Emerging Patterns of Social Capital, Livelihoods and Sustainable Development in Post-Conflict Northern Uganda

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Abstract: This qualitative study, conducted in Oyam district northern Uganda, presents an ethnographic analysis of the transformation of the social capital available to former internally displaced persons (IDPs) by the Lords' Resistance Army (LRA) conflict, and the implications for their livelihood strategies. Northern Uganda suffered a protracted two decade (1986-2006) civil war between the LRA and Government of Uganda. Forced conscription, abduction and eventual displacement into camps by the combatants shattered the mutual trusts and capital that communities had accumulated overtime. This paper applied case study design to investigate the emerging forms of social capital among former displaced persons and the respondents were purposively selected. In-depth interviews were held with Government civil servants and local leaders while focus group discussions were conducted with community members to explore opinions on the after-displacement livelihood strategies. Sustainable livelihoods and social capital theories were applied to analyse the relationship between social capital and livelihood resilience upon returning home from displacement. The findings indicated that while emerging from displacement, family members moved in phases with family heads and elder children returning first to prepare livelihood strategies. Both positive and negative networks emerged that influenced preference for social groups and livelihood activities. The established social groups comprised of '*doggola*' (kinship) relationships, wage-labour, neighbours, friendship, alcohol consumption and informal social support groups. Despite the dynamics experienced in social capital and livelihood activities, the former IDPs modified and reverted to the traditional social capital. This paper concludes that amidst conflict and displacement, social capital sustains household welfare and community development hence, social capital does not vanish but changes forms. Thus, the post-conflict reconstruction programme ought to integrate social capital into its package for sustainability purpose.

Keywords: Social Capital, Displacement, Livelihoods, Sustainable Development, Post-Conflict

1. Introduction

This paper investigates emerging forms of social capital in the aftermath of the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) conflict (1986-2006) in northern Uganda and its influence on the livelihoods of internally displaced persons (IDPs). Studies reveal that a critical development challenge facing the world today arises from the displacement of people by conflict and other factors such as climate change, population growth, urbanization, food insecurity and water scarcity; many of which interact with and exacerbate one another [1, 2]. United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) statistics indicate that in 2012, 33.3 million people were forced to flee their homes and were internally displaced within their country's borders [3]. With constant conflict today, the number of people forced to flee their homes across the world has exceeded 50 million for the first time since World War II (1945-2011); an exponential rise that is stretching host countries and aid organizations to breaking point [4].

Conflict, forced migration and subsequent displacement have negative consequences for the livelihoods (wellbeing) of those embroiled in it [5]. It destroys lives, shatters families and communities, as well as impacting negatively on people's assets in the various forms of capital- social, physical, economic, cultural, financial and human – yet they need to sustain their livelihoods. The aftermath of conflict is

characterized by breakdown in the civic and economic cooperation in society [6]. However, studies on conflict focus more on the macro-economic consequences, presenting the economic and political disintegration that follows conflicts, especially in developing countries [7]. One of the often-neglected consequences of conflict is its implication on social relations. It is however important to note that the social and behavioural outcomes associated with conflict are just as, if not more important than the economic, when it comes to understanding the development challenges present in post-conflict situations. This is because conflict can sow seeds of distrust within communities that undermines social capital henceforth impeding development.

The social capital concept has become a popular development literature that is significant in understanding some economic and social concepts in post-conflict environment though not driven by classical economic theory. E. Ostrom postulates that social capital is fundamental for the reconstruction of a conflict-ravaged community [8]. Case studies drawn from countries across the globe specifically, Cambodia, Sri Lanka, Democratic Republic of Congo, Rwanda and Syria all indicate that aid channeled for physical capital like roads, health facilities, and irrigation schemes could turn into ruins in the absence of social capital [9, 10]. Social capital in this paper refers to an outcome of network accumulation of resources embedded in social structures that are accessed or mobilized in purposive actions, borrowing from P. Bourdieu [11]. N. Lin argues that social capital contains three ingredients; resources embedded in a social structure, accessibility to such social resources and use or mobilization of such social resources by individuals in purposive actions [12]. Ideally, social capital contains three intersecting elements; action, structural embeddedness and opportunity or accessibility. This paper focuses on the connections and actions of former displaced persons in Oyam to access livelihood opportunities.

1.1. Social Capital and Livelihoods

Studies have shown that social capital is more eminent in kinship relations than in other forms. Thus, most sociologists argue that the known moral obligations involved in kinship networks evidently functions as alternative for social support for the members [13, 14]. Kinship in this context refers to relationships based on birth, marriage and to relationships in extended family network. This is an extension of A. Bebbington's idea that intra-community (strong) ties are necessary to give families and communities a sense of identity and common purpose [15]. M. Woolcock complements the idea that kinship has some obligations for its members. The obligations may include sharing and claiming assistance from relatives during periods of shocks and vulnerability. However, for kinship to provide the required social and livelihood support for the members, it is important that the members involved play the defined obligations as stipulated by the guiding norms and principles. Besides kinship relationship, networks of friends and neighbours are known to support livelihood activities. I. C

Nombo argues that this form of relationship is a source of support to individuals in normal situation and crises [16].

