

Changing Fortunes: Women's Economic Opportunities in Post-War Northern Uganda

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About Investing in Peace

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CHANGING FORTUNES: WOMEN'S ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES IN POST-WAR NORTHERN UGANDA

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Executive summary

This report is Issue No. 3 of International Alert Uganda's *Investing in Peace* briefing paper series. It also forms part of a wider comparative study on women's political participation in countries emerging from conflict undertaken in the Great Lakes region by International Alert, together with the East African Sub-Regional Support Initiative for the Advancement of Women (EASSI).

Relative peace in Northern Uganda has enabled the majority of former Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) to return to their home areas and begin rebuilding their lives. After the long war, women have emerged as critical economic actors, taking advantage of economic opportunities to secure their families' livelihood, security and advancement. Based on a survey in Gulu and Lira districts, the report charts the new economic activities in which women are engaged. They are now farming and selling a range of agricultural produce. They comprise the majority of market stallholders and vendors, selling cereals, vegetables, fish, other foodstuffs and second-hand clothes, as well as brewing alcohol. They are also engaged in other formal and informal cash-generating activities. In contrast with the pre-war period, a high number of woman-headed households are now found in the two districts and, even in marriages, women are often the primary source of family income. In this sense, they are at the forefront of the region's economic recovery.

This can largely be attributed to conditions in the displacement camps where the majority of people from rebel-affected areas lived for a decade and more. The camps concentrated vast numbers of people in quasi-urban conditions, largely dependent on humanitarian relief. This phenomenon, in turn, generated new patterns of supply and demand that women were able to exploit, since many men had either been directly caught up in the conflict or displaced from their traditional activities. At the same time, development-partner and NGO programmes targeted women as the beneficiaries of training and livelihood support during the years of conflict, responding to egregious levels of sexual and gender-based violence, a women's empowerment agenda and the development maxim that women were more likely to share their earnings with their families than men. Along with women-led community peacebuilding initiatives, such interventions propelled women to the foreground of family survival strategies, and increased their skills and confidence. As a result of these factors, gender relations in Northern Uganda are in a significant period of flux.

This report finds that women are more prominent in decision making in many aspects of domestic life. Beyond the home, survey respondents report increased mobility and influence in different fora at a community level, including farmers' groups, Savings and Credit Cooperative Organisations (SACCOs) and other savings groups, with women increasingly taking leadership positions. The report also notes the high readiness of women to vote in local and national elections.

While these gains are important, very few women hold positions in the region's local government beyond mandatory positions set aside in local councils under the Local Government Act 1997. Some women are preparing to contest the 2011 elections (e.g. for the positions of mayor and the chair of the local council in Gulu district), however the overall picture shows women severely lagging behind in terms of political representation. Women were poorly represented in the negotiating team at the Juba Peace Talks, despite the high-profile peace initiative led by Betty Bigombe in the 1990s and other women-led examples of community-level peace activism throughout the conflict. There are also clear limits to the scale of most women's entrepreneurial activity which, while significant in terms of the livelihood economy, does not compete above a certain level. Only 18 percent of those surveyed reported incomes of more than Shs 300,000 per month (US\$135).

These limitations can be explained by the constraints facing women, such as basic needs, an overwhelming domestic workload, lack of capital, exclusion from land ownership, and male dominance, frequently expressed through violence. Specific interventions are needed to leverage opportunities for women's further economic empowerment and political participation, the promotion of gender equality and the establishment of harmony in gender relations as necessary pre-conditions for a real peace economy to flourish. Such initiatives are all the more critical given the lessons from earlier phases of Northern Uganda's conflict and other post-conflict contexts. While war often leads to social, economic and political dynamics that provide opportunities for positive social change to take place, it is also common that such gains may be lost as societies revert to pre-conflict norms.

The report explores the extent to which current initiatives by the government of Uganda and development partners to contribute to recovery are sensitive to these gender dynamics, or factoring into their programmes the important role of women in the peace economy. It concludes that the government's Peace, Recovery and Development Plan (PRDP) has failed to take these issues into proper account. Despite some interesting initiatives, development-partner interventions also lag behind. Whereas a large number of programmes prioritised women as beneficiaries during the emergency period, and some continue to do so to facilitate the return process, the role played by women as economic actors in the peace economy is largely overlooked. Many initiatives that relate to women are limited by defining women as "vulnerable". This labelling risks becoming a self-fulfilling prophecy, as opportunities to support women's entrepreneurial skills are overlooked in the rush to design longer-term development initiatives mainly dominated by men. In the wider context, the ways that gender relations affect economic recovery, and *vice versa*, are factored into very few interventions, despite most agencies' policy commitments to gender equality and gender mainstreaming.

Supporting women's changing fortunes and gender-sensitive recovery in Northern Uganda: Recommendations to government and development partners

Interventions by government and development partners should be nuanced to add weight to, and sustain, the new position of women as key actors in the livelihoods economy and as community-level decision makers. They should assist women to build on and expand beyond current levels, and move towards actual gender parity. Moreover, steps should be taken to mitigate the domestic-level conflicts associated with changing gender roles and relationships triggered by the war, through the design and implementation of improved recovery initiatives.

