in ag. input distribution & seed multiplication
- WFP has three strategic objectives:
  - (1) to provide humanitarian assistance, particularly food, during emergencies (Lira has surpassed this stage).
  - (2) food and nutrition security (In Lira, it provided support for seed multiplication and distribution of cassava, fruit trees, and rice).
  - (3) agriculture and market support.

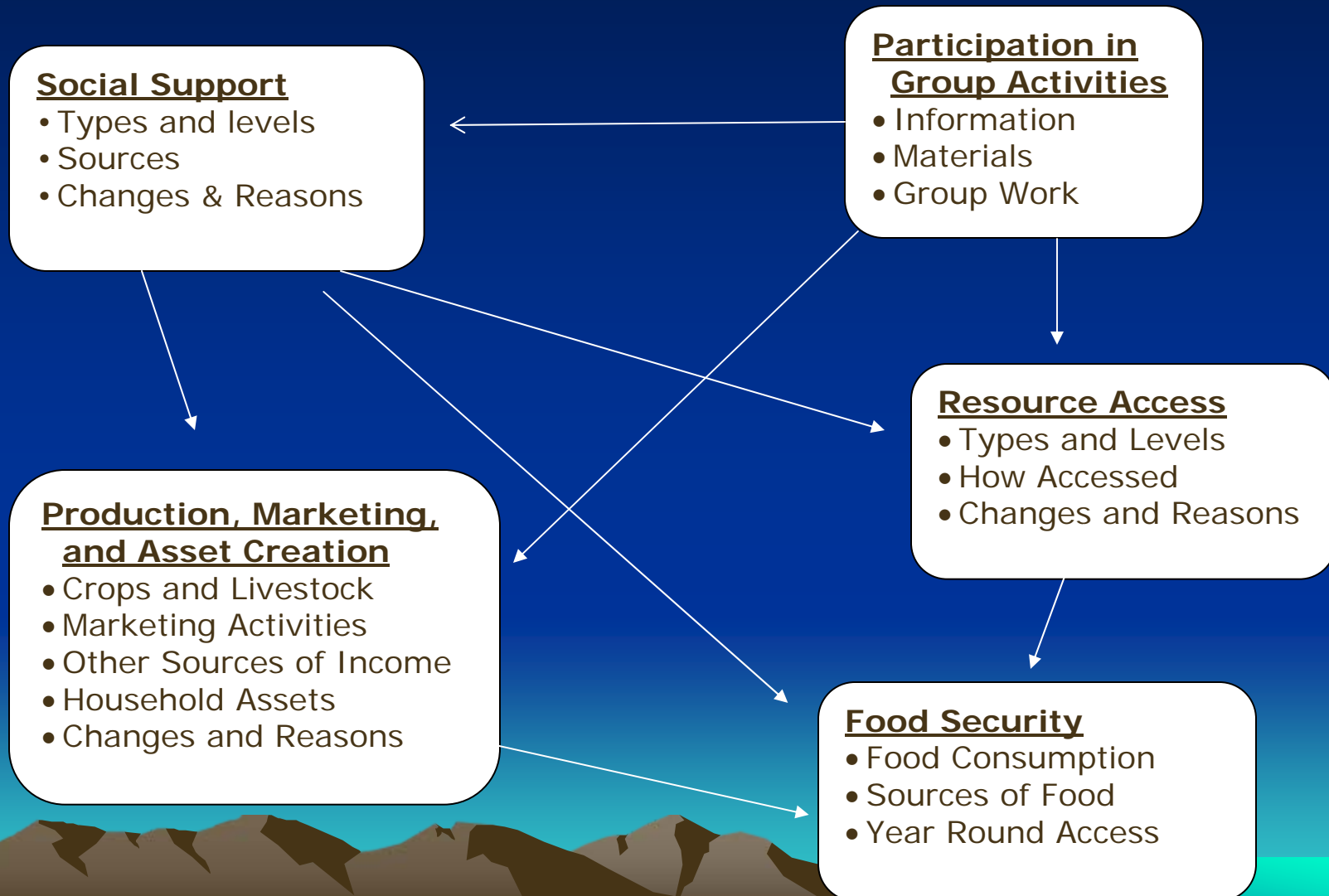


# Insights from this trip

- Numerous organizations engaged in related activities, mainly seed multiplication and distribution.
- Labor for farm activities is a major constraint.
- Many young men and women are reluctant to go back to villages after living in urban centers.
- Groups are organizing 'labor loans' to overcome labor problems.
- Access to land is a constraint for some households, and conflicts over land are common.



# Factors that influence food security



# Research Objectives

1. Characterize the size and composition of household social networks and the support obtained through them.
2. Examine how participation in farmers' groups influences household social networks, access to resources and asset creation.
3. Analyze the relationships among household social networks, participation in groups, support, and food security, taking into account gender of the household head.



# Propositions

- A higher level of participation in group activities is associated with larger social network size, more diverse sources and higher levels of social support, increased access to resources, and increased asset creation.
- A larger social network size and more diverse sources of social support are associated with higher food security level.



# Research Methodology

## Research design:

- Qualitative data collected through key informant interviews and focus group discussions.
- Household survey to understand household networks, social support, participation, asset creation and food security.



# Definitions

- (1) *Social network*: role relations that a household has with a variety of people or institutions such as extended kin, friends, neighbors and voluntary agencies and government departments) (Lee 2005).
- (2) *Social support*: support from the role relations that households maintain with a variety of people or institutions (e.g., access to land, labor, and information and borrowing money).



# Definitions

- (3) *Participation*: involvement of any member of the household in small-scale farmers' organizations.
- (4) *Food security*: Food security exists when the household is able to have or afford all the food needed throughout the year.



# Operationalization

## *(1) Composition of Social support:*

Ask respondents about to whom they first turn when they:

- Borrow or loan land
  - Need more labor during busy times of farm labor
  - Information for their production and marketing activities
  - Borrow money.
- Follow up questions concerning demographics and relations of the household and the level of interaction.



# Operationalization

## *(2) Participation in group activities:*

- Membership by any member of the household.
- Status of household in the group: member or executive committee, etc.
- How the household became a member of the group (s): born into the group, required to join, invited, etc.
- Whether the household made any contribution to join the group: entrance fee, annual fee, labor contribution, etc.
- No. of times a household participates, on average, in group activities such as meetings, operational activities in a month.



# Operationalization

## *(3) Asset creation:*

- Livestock numbers (before and after displacement).
- Main crops grown and estimated harvests (before and after).
- Sources of income (before and after).

## *(4) resource access:*

- Land ownership (before and after).



# Operationalization

## (3) Food security:

Asking 15 questions (USDA scale) about the foods eaten in the household in the past 3 months and whether the household was able to have or afford the food needed; questions focus on coping strategies and how often they are used.

### Examples:

- Were you at any time in the past 3 months worried that food would run out before more could be obtained? 0 =No; 1 = Yes. How often did this occur? 0. Rarely 1. Sometimes 2. Often.
- In the past 3 months, was any adult household member not able to eat the preferred kinds of foods due to lack of resources?



# Data Collection Methods

- Key informant interviews.
- Focus group discussions.
- Household level interviews.



# Sampling

- Two communities selected
- Elders and individuals knowledgeable about community.
- Participating households in VEDCO project.
- Participating households in similar projects.
- Non-participating households.



# Data analysis

- Qualitative info. analyzed by identifying major themes and exploring patterns and accounting for gender-based differences on how social institutions influence household networks and access to resources.
- Multivariate analysis: to explore relationships among household's social network, social support, participation and food security with food security as a dependent variable.