The network relations of friendship and neighbours are voluntary relations based on reciprocity maintained for borrowing and lending material resources like food, money as well as social support for a livelihood. In support of this argument, J. Scott while extending the rational choice theory invented by G. Homans contends that man's action is fundamentally 'rational' in character since people calculate the costs and benefits of any action before taking a decision [17, 18]. This is because, depending on the nature of the network, sometimes, social capital can be a liability and less constructive. It is upon this reasoning that individuals make calculations before joining a particular network and group.

Violent conflict is highly associated with the destruction of livelihoods including social capital, which in turn creates human shocks and vulnerability; hence disrupting people's well-being and reducing opportunities for sustainable development [19]. S. T. Kulatunga & R. W. Lakshman contend that conflict have wider repercussions as people flee, and markets collapse, which in aggregate constitute shocks and has a broader effect on livelihood patterns including disruptions in coping strategies [20]. In the same vein D. J. Unruh, argues that the disruptions involve how households and communities deal with direct combat events or fear of them, and lack of assistance and support provided by lineage, religious groups, ethnic, the state, or the international community [21]. Thus, post-conflict coping mechanisms can be challenging; resulting in emotional, political, social and economic exclusion.

1.2. An Overview of Northern Uganda Conflict

Since independence, Uganda has experienced a series of violent conflict that affected development socially, economically and politically. The most widespread disruption that lasted from 1986 to 2006 was conflict between the Lords' Resistance Army (LRA) and the incumbent National Resistance Movement (NRM) Government, which affected the people's livelihood pattern and lived experiences. While this conflict was initially a popular rebellion against the NRM Government, it became a profoundly violent war in which civilians were the victims. The long period of violent conflict, which was more pronounced in Acholi sub-region later spread to Lango and some parts of Teso and displaced people from original ancestral homes into internally displaced people's camps [22-24]. During displacement, the LRA rebels continuously abducted and forcefully recruited children into rebel force [25]. The forceful conscription of young people including killings of non-combatants created massive fear and suspicion among community members and eventually reduced community mutual trust. O. Otunnu argues that the year 1996 marked the beginning of widespread and systemic internal displacement following a government strategy to protect the civilians and aid the army's counter-insurgency campaign against the LRA by forcing households into "protected villages" also called internally displaced people's camps while it pursued a

"military solution" against the rebels [26].

2. Theoretical Framework

The theoretical view in this paper is informed by two key arguments. First, drawing on the argument of N. Lin, Y. C. Fu & R. M Hsung that having access to social capital is important to individual achievement and inclusion [27]. Second, we were intrigued by the work of P. Collier et'al that within camp set up for internally displaced people, social capital is not mobilized due to lack of trust. The key theoretical framework of this paper thus hinges on the notion of social capital, and people's ability or willingness to mobilize it in post-conflict situations to improve on their wellbeing (livelihoods). Social capital in this paper is defined as the information, trust and norms of reciprocity that exist within a person's social network that can facilitate mutual benefit, as long as the person is capable of mobilizing it. We draw arguments from P. Bourdieu, R. Putnam and A. Portes, in coming to this definition [28, 29]. For instance, R. Putnam argues that social relations have high levels of obligations and expectations such that the actors engaged perform tasks for each other with trust and expected returns**.**

The paper espouses sustainable livelihood theory postulated by R. Chambers & G. Conway and I. Scoones to explain the interaction between social capital and livelihood activities among former displaced persons in northern Uganda [30, 31]. The sustainable livelihood theory further explains the resilience, capability, materials and coping mechanism adopted by former displaced persons to survive beyond the current generation. In line with the views of P. Bourdieu, social capital relates with other forms of capital to enhance individuals' means of livelihoods. This theory is relevant in explaining the shattered social relations in post-conflict northern Uganda that affected the social capital constructs of trust, reciprocation, cooperation and friendship. Finally, the rational choice theory postulated by G. Homans buttressed the reasons for individuals' preferences for a specific network in the aftermath of displacement. This is because individuals are rational and analyze the costs and benefits of joining a particular network.