The report highlights priorities and recommendations for the constructive support of women as key drivers of Northern Uganda's peace economy – promoting the goal of a healthy adjustment of gender roles and relations, encompassing women's changing fortunes.

1. Make gender a core element in the design and implementation of recovery interventions

Government and development partners must scale-up efforts to respond to the gender dynamics playing out in Northern Uganda's recovery in order to maximise positive changes and minimise the possibility that current domestic tensions become endemic. Uganda has a strong, gender-policy framework, but the capacity of the Office of the Prime Minister, the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Affairs, and Community Development Officers and Gender Officers (who play a critical role in promoting the social transformation necessary for women's economic advancement and increased political participation) needs to be greatly increased. The financial capacity of these departments has a major bearing on challenges currently faced by women.

The PRDP results monitoring framework needs to incorporate gender in its indicators, as recommended by the Women's Task Force (WTF) for a Gender Responsive PRDP, and all PRDP interventions should be preceded by gender analysis that explores specific opportunities and risks in the communities concerned. The turbulence and rapid change affecting gender relations in the

region, as highlighted in this report, presents both opportunities for and risks to recovery. These issues need to be analysed and factored into programme design and implementation.

Definitions of women that emphasise their vulnerability need to evolve so as to incorporate diverse experiences now that the emergency period is over. Certainly there are categories of vulnerable women, including the elderly and infirm, and it is critical that their needs continue to be addressed, even as interventions shift to prioritise long-term development. Yet there are many women whose entrepreneurial activity is the major source of support for their families and communities. While they face huge obstacles and challenges, including persistent domestic violence and unequal land rights, the description of “vulnerable” does not quite fit. There is a danger that interventions that seek to enhance the region’s overall economic performance will focus on the larger-scale actors, who are mainly men, and thereby miss opportunities to harness the economic potential of such women.

All recovery programming in Northern Uganda should:

- **Reconceptualise the role of women in Northern Uganda’s peace economy – moving beyond “vulnerability” to recognise women as economic actors and agents of social change**
- **Acknowledge, analyse and reflect in programme design the critical role played by women in the livelihood economy**
- **Ensure efforts to promote recovery and development of Northern Uganda are based on gender-sensitive context analysis**
- **Train local authorities and officials at district and sub-county levels in gender-sensitive planning and budgeting**
- **Create and fill posts for gender officers within local government where this has not been done**
- **Increase space for women on the planning structures at all levels of local government, as well as consultation with women at the grassroots**
- **Develop planning and monitoring tools for both conflict and gender impacts of interventions.**

2. Support economic empowerment of women as part of building a peace economy

Taking into account emerging best practice on conflict-sensitivity and gender programming, and as part of a holistic effort to support the overall peace economy in the region, it is important that government and development partners make concerted efforts to harness the potential of women as key actors in economic recovery through more effective support of their activities. Where women are targeted as beneficiaries, it is important that this is not solely on the basis of vulnerability, but that more entrepreneurial, empowered and productive women also benefit. Recovery interventions should emphasise increasing women’s agricultural production and productivity, given the high number of women-headed households in the region and the gains made to date.

Initiatives are required to address the numerous constraints faced by women in scaling-up their economic activity. Central to the problem is the overburdening of women as they add new economic activities to a heavy domestic workload. Improving access to water, fuel, health centres and schools have clear benefits in terms of increasing available time for investment in productive activity. Such interventions should be based on consultation with women about their needs, rather than top-down approaches.

A priority programming area is the provision of training and support to women to expand the scale of their businesses. Business development services that target women will help them to benefit from the available, post-war opportunities.

At the same time there is a pressing need to harmonise interventions. One challenge raised by the research is the common requirement of programmes targeting women that the beneficiaries should form new groups, a process that entails an excessive degree of administrative procedure. The emphasis should be on coordinating existing groups, rather than forming new ones for each

intervention. Support and training should target existing groupings as far as is possible. The potential for tensions to emerge within and between groups should be taken into account when designing interventions.

Beyond this, it is important that women are provided with affordable, women-friendly financial services in terms of repayment conditions, interest rates and accessibility. Women need better access to value-adding agricultural technology, as well as markets. There is a critical need to initiate more equitable, land-ownership arrangements that give access to women, both as a source of collateral for scaling-up their economic activity, and as a source of security and parity. Lastly, local governments should consider affirmative action for women in tenders for public works, supplies and services.

- **Scale-up community infrastructure programmes, reducing obstacles to women's economic participation**
- **Improve women's access to markets and agricultural technology**
- **Provide women-friendly financial services**
- **Prioritise efforts to secure women's rights to housing and land**
- **Offer business development services and skills transfer opportunities for women**
- **Harmonise use of group formation as a prerequisite for assistance for women**
- **Promote affirmative action for women in awarding of local government contracts.**

3. Support women's political advancement

Although women are taking increasingly prominent positions in household and community-level decision making, this has not permeated the political sphere beyond the mandatory quotas for women in public office. One opportunity is to strengthen the empowerment component of existing initiatives, for example within groups. Where group formation is a dominant element of development assistance to women, it is often administered in a political void, without maximising their potential for developing women's political activism. Groups should be open to women working on activities that involve others, and offer training on political participation. Support should continue to be directed to women's civil society organisations (CSOs) and peacebuilding initiatives, particularly those promoting women's voice in political life and in monitoring recovery-programme implementation. Training programmes that provide women with the skills needed to engage in public life should be made available. There is also a need for leadership schemes that encourage women to stand for office, encourage women and men to vote for women candidates and mobilise women who are already in office to use their positions in the interests of gender parity and voicing women's concerns.

Recognising that fear of violence in the electoral system emerged from the research as a barrier to women's participation, all actors should work together to maintain a free and fair electoral process in 2011, and to sustain peace in Northern Uganda thereafter. Government should implement its action plan on women in peacebuilding, ensuring that they take their proper place in ongoing and future peacebuilding initiatives.

- **Encourage political confidence and engagement on local political issues within women's groups**
- **Train women on assertiveness, campaign skills, public speaking, negotiation, lobbying, advocacy, fundraising and gender budgeting**
- **Fund CSOs providing support to women to engage in political life and monitoring of recovery programmes**
- **Mobilise women and men to vote for women, and work with women MPs to promote women-focused politics**
- **Implement a government action plan on women in peacebuilding.**

4. Invest in constructive social transformation

For women to fulfil their economic and political potential in the peace economy it is essential that gender relations are normalised and the goal of gender parity becomes socially acceptable. Northern Ugandan society requires targeted programmes to recover from the traumas of war and the challenges of rapid social change.

Existing initiatives on violence against women (VAW) led by the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development, United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and other actors, should be scaled-up to ensure the sensitisation of men, the enhancement of community vigilance and the effectiveness of protection agencies. The recently enacted Domestic Violence Act should be implemented.

Programmes related to economic recovery, whether agricultural inputs and skills, voucher, cash or food-for-work schemes, infrastructure projects, and employment or business development, should actively explore gender dynamics with beneficiary groups, identifying obstacles and perceptions, and factoring these into design so that opportunities for sensitisation and resolution are maximised through programme delivery.

There is an urgent need to bring men back into household provisioning as an obligation, rather than a choice. A focus on men is beneficial for both women and men, and above all for children, who will benefit from an environment characterised by mutually-supportive gender role models. Positive masculine identities will reduce the heavy physical and emotional burden that many women shoulder by encouraging a more equitable distribution of labour. Mobilisation and support to men would be part of the healing process, enabling them to participate in the reconstruction of society. The mobilisation of men should present clear messages about how men stand to gain from a cooperative, productive and violence-free community.

- **Build opportunities to explore the transformation of gender roles and relations and incorporate them into the planning and implementation of all economic recovery interventions across the spectrum of programming**
- **Increase community training on gender relations in order for men to better appreciate the role of women and see them as partners, rather than a threat to their masculinity**
- **Scale-up the availability, inclusivity and impact of psycho-social recovery programmes across all groups**
- **Scale-up sensitisation programmes on VAW and increase the effectiveness of community policing**
- **Implement the 2010 Domestic Violence Act.**

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Acronyms

aBi	Agri-Business Development Initiative
ACDI/VOCA	Agricultural Cooperative Development International/Volunteers in Overseas Cooperative Assistance
ACTED	Agency for Cooperation and Technical Development
CBO	Community-based Organisations
CDO	Community Development Officer
CEDAW	Convention for the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women
CPA	Concerned Parents Association
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
DFID	UK Department for International Development
EASSI	East African Sub-regional Support Initiative for the Advancement of Women
FAO	Food and Agricultural Organisation
FFLS	Farmer Field and Life Schools
FFS	Farmer Field Schools
GBV	Gender-based Violence
G4G	Gender for Growth Fund
IDP	Internally Displaced Person
KIDDP	Karamoja Integrated Disarmament and Development Programme
LC	Local Council
LRA	Lord's Resistance Army
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
MFI	Micro-Finance Institutions
MP	Member of Parliament
NAADS	National Agricultural Advisory Services
NGO	Non-governmental Organisation
NRM	National Resistance Movement
NUREP	Northern Uganda Rehabilitation Programme
NUSAF	Northern Uganda Social Action Fund
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
OPM	Office of the Prime Minister
PEAP	Poverty Eradication Action Plan
PRDP	Peace, Recovery and Development Plan
RA	Research Assistant
SACCOs	Savings and Credit Cooperative Organisations
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNIFEM	United Nations Fund for Women
UNSCR	United Nations Security Council Resolution
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
UWONET	Ugandan Women's Network
VAW	Violence Against Women
WFP	World Food Programme
WHO	World Health Organisation
WTF	Women's Task Force for a Gender Responsive PRDP