3. Methods

The purpose of this study was to examine the effect of northern Uganda conflict on social relationships of the former internally displaced persons and the implications for social capital and livelihood strategies thereafter. By livelihood strategies, we refer to means by which an individual earns a living to improve the wellbeing. We posit that exposure to conflict could have influenced preference for social capital indicators among the returning communities. The major concern is the extent to which preference for social capital determines individuals' access to livelihood opportunities after displacement. The study was conducted in the rural sub-county of Otwal, Oyam district, Lango sub-region from January to November 2018. Thus far, most studies have been located in Acholi region, and there is scanty documentation on Lango and Teso sub-regions even though they underwent similar conflict of the LRA. On entering the field, we hypothesized that exposure to conflict could have reduced the preference for social capital among the LRA victims. The main research question was to what extent do people's desire for social capital influence their access to livelihood opportunities after displacement? We triangulated data collection tools, combining in-depth interviews and focus group discussions based on qualitative approach bringing forth the experiences and voices of the former displaced persons in Oyam. We interviewed 34 interlocutors; local leaders, religious leaders, cultural leaders and community-based civil servants. We conducted 2 focus group discussions with community members; each with males and females respectively and reviewed literature on post-conflict social capital and livelihood opportunities in conflict environment. The participants were purposively selected and the fundamental questions discussed were; 1) what effect did displacement create on the peoples' wellbeing and social relationships? 2) What is the relationship between emergent social capital and livelihood opportunities of former displaced persons? Open-ended questions were used to explore the opinions of the respondents on the interaction between displacement emerging forms of social capital and livelihoods. Since this was an ethnographic study, we used conversational and narrative analyses based on themes and contents. The qualitative data analysis portrays a stable and structured pattern that are directly linked to the actors [32]. The patterns are independent of psychological or other characteristics of the individuals involved in the conversation.

4. Results and Discussion

The results of this study are presented and discussed in line with the research questions, which sought to examine the interplay between displacement, social capital and the victims' livelihood strategies through and after displacement. Thus, the discussions are made into two sections namely: displacement and livelihoods and emerging forms of social capital and the implications for former internally displaced persons' livelihoods.

4.1. Displacement and Livelihoods

The consequences of conflict are persistent and transmitted across generations [33]. During conflict, the forms of physical and social capital that people access to enhance their wellbeing are greatly affected. Uganda has experienced a series of violent conflict that affected the country's development socially, economically and politically since independence in 1962. Northern Uganda specifically suffered the prolonged LRA conflict that lasted for over 20 years (1986-2006). S. Finnstrom, and C. Dolan established that this violent conflict displaced approximately two million people into internally displaced people's camps in Acholi, Lango and Teso sub-regions.

Further studies indicate that internal displacement and forced migration frustrate the capacity of individuals to effectively participate in productive activities to earn a living [34, 35]. This is particularly true when displacement forces people into confinement and caught between combatants where economic infrastructures are inadequate with restricted livelihood activities. In Oyam district we noted that lack of basic needs especially food and inadequate health services were among some of the conditions experienced by former displaced persons. Although humanitarian agencies like the World Food Programme, Doctors without Borders, and Samaritan Purse provided food and health services to displaced persons, these interventions were insufficient and unsustainable, as one respondent accentuated:

The food rations supplied in the camps were not sufficient to feed an entire family, leaving many of our people starved and malnourished squarely visible in the face. Children under five and the elderly were most affected; often becoming malnourished without food nutrients in the diet… (interviews with a female respondent aged 65 in Otwal Trading center B, July 18, 2018).

The proclamation by the interlocutor is a reflection of the sufferings that the displaced persons experienced. Findings in Lango sub-region corroborates studies by C. Dolan and E. Cagney in Acholi sub-region [36]. The food shortage was aggravated by restricted movement outside the camps. Thus, cultivation was limited to small plots of land along army patrolled-roads for security purposes. C. Dolan further noted that in Acholi sub-region, residents who moved out of the camps to farm were shot on sight by government troops on suspicion of conspiring with the rebels. This restriction forced the displaced persons to depend exclusively on relief aid, which supply was irregular, inadequate in quantity and not demand driven and thus unsustainable. In 2006, I. Bjorkhaug, B. Morten, A. Hatloy & M. J. Kathleen established that Oyam, along with Amuru, Gulu, Kitgum and Pader districts, scored very poorly in terms of Human Development Indicators (HDI) as a result of unrestrained violence and displacement [37].

The former displaced persons reported living in a filthy and overcrowded environment while in the camps, which were characterized by poor sanitation and temporary shelters. One of the respondents reported the intensity of the squalid living environment, such that:

The situation worsened to the extent that we had to queue for calls of nature (going to toilet) especially in the morning hours due to limited latrine facilities in the camps. Thus, we were more vulnerable to outbreaks of infectious diseases than any group of people then in Uganda…" (interviews with a man aged 56 in Otwal Trading Center A July 18, 2018).