1. Introduction

While the Juba Peace Talks failed to achieve the ultimate objective of a Comprehensive Peace Agreement between the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) and the government of Uganda, the period of relative peace and security in Northern Uganda since the two parties signed the Cessation of Hostilities Agreement in August 2006 has led to renewed hope regarding the prospects for rebuilding the region. Four years of peace have encouraged large numbers of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) to return home; nearly 80 percent of the original population have now left the camps.¹ Government, development partners and investors are planning either to contribute to peace through development programmes and other initiatives, or to make the most of the opportunities available in the post-conflict economy. Central to these efforts is the government's overarching Peace, Recovery and Development Plan (PRDP) for Northern Uganda, which identifies economic revitalisation as one of its four strategic objectives.²

The challenges and opportunities inherent in Northern Uganda's recovery process were reviewed in International Alert's *Investing in Peace* Issue No. 1, 'Building a Peace Economy in Northern Uganda: Conflict-Sensitive Approaches to Recovery and Growth', which highlighted the importance of positioning conflict-sensitive approaches at the heart of initiatives to rebuild Northern Uganda, given the historic links between the region's economy and conflict dynamics.³ Issue No. 1 proposed the idea of "building a peace economy" in which different groups have access to work opportunities and share in economic growth as an essential aspect of consolidating peace in the long term. *Investing in Peace* Issue No. 3 goes into further depth concerning the gender dynamics of the peace economy, focusing on women's economic and political status. This report has been undertaken as part of a wider comparative study across the Great Lakes region, led by International Alert (Alert) and the East African Sub-Regional Support Initiative for the Advancement of Women (EASSI), that explores women's changing access to political participation after conflict in various countries (see box below).

Women's political participation in countries emerging from conflict

Over the past ten years a number of countries in the Great Lakes region have undergone the process of political transition after a period of conflict. In Burundi, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Rwanda and Uganda, there has been a significant improvement in women's participation in post-conflict decision making, mainly achieved through affirmative-action mechanisms, including quotas and cooptation systems. However, major challenges in translating these gains into real changes in women's status at all levels of society persist. The Alert/EASSI research project aims to assess the role of women after conflict in each country. The lessons derived from the process will be used to inform policymakers, implementers and development partners to advance opportunities for women in the region to contribute to improvements in governance and building sustainable peace. The project operates within the conceptual framework that inclusiveness and participation are factors inherent in enhancing peace and security. It works on the further understanding that women in the Great Lakes region are not homogenous, but have diverse identities shaped by ethnicity, class, age and social status.

1 UN OCHA CAP Uganda (2010).

2 Strategic Objective (SO) 1: Consolidation of State Authority; SO2: Rebuilding and Empowering Communities; SO3: Revitalisation of the Economy; SO4: Peacebuilding and Reconciliation. GoU (2007). 'Peace, Recovery and Development Plan for Northern Uganda (PRDP) 2007–10'. Kampala, Uganda: Office of the Prime Minister. The PRDP is discussed in further detail in Section 5 of this report.

3 International Alert (2008). 'Building a Peace Economy in Northern Uganda: Conflict-Sensitive Approaches to Recovery and Growth', *Investing in Peace*, Issue No. 1. Kampala, Uganda: International Alert.

The Uganda study explores the links between new economic opportunities for women and their involvement in decision making in Northern Uganda;⁴ in DRC the focus is on women's participation in the peace processes, formal and informal, and the 2006 electoral process; in Rwanda the research assesses the impact of decentralisation on gender equality, and the nature and impact of women's participation in local governance; and the Burundi study analyses the impact of the quota system on the advancement of women at national and community levels. The four case studies will be collected in a final synthesis report, due to be published by December 2010.

"Political participation" relates to different forms of public expression and influence on political, economic and social decisions. Although the term often refers to the holding of public office, political participation is broader and includes other areas of political activity, such as lobbying, demonstrations, civil society, and community activism and organisation.⁵ In relation to women, this description ranges from women's position in household and community decision making, through to their attainment of leadership positions in public office. Political participation is thus a term that embraces all processes in a continuum, including traditional and non-traditional politics.⁶ Full and effective political participation by women is seen as a necessary component in peace processes and post-conflict reconstruction.⁷

The civilian population in Northern Uganda suffered greatly during the war, as the LRA's brutal tactics wrought havoc on lives, homes and infrastructure. The government security forces responsible for protecting civilians failed to provide the needed sanctuary and were sometimes complicit in further mistreatment.⁸ Men, women and children experienced killing, abduction and torture. Entire communities suffered the trauma of displacement into IDP camps for prolonged periods, leading to aid dependency, high levels of domestic violence, alcoholism and family breakdown.⁹ The societal costs of the conflict are incalculable. Due to gender differences, men and women experienced these traumas differently, with women particularly vulnerable to sexual abuse both by the warring parties and by civilians exploiting the general insecurity. Women were also disproportionately denied educational opportunities.¹⁰

While conflict frequently exacerbates gender disparities by increasing women's vulnerability to sexual and gender-based violence, new social, economic and political dynamics sometimes emerge that provide opportunities for social change.¹¹ Representing half the population, women's participation helps to strengthen the legitimacy of peace and recovery processes, ensuring they reflect women's experiences, needs and insights. Women's participation in reconstruction efforts provides opportunities to cement and capitalise on positive social changes made during war-

4 Although the overall focus of the EASSI/International Alert project is national-level changes promoted by government after political transition, it was decided that a more valid focus in Uganda, in terms of topicality and research gaps, would be women's economic and political situation after conflict in the north.

5 EASSI and International Alert (2009). 'Assessing the Impact of Women's Political Participation in Countries Emerging from Conflict: Workshop report on Feminist methodology'.

6 U. Thakkar (1985). 'Women's political participation', *Economic and Political Weekly*, 20 (30).

7 M. E. Greenberg and E. Zuckerman (2006). 'The gender dimensions of post-conflict reconstruction', Research Paper No. 2006/62, UNU-WIDER, United Nations University. See also: A. S. Naraghi (2007). *Women building peace: What they do, why it matters*. London: Lynne Rienner; B. Sørensen (June 1998). 'Women and Post Conflict Reconstruction: Issues and Sources', WSP Occasional Paper No. 3; A. M. Tripp et al (2009). *African women's movements: Changing political landscapes*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

8 Amnesty International (1990). *Deaths in the countryside: Killings of civilians by the army*. London, UK: AI; Amnesty International (1992). *The failure to safeguard human rights*. London, UK: AI; Acholi Religious Leaders Peace Initiative (2001). *Let my people go*. Gulu, Uganda: ARLPI; Erin Patrick (2005). 'Surrounded: Women and girls in Northern Uganda', Migration Information Source (MPI) website.

9 D. Mulumba (1998). 'Refugee women and the trauma of encampment in Uganda', *East African Journal of Peace and Human Rights*, Vol. 5, No. 1. pp.32-44; D. Mulumba (2002). 'The women's movement and conflict resolution in Uganda' in A. M. Tripp and J. Kwesiga (Eds.). *The women's movement in Uganda: History, challenges, and prospects*. Kampala, Uganda: Fountain Publishers. Fountain Series in Gender Studies.

10 Survey of War-Affected Youth (SWAY) (2008). *Special Report on Women and Girls for the Juba Peace Process*; M. V. Nakiboneka (2009). *Participatory gender equality and women's needs assessment in Northern and North-Eastern Uganda*, Final Report for Isis-WICCE. Kampala, Uganda: Isis-WICCE.

11 A. M. Tripp et al (2009). Op. cit; Danida (2008). *Country Gender Analysis*. Copenhagen, Denmark: Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

time, rather than see them disappear as society reverts to pre-conflict norms.¹² Historically, the aftermath of conflict is a double-edged sword, with fractures and wounds on one hand, and opportunities arising from reconstruction and rehabilitation, on the other. Conflict transforms family structures, redefining responsibilities in ways that impact on how people participate in later peace and recovery processes. In terms of gender dynamics, opportunities arise for the constructive redefinition of power relations between men and women.

This report explores the extent to which women in Northern Uganda are now confronted with or have already seized new economic opportunities in the peace economy. At the same time, it seeks to understand whether these adaptations have translated into further gains in terms of women's decision making at household, village, sub-county and district levels. The report also examines the consequences that gender shifts in the societal structures of Northern Uganda may have for men, already disempowered by displacement, for whom any advancement of women may be experienced as a "zero-sum" assault on their own diminished power; and for women, who have reported an increase in domestic violence as a result of this reaction. Looking ahead, the paper examines the extent to which gender dynamics are effectively factored into government and development partner policy planning for regional economic recovery. It concludes with recommendations for the constructive support of women as key drivers of Northern Uganda's peace economy – an economy that also envisages a healthy adjustment by men to women's changing fortunes.

1.1 Methodology

At the core of this report are findings from a study conducted in the Acholi and Lango sub-regions during November 2009, specifically in Gulu and Lira districts, important commercial centres in Northern Uganda. To allow for rural-urban disparities and possible comparison, the study focused on one urban area and one rural area in each district. In Gulu, the urban area of focus was Bardege Division; and the rural area, the sub-county of Bungatira. In Lira, the urban area of focus was Ojwina Division; and the rural area, Apala sub-county. Study participants were drawn from a broad spectrum of economic spheres in Gulu and Lira, including formal and informal activities, agriculture, trade and business.

The study was designed not only to assess women's status, but to explore the potential for social change in the post-war economy, thereby articulating its linkage with women's political participation and empowerment. To achieve this, the study combined qualitative and quantitative approaches. While quantitative data allowed for broader description of the study participants, additional explanations and reflection are drawn from the qualitative data.