Whilst we could not objectively assess this respondent's claim with regard to disease, the statement does give us a very clear indication of the ways in which conditions in the camps were subjectively experienced. The deplorable health and sanitation conditions in Oyam were probably similar to those observed in Gulu by C. Dolan and E. Cagney and in Kitgum by C. Bozzoli, T. Brück, & T. Muhumuz and G. Kirsten, M. Daniel & M. Dyan [38, 39]. One of the respondents informed that hygiene was appalling since a single latrine was shared by approximately 15 households, far beyond the 1:1 ratio recommended by Uganda Ministry of Health.

In addition to health and sanitation concerns, time spent in the camps reduced people's productive capacity to engage in economic activities. In one of the discussions we conducted, a male participant attested that:

For the first time, I was rendered idle- doing nothing, unemployed, with no income generating activity or opportunity to work in the fields to produce food for my family… FGDs with men (former IDPs) in Otwal trading center B, July 16, 2018).

The statement reveals that men were left helpless to provide for their families as household heads, thus, destabilizing gender roles. Further discussions revealed that insecurity and confinement were salient issues that limited the former displaced persons' potential to achieve a decent livelihood during displacement. The experience of displaced persons in Oyam corroborates M. Eastmond's argument of shared experiences in forced migration. One outcome of this enforced idleness was a high rate of alcoholism among people, particularly amongst men. This research showed that most men resorted to excessive alcohol consumption due to redundancy and desperation. However, alcohol consumption did not provide a lasting solution to the anxiety. One of the female respondents stated that:

My husband got addicted to excessive alcohol consumption despite his advanced age just like most men. Consequently, crime rate scaled up in the camps due to alcoholism. Cases like defilement, rape, suicide, early marriages and petty theft dominated the survival strategy of perpetuators as a result of over drinking alcohol (interview with a female respondent aged 72 in Otwal Railway Station, Otwal sub-county July 16, 2018).

Both early marriage and alcoholism were not limited to the time of displacement. Even when camps shut down, such activities had effects in the present. Alcoholism has thus continued into the post-conflict resettlement era. A male respondent shared in a discussion that many women lost respect for their husbands, which increased suspicion and distrust among couples. In addition, there have been increased rates of domestic and gender-based violence. In response, Oyam Local Government passed an Ordinance in 2014 against alcohol sale and consumption before 12:00 Noon (Interview with District Community Development Officer (DCDO) Oyam, July 18th, 2018). The Ordinance supports the Uganda Enguli Act 86 (2) of 1964 (*Enguli* is a local name for the clean distilled spirit in Uganda). The Act regulates the manufacture, sale, possession, and other dealings in *enguli* and *enguli* apparatus without a license. The same section of the Act provides an offence for the sale and consumption of *enguli* [40]. The Alcohol Ordinance passed by Oyam Local Government contributes to the current debates on Alcohol Bill 2016 regulating the sale, purchase

and consumption of alcohol in Uganda. The proposed bill condemns the consumption of alcohol after 12:00am and before 5:00pm and to date, it has never been concluded due to emerging controversies. If this bill is passed into a law, it may restrain drinking habits. However, this law may constraint the livelihood of those who depend on distilling and sale of alcohol for a living. By far, we have discussed the context of life in the camps and some of the after lives in the present. The camps were closed in 2006 and families began to move on and re-group in original homes. It is to this process and its effects on social capital that we now turn on in the subsequent section.

4.2. Emerging Forms of Social Capital and Livelihoods in Oyam

Relative peace returned to northern Uganda in 2006 following the botched Juba peace accord in the Capital of South Sudan between the Government of Uganda and the LRA rebel leader [41]. Joseph Kony the LRA rebel leader deliberately withdrew into Central African Republic before concluding the peace pact. Failure of the Juba peace treaty left northern Uganda communities uncertain of their security. Nonetheless, people gradually began returning home in shift from camps, amidst myriad uncertainties. J. Corbert observes that migration often occur in phases and the volume of first-line migration is usually greater than the subsequent or return migration streams [42]. In Oyam district we established that family members returned in phases and settled in satellite camps before reaching ancestral homes. One of the interlocutors revealed that:

While returning home, as a family we divided ourselves into groups. I (household head) and older children went home first to prepare home and lay livelihood strategies by constructing temporary shelter and open gardens for planting fast growing food crops especially vegetables for my family. After a short while, my wife and younger children followed but our return depended on the security situation in the villages…" (interview with a male respondent aged 62 in Otwal trading center A, July 20, 2018).