The study's participants were chosen from selected villages with the help of local leaders on the basis of socio-economic indicators, type of economic activities and type of household. A total of 200 women, on the basis of one adult female from each household, took part. In each sub-county or division, one parish was selected in consultation with research assistants (RA) and area leaders. Three to four wards and/or villages were selected in each parish for participation in the survey. The respondents were selected within each chosen ward/village. Each RA was allocated a separate village on a daily basis and worked with a guide, usually a local council (LC) official or a person familiar with the area's geography and demographic make-up. Allocating each RA to a village helped to guard against double visits to households.

An adult female was defined as a woman above 18 years identified with the household. Candidates included women heads of household, spouses, caretakers or guardians, but visitors, relatives

12 EASSI and International Alert (2009). Op. cit. See also: S. Meintjes et al (2001). *The aftermath: Women in post-conflict transformation*. London: Zed Books; A. Falch (May 2010). 'Women's political participation and influence in post-conflict Burundi and Nepal', *PRIO Paper*. Oslo, Norway: PRIO.

and employees were excluded. Care was taken to produce a sample that included married and unmarried women, widows and female heads of household. In urban areas, care was taken to ensure that one-roomed households were included, although other families may have occupied quarters in the same building.

The study was complemented by in-depth interviews with key informants from different categories, including officials, local leaders, women's networks and civil society organisations (CSOs), and private-sector and religious leaders. Four women with more elaborate histories relating to the topic under study were selected in each district to furnish more detailed accounts of their pasts, and how these related to women's economic activity, political participation and empowerment. Each was chosen from one urban division and/or rural sub-county, and serve as the basis for the case studies in the report. Selection was based on the richness of personal experience and the women's willingness to engage at length with the researchers.

Further detail on the study sample and overall methodology is included at Annex 1.

2. Mapping women's changing economic activities in Northern Uganda

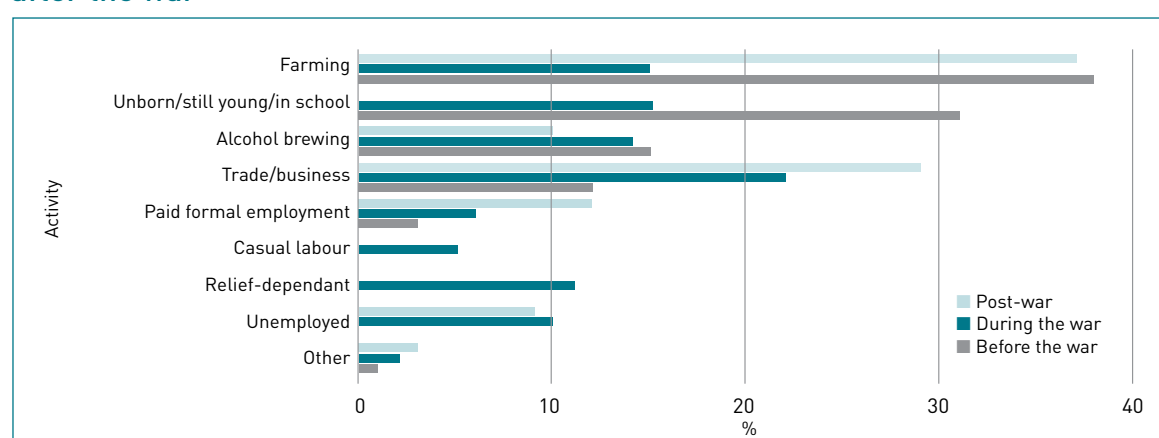
The war had a drastic impact on economic life, destroying infrastructure, markets, investment and livelihoods; critically reshaping the demographic and skills base of the region; and compounding divisions between the north and south of the country.¹³ At 64 percent in rural and 40 percent in urban areas, Northern Uganda has the nation's highest rates of poverty. Against this backdrop, the study tracked the changes in women's economic activities that have taken place during and since the conflict.

Table 1 and Figure 1 below show the main economic activities and circumstances before, during and after the conflict for women interviewed in Gulu and Lira. These will be discussed in the analysis below.¹⁴

Table 1: Main economic activities/circumstances for women before, during and after the war

Main economic activity	Before the war		During the war ¹⁵		Post-war	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Farming	82	38	34	15	74	37
(Unborn/Still young/In school)	68	31	35	15	0	0
Alcohol brewing	33	15	31	14	19	10
Trade/business	25	12	51	22	57	29
Paid formal employment	7	3	14	6	23	12
Casual labour	0	0	11	5	0	0
Relief-dependant	0	0	26	11	0	0
Unemployed	0	0	23	10	18	9
Other	3	1	5	2	6	3
Total	218	100	230	100	197	100

Figure 1: Main economic activities/circumstances for women before, during and after the war



¹³ For further discussion on the economic impacts of the conflict, see International Alert (2008). Op. cit. pp.14-25.

¹⁴ Sex work is not shown in the data, though respondents and key informants report a rise in sex work during and after the war. While it can scarcely be described as an "emerging economic opportunity", some women adopted sex work as a livelihood strategy and a way of earning money. Other women had "marital" liaisons with soldiers as a form of protection. Others had, and continue to have, liaisons with men for money. This report did not go into further detail on the relationship between sex work as a livelihood strategy in the post-conflict context of Northern Uganda.

¹⁵ Figures before and during the war are based on multiple responses (which is why the total number of responses is above 200); figures after the conflict are based on valid cases with a single response (which is why the total is below 200).

2.1 Pre-war economic activities

The survey for this report generalised the pre-war period in interviews with participants, focusing on the immediate pre-war period that they recalled i.e. in their lifetimes. Further back, Acholi and Lango society have experienced different periods of change and transition, including those affecting women and gender roles.¹⁶ Nonetheless, according to survey respondents, it is fair to describe the immediate pre-war society as characterised by a relatively clear gender division of labour, with women undertaking specific household tasks. Unemployment, casual labour and relief dependency were largely absent. Women engaged in subsistence farming and, if they sold produce at all, it was on a small scale in nearby markets that also provided basic commodities like salt, paraffin, soap or local alcoholic beverages (*ajono*, *marwa*, *enguli*). In urban areas, women engaged in petty trade to a small extent, chiefly for cash for immediate consumption.

Women primarily operated within the confines of the home, with a negligible degree of commercialisation and low exchange of goods. Brewing and the sale of alcoholic beverages were women's most important cash-generating economic activities. There was a further demarcation between cash (cotton and tobacco) and food crops, where production was mainly for subsistence. The cash-crop economy – the community's main source of cash income – was largely controlled by men in the pre-conflict period; if women participated at all, it was through their labour as part of the household, rather than in an independent capacity.¹⁷

2.2 War and necessity: Women's economic activities during the war

'You know during the war, when we were mostly packed in the camps, our activities were limited, depending on the situation at hand. At times when you could hear or learn that the rebels had gone to other parts of the district, you could sneak home and collect firewood for sale in the camp.'

(Women, focus group discussion, Bungatira sub-county, Gulu.)

The conflict threw this traditional division of economic roles and market segments into disarray. People were forced to flee to camps, others were abducted and some were killed. Insecurity triggered a dramatic fall in the region's productive capacity and some women reported that for the first time they were "doing nothing" i.e. unemployed, without any return for their labour. A large number became dependent on relief. Tilling the land for subsistence was no longer viable for fear of rebel attack. This period of hardship forced women to look for alternative sources of livelihood.

Family survival came to depend heavily on women, as large numbers of men were caught up in the conflict through recruitment in Local Defence Units (*militia* in Acholi and *amuka* in Lango), by joining the Uganda People's Defence Forces or being abducted by the LRA. Many others were killed. A trend towards alcoholism among men further contributed to their "demobilisation" as providers, while women risked going out to cultivate in nearby areas or engaged in petty trade in the camps. This impact of the conflict forced women out of their households to search for other means of survival, increasing their mobility and public presence. This shift in roles has continued into the post-war period.

The most notable change in women's economic activities during the war was the growth of trading and other cash-related activities. 'It was unheard of for one to be selling *pai-pai* (paw-paw) in

16 See for instance J. El-Bushra and I. Sahl (2005). Op. cit; D. R. Pain (1975). *Incorporation, Participation and Division in Northern Uganda*. PhD Dissertation, University of Cambridge.

17 This division reflects nationwide trends. In Uganda control of high and low value crops is gendered. According to a recent study, in intra-household, decision-making patterns, land under high-value perennial crops is controlled 44.9 percent by husbands, as opposed to 9.4 percent by wives. This contrasts with low value crops where wives control over 45 percent compared to husbands' 5.8 percent. See Danida (2009). *Gender situational analysis of agriculture and local government processes in Northern Uganda and West Nile*.

the days before the war,' said one respondent in Gulu. Foods and fruits, hitherto for domestic consumption, became saleable in a camp setting. As the conflict dragged on, the commercialisation of relief items, such as *posho* (maize flour), beans, cooking oil and household equipment began to develop, with women selling rations to buy other necessities. Others registered "ghost" beneficiaries to acquire surplus relief items for re-sale.

Alcohol brewing remained at almost the same level as in the pre-war period, but assumed a greater importance as a source of income. Some women set up small eating areas in the camps, while others operated kiosks. In a further change, women found casual work on the construction sites of the social infrastructure being built to service the camps; as well as in other people's gardens or businesses.

Camp life also saw the launch of revolving-loan savings schemes or *Bol'i Cup* ("drop something in the box"). These had existed before the war, but flourished in camp conditions. In response to women's own initiatives, members of women's groups would pool an amount of money for onward lending to individuals to realise investments in businesses such as the sale of foodstuffs, charcoal and brewing, with the profits shared. A number of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and development agencies began to support women by enhancing their economic capacity in this period.

2.3 Women's economic activities in the post-war era

As the population begin to rebuild their lives in the wake of relative peace, women continue to carry the burdens of the conflict period. In most of the households studied for this report, a pattern emerges of comparative male absence and women's strong presence. The study found women living as single mothers, aged and widowed; or in relationships where spouses contributed little or nothing.

While the general picture was of women living in no permanent partnerships, a closer questioning of 200 women participants showed that a majority (67 percent) were in some form of binding marriage relationship (see Table 2 below).