Moving back home in shifts where one group would pave way for the next, demonstrated the level of uncertainty that people had regarding the security situation in northern Uganda and a recognition of the difficulties of starting a new life after displacement. Amidst fears that violence would resume, people began to put in place temporary strategies for making a living. This was done from scratch since their livelihood assets had been destroyed by the combatants. However, the greatest challenge in the return process was revealed by the respondent to be mobilizing close relatives, most of whom had settled in different camps during displacement. Some households and family members had been scattered and desired to come together once more since culturally, kinship networks were instrumental in the pursuit of livelihoods. This finding indicates that the immediate social capital was derived from kinship relations. As observed by N. B. Christa & H. E Bulte, kinship networks

provide social support for the members. Kinship in this paper refers to relationships based on birth, marriage and to relationships, which include extended family relatives in Lango and most African cultures.

In line with the benefits of social capital, A. Bebbington contends that strong intra-community ties and kinship networks are necessary to give families and communities a sense of identity and common purpose. We noted that Lango as a tribe had a strong patrilineal kinship network, termed doggola before and after displacement. Under this network, the elders could trace up to four generations of the genealogical relations of the doggola system. However, displacement interfered with this relationship, as was revealed by one of the key informants:

Doggola was made up of about four generations and apparently was the largest corporate descent group. Its members settled over an area of approximately 50 square kilometers, but participated jointly in a number of social and economic activities including cultivation, rituals and marriages. Members of doggola attended important rituals, such as funerals, healing and marriages. Failure of one section of the lineage to attend such rituals was often regarded as an imminent breakdown within the lineage. During displacement, doggola members took refuge to different places for safety. Consequently, most people lost out the relations that can now be traced to first cousins only. (Interviews with an elder of Lango Cultural Foundation, male age 78, August 15, 2018).

The network that had hitherto bonded Lango was weakened by displacement and insurgency. However, it is probable that increase in population could have contributed further to the lineage breakdown. According to the Principles, Practices, Rights and Responsibilities (PPRR) of Customary Land Tenure in Lango, by 2009 there were 159 registered clans by Lango Cultural Foundation up from 10 in 1962 [43]. This implied increase in population as well as weakened kinship relationship. Kinship obligations amongst Lango ranged from claiming assistance from relatives during difficulty to protection in normalcy. In corroboration with R. Putnam's argument, for kinship to provide the required social support for the members, it is important that the members involved play the defined obligations as stipulated by the guiding norms and principles of the family and clan. In Oyam, during displacement, the support was inadequate due to scattered settlement of family members.

Besides kinship, we explored the networks of friends and neighbours that previously displaced people drew on. Thus, kinship was not the only form of social capital available to people. I. C Nombo posits that relationships with friends and neighbours provides an important source of support to individuals in normal situations and in crises. In Oyam, friendship networks before displacement were voluntary based on proximity, and drew on reciprocity maintained for borrowing and lending material resources, as well as social support towards livelihoods. After displacement, most community associations were formed and based on friendship relations built on trust and not exclusively

proximity. Our findings with regard to friendship networks were in keeping with the rational choice and the social resource theories initiated by J. Scott and A. Elliott in that they showed the crucial role played by neighbours, friends and other non-kin during displacement, when usual kinship relations became strained for the reasons explored below [44]. It was thus rational that non-kin drew on one another to fill this gap.

During displacement, normal kinship relations were weakened due to distance, lack of communication and loss of critical members of the kin network. Consequently, individuals invested in other forms of networks, since not only were kin lost but friends and neighbours also changed. This research established that considerable vulnerability resulted from the loss of a critical mass of social capital harnessed from kinship and other networks. Lack of support from relatives was compounded by the appalling economic situation, in which conditions of poverty and hardship were experienced during and after displacement. Consequently, family members found it difficult to support extended relatives due to similar economic adversity. This negatively impacted on the reciprocation culture enshrined in kinship relations hence the collapse of trust and dependence among relatives in Lango.

The findings reinforce arguments by A. Elliott and C. Huggins since weakened relationships result from dislocation and displacement causing economic and social difficulties for individuals, households and communities [45]. Displacement also result in loss of assets, and access to livelihood information may be limited. This argument is complemented by D. J. Unruh as livelihood strategies under protracted conflict are interwoven and may be ethnically bias. Sometimes the displaced persons' status quo is worsened by discrimination by host communities due to competition for resources and services. The relationship can severely affect the livelihoods of victims of displacement and results in social insecurity. In Oyam, the displaced communities complied to an ultimatum of 72 hours in 1996 to relocate into camps as noted by O. Otunnu and thus could not carry sufficient livelihood needs including food stuffs. Although discrimination was not reported by the displaced persons in Oyam, the increased and overcrowded population constrained resources and social services in the host communities.

We encountered a weakened kinship support during the fieldwork when we met an abandoned childless eighty-seven-year-old woman, whom we called Auma, (pseudonym). Auma had previously been cared for by her brother. Unfortunately, her vulnerability increased upon the brother's demise as she shared her ordeal:

My brother died when we were in camps. I joined my nephews to return home when some peace returned. However, my nephews forced me off the small piece of land that I used to cultivate and survive on when my late brother was alive. Painfully I had to return to the camp even though the camps were officially dissolved in 2011. My future back home is bleak as I lack where to settle and

subsist… (interview with an 87- year old woman in Apitolwak village, Otwal Railway station July 23, 2018).

Auma's disenfranchisement and lack of support from her relatives worsened her vulnerability after displacement. In accordance with Lango culture, the responsibility of caring for the elderly, orphans and disabled persons rests with the immediate family members. However, the changing economic trend had greatly influenced people's attitude to support their poor relatives. This finding is in keeping with work done by P. Collier et'al., C. Huggins and P. Justino who have found that the post-conflict period is usually characterized by economic deprivation and social exclusion [46]. In the particular case of Auma her vulnerability can possibly be attributed to the monetization of land after the return process from displacement as some displaced persons in Oyam sold their lands to start a living. Similarly, Auma reported that the nephews forced her out of the land and sold it away. Consequently, she lost the social protection from her relatives and so was the piece of land on which she subsisted.

From the economic perspective, the social exclusion of Auma demonstrates the extent to which a lack of social capital led to loss of land to inhibit her livelihood means. Our study agrees with A. Cain and A. Akiko that conflict weakens institutions at all levels. In Angola and Mozambique displaced families lost their household assets including land, farm implements, foodstuffs and any accumulated assets [47]. The plight of Auma further confirms findings by J. N. Colletta & L. M. Cullen in Rwanda where the return of internally displaced persons to the ancestral homes stirred the social conflict over land resource sharing [48]. Subsequently, the rehabilitated physical assets were devastated by community disintegration hence hindering sustainable development.

Coupled with kinship, marriage relationship remained highly valued by the respondents despite the challenges experienced in camps. The challenges we recorded in marriage relations ranged from mistrust and suspicion among couples, engagement in extramarital affairs, laziness and failure to provide for the families by the household heads. Excerpts from one of our discussions demonstrated the extent of challenges experienced in marriage relations:

Confinement into IDP camps exposed many of us couples to a number of temptations. Among these were extramarital affairs due to proximity of huts and sometimes, two pairs of couples had to share a single hut, with children. In the absence of one's partner, temptations could arise leading to adulterous behaviour that exposed couples to HIV/AIDS pandemic and other sexually transmitted infections. Worst, we shared homesteads with the security operatives (soldiers and local defense units) that were morally more dangerous than the rebels. In a number of cases, the soldiers hijacked civilians' wives and no cases were filed against the offenders leaving us in pain and bitterness…. (FGD May 15th 2018 in Trading center B, Otwal).

The tribulations experienced in marriages were compounded by the inability of most men to fend for their

households due to confinement and restricted economic activities. Consequently, we had recounted cases where married women eloped with other men (often soldiers) who could provide their basic needs. Given that the excerpt also speaks of instances where relations between women and soldiers were non-consensual, it seems likely that in many of these cases soldiers sexually exploited the destitution of displaced women who were in dire need of economic support. This finding complements the sexual exploitation in Acholi sub-region during the peak of the LRA insurgency revealed by C. Dolan and O. Otunnu.

The sexual exploitation of former displaced females could have gone some way towards explaining the high HIV/AIDS prevalence rate for northern Uganda recorded at 7.4 percent against the national rate of 6.5 percent [49]. Despite the participants' recounted cases on their experience of violence, displacement and repression, sometimes narratives are not transparent versions of truth as contended by M. Eastmond. Narratives may be a reflection of an interplay between life, experience and story of the victims though provide insights into how displaced persons can re-establish their identities in raptured communities. Thus, other factors especially poverty and multi-sexual partnerships could have contributed to the high HIV/AIDS prevalence rate then in northern Uganda.

Nonetheless, internally displaced persons experienced breakdown in relationships than was previously the case, due to suspicion and mistrust among couples. In extreme situations, the mistrust resulted in loss of lives. One of the participants attested in a discussion that:

Some of us women lost respect for spouses, which increased mistrust, drunkenness and men's failure to provide for the family. Incapable of fending for the family's basic needs and above all, a drunkard, such husbands are hopeless and useless 'small man' with no future, the only option was to separate in marriage since the situation was intolerable, expressed one the female participants (FGD with women May 15th 2018).

The statement indicated the impact of conflict on gender power relations. J. Omona & J. R. Aduo noted that in Amuru district, post-conflict economic reconstruction focused more on women than men [50]. We concur with this finding as women in Oyam presumed custody of food ratio distributed to households and engaged in petty businesses especially vegetable selling. Consequently, women became more economically empowered leading to men's vulnerability and increased gender-based violence among couples. The findings in Oyam contrast S. Baden's drawing on Mozambique, Ethiopia, Liberia and Rwanda that post-conflict reconstruction programmes focused more on men and neglected women thus underscoring the patriarchal African cultural practices [51]. Insights from these arguments indicate that post-conflict interventions should cater for men and women equally in order to bridge the gender gap created by displacement, reduce on domestic violence and to promote sustainable household development.

Interviews also indicated that before displacement, the people of Oyam voluntarily performed routine public or community service for the benefit of everyone. The service included routine road maintenance, cleaning water sources, community food security production called *awak* and response to community emergency cases. The village Chief locally called *'Rwot wang tic'* mobilized and supervised these communal livelihood activities (interview with an elder, Lango Cultural Institution, May 16, 2018). *Rwot wang tic* was elected by the Village Council of Elders. Communally performed tasks were clearly divided in keeping with Lango tradition with men and women performing defined roles. Fines were levied on defaulters, who may also have had their assets – such as a chicken, goat, hoe or cooking utensils - confiscated by *Rwot wang tic* and his committee, depending on the magnitude of the tasks defaulted on. The fines were intended to restrain deviant actions in the community, and to create unity among the members. In the contemporary, the Secretary for works under the Local Council arrangement performed an almost similar duty of *Rwot wang tic*. Thus, community service remained part and parcel of the former displaced persons though under transformed management system of the Local Council, elected by every adult community member not essentially the village council of elders.

Wage-labour group relations were established as one of the emerging livelihood strategies that the former internally displaced persons of Oyam partly engaged in after displacement. This seemed to substitute for the communal production that had previously been practiced. Interlocutors attested that the demand for wage-labour sharply rose on returning to ancestral homes, thus shifting people away from previous modes of collective production. This arrangement was however common among able-bodied persons. Subsequently, most households tended to rely more on immediate family members to subsist, thus undermining the essence of cooperative. Previous studies by A. Bebbington, A. Bebbington, D. Leni, F. Erwin & G. Scott and A. Portes indicated relative lack of benefits and community development due to loosened social network [52]. Lack of cooperation thus negatively affect labour reciprocation and trust among local-level institutions and organizations yet social network is a critical stimulant for sustainable rural development and food security. Therefore, the shift from communal to wage-labour and individual production could have restricted wide-reaching rural development in Oyam.

The decline in communal labour demonstrates a decline in the level of trust among community members upon returning home. The provision of family labour corroborates B. Wellman & W. Scott that parents and elder children are in a better position to reciprocate major and basic services than anyone else in the network due to biological attachment hence creating a reliable network [53]. Sometimes, the family support stretches beyond basic needs to compassion and health care ascertaining the adage that 'blood is thicker than water.' However, the rise in wage-labour could have been compounded by the global economic capitalist system and the rising demand for cash economy. In an ideal world, these new forms of social and economic order would be an

improvement upon the old system, such that individual family cultivation and wage-labour would surpass the communal forms of livelihood that prevailed among pre-displaced persons in Oyam district. One of the participants accentuated in a discussion:

I casually work on people's garden for cash either individually or in a group. On average, I can earn a sum of Uganda shillings two thousand daily depending on the amount of work have done. When we work in a group, cultivation is done faster and we earn and save time for other activities. Another participant complemented, to me group work guarantees savings. I make savings and receive it at the end of the year especially during Christmas season (FGD with men in Alibi village, Otwal sub-county August 6, 2018).

Although wage-labour group did not ensure labour reciprocation as did communalism, the arrangement confirmed the view that displaced persons are likely to fall back to previously practiced livelihood activities. Earlier studies by E. Cagney and I. Bjorkhaug, B. Morten, A. Hatloy & M. J. Kathleen agree with the fact that conflict and subsequent times of insecurity and fear, may impact on the ability of individuals and households to fall back on known survival strategies and initiate cultural revival and restructure their social life. Nonetheless in some circumstance the majority become more vulnerable due to loss of formal and informal risk-sharing networks. In Oyam district, those who could not access wage-labour groups lacked the safety nets and savings for the festive seasons. Drawing on this context, social capital contributed to social exclusion for some individuals who failed to comply with the groups' guiding norms and values or were physically disabled to perform hard labour task especially group cultivation.

Informal network was established though predominantly women's social support groups. These were not based on cash reciprocation but rather on sharing household materials and social support. These networks were basically formed on friendship and the members contributed kitchen utensils in turns for each member. The members further contributed basic items to support each other in times of sickness, death, or marriage. In case of death, each member was obliged to meet a defined material contribution and physical task undertaking to support the bereaved family. One of the group members shared her opinion in an interview:

We contribute items like firewood, water, soap, sugar, salt… and share task at funeral service. We use attendance register and roll call to update the membership. Fines are levied on absentees without apology whenever the group converges for a meeting. We call this group 'Can mito note' (overcoming poverty through unity) (interview with a female member of 'Can *Mito Note*' group, Otwal trading center B, August 2 2018).

Based on the respondent's elucidation, friendship complemented kinship as a medium of promoting inter-community ties since the *Can Mito Note* group were not drawn from a single clan or extended families but from wider community female members. The members came from several clans but agreed on basic guiding principles. These principles tied members beyond mere friendship and kinship justifying the social capital model of connections. Perhaps this was the reason to register attendance in meetings and fining absentees without apologies. This finding corroborates arguments by I. C. Nombo and S. M. Granovetter that families from different clans can form acquaintances that end up in strong links, thus initiating strong bonds between the families and within communities [54]. Through such friendships, children emulate adults and grow up to recognize and live in love and harmony with each other and thus, friendship promoted good will and peace in society.

Drawing on the hermeneutic and gender perspective, more women than men value informal groupings due to the valuable social and psychological support systems generated that extend beyond economic benefits. The *'Can Mito Note'* group for instance provided economic and social support to its members. One of the female group members explained that:

It is a good experience working and living together as a group with fellow women. Our relationship has gone beyond friendship to sisters. When a member is sick, we organize to visit her. Sometimes you may have relatives but some may not offer support as much as close friends and group members can… (Interview with a female member of 'Can Mito Note' group Otwal trading center B August 2, 2018).

Evidently, the support generated by social networks cemented relationships, promoted harmony in the villages and generated social capital. This kind of relationship empowered women to perform their gender roles adequately especially family provision, caring and nursing the sick. The finding contrasts arguments by S. Whyte, M. S. Babihaa, R. Mukyala & L. Meinhert that social networks disadvantaged women in Acholi sub-region emerging from the LRA conflict [55]. In Oyam, women who emerged from conflict and displacement mobilized the social capital to access economic and social resources to enhance their households' livelihoods.

Gambling and alcohol consumption groups emerged among the former displaced persons in Oyam district. These were common among male youths and the practice involved pooling money to buy and drink alcohol. Alcohol consumption groups manifested the endemic drunkenness in Oyam that transcended into post-conflict epoch. This life style presented a precarious version of a community in which insecurity and conflict lead away from other more positive forms of development. Our study attributed the negative networks to dependency syndrome initiated when the displaced population exclusively depended on relief aid provided by humanitarian organizations. J. Annan, C. Blattman, K. Carlson & D. Mazurana have similarly shown that youths in northern Uganda emerging from conflict hardly engaged in productive activities for more than eight days a month [56]. The implication is high level of idleness and increased dependency. From this viewpoint, social network can be a liability rather than an asset, which encourages harmful habits such as drinking and gambling.

5. Conclusion

Displacement has had a significant influence on social capital and livelihoods of the victims as presented in this paper. Despite being displaced, the social capital of people does not completely fade away, but rather transforms either positively or negatively depending on the circumstance. This was evident in Oyam district where both constructive and negative forms of networks emerged. On the whole, however, a positive association exists between social capital and livelihood activities of the people emerging from displacement. Thus, it is ideal for Post-conflict reconstruction programs to integrate social relations in the intervention package and to invest in psycho-social support and mindset change in the reconstruction framework as opposed to humanitarian and material aid that promotes dependency rather than sustainable development.

Since communalism has been eroded due to displacement and the influence of global political-economic order, we suggest that the government of Uganda in its post-conflict reconstruction program considers invigorating cooperative movements in northern Uganda to support the farming communities to improve on their livelihoods. This would empower the former victims of displacement through collective bargaining power to transit from subsistence to commercial farming system. Despite the dynamics on the social capital and livelihood activities, this paper demonstrated a revert to the previously practiced forms of relationships before displacement, hence endurance of traditional and cultural practices. Since interpersonal and intergroup relationship promotes collective action, reviving social capital make community development projects more relevant and sustainable due to group solidarity. We therefore conclude that post-conflict reform processes should involve interdependence of development agents including Government, local leadership and non-state actors by linking all livelihood assets of the victims for a descent and sustainable community development having illustrated in this paper that trust, reciprocity, civic duty and moral obligation are essential to a successful and stable society.

This paper contributes to the social theory, the social exchange and the rational choice theories postulated by A. Elliott and J. Scott respectively. The social theory illustrated the dynamics in the former internally displaced people's societies, social exchange theory elucidated on the economics of social capital especially trust, reciprocity, voluntarism and friendship that social capital and livelihood opportunities thrived on. The rational choice theory was appropriate in explicating the individual choice for a particular network to enhance survival means.

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