Table 2: Marital status of survey respondents by district

Marital status	Lira		Gulu		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Never married	5	5	9	9	14	7
Married monogamy	53	55	48	48	101	52
Married polygamy	16	17	14	14	30	15
Separated/divorced	7	7	8	8	15	8
Widowed	15	16	21	21	36	18
Total	96	100	100	100	196	100

Because the sample was not representative, it is not possible to conclude whether the majority of women in the selected areas are married or not. Marital status is a tricky question for women, who may state they are married in order to conform to social custom. Nevertheless, in the majority of households, women shoulder the responsibility for family support. As discussed later in this report, the majority of men, if not physically or psychologically disabled, are reportedly sufficiently demoralised that they spend most of their time in alcohol consumption. The cases of Abeja (Lira) and Lakot (Gulu) vividly demonstrate that a large number of women live with men so traumatised by the conflict that they have effectively replaced them as heads of households.

Abeja (Lira)

I am a customarily married woman, Primary 5 drop-out, aged 39. I got married at 18 and I have nine children. My husband and I were farmers, and we used to do both garden work and taking care of animals. We had nine cows and 21 goats at that time and it is through these activities that we were able to take care of our children and send them to school. After 32 years of happiness, my life changed due to the war. My son was captured and I have never seen him to date. My husband developed mental problems due to torture by the rebels.

We lived in Obim camp as the safest place. I did nothing for a living and survived from World Food Programme aid. I returned to an empty home in 2006, due to the unbearable camp life and the relative peace in the village. We engaged in farming and invested the savings in brewing. The war has changed everything in my life. I used not to brew alcohol and had never thought of such, but I had no alternative. I am the husband and wife of this home. Look, my husband is like a baby. He does nothing because he cannot even think for himself.

I have just joined a women's group. I have also been attending trainings conducted by Church of Uganda on modern farming methods. Other women have got loans for their businesses, but I am unable to acquire a loan because I have to remain at home caring for my mentally disturbed husband. I have a heavy burden of caring for the children, especially their education, and my husband's mental condition.

Lakot (Gulu)

I am a Primary 4 drop-out widow, aged 40 with ten children. My customarily married husband, then in the army (Obote government), used to provide everything while I stayed at home to do household chores. I was elected a leader of women in the army barracks and my role was to solve family conflicts. We ran in different directions when Museveni overthrew the government in 1986. I went back home with my two kids having failed to trace my husband. I engaged in cultivation and brewing local alcohol (*marwa* and *waragi*) to cater for my children. The Lakwena war forced us to move to town (Gulu), where I started selling charcoal and also collecting water at construction sites. I opened a small kiosk out of my savings and I could sell salt, onions, cooking oil, fish and other small things. When my children grew up, they helped me in the kiosk while I engaged in trade. I would buy produce, such as *sim-sim*, bananas, beans and maize, from villages and re-sell them in town. This was disrupted, for I had to look after my daughter after she had an accident and was hospitalised for several months. Produce business collapsed and I resumed kiosk business again.

I joined a group of 30 women where we collect money and give it to one member to inject in business. We usually collect an agreed amount, like Shs 2,000 (US\$0.90) per week. I invested my money from this group into brewing *waragi* and *marwa*. My income started increasing and I have now even started selling beers, *molokony* (sauce made of cow's legs) and soft drinks.

I really think it is because of the war and suffering I faced that my life changed. It made me think deeply because I was left alone now without the support of my husband. Many women, especially those of my group, are at least doing some small business and I think it has made a big difference to our lives. Through my good leadership and successful business, the women in my group decided to elect me as their chairperson.

Recent studies put the proportion of households headed by women as a result of war as high as 45 percent in Acholi and 69 percent in Lango districts.¹⁸

¹⁸ M. V. Nakiboneka (2009). Op. cit. p.109.

The post-war period witnessed a further expansion of cash-related activities by women, as circumstances continued to propel them to the head of family survival strategies. Increased competition has seen profit become a key motivating factor in how women choose their livelihood options. Women are individually and collectively engaged in farming, trade and business, paid employment and alcohol brewing. The study participants' identification of the new opportunities available to them is summarised in Tables 3 and 4 below. This report will proceed to discuss each sector in detail.

Table 3: Primary source of new economic opportunities for women

Opportunity	No.	%
Business/trade	44	29
Agriculture	33	22
NGOs/CBOs	27	18
Financial	26	17
Government	9	6
Crafts/vocational	5	3
Road reconstruction	4	2
Social services	3	2
Other	2	1
Total	153	100

Table 4: Women's current economic activities by district

District		Main activity for a living						Total
		Trade/business	Farming	Formal/paid employment	Alcohol brewing	Unemployed	Other	
Lira	No.	34	26	14	9	8	6	97
	% within	35	27	14	9	8	6	100
Gulu	No.	23	48	9	10	10	0	100
	% within	23	48	9	10	10	0	100
Total	No.	57	74	23	19	18	6	197
	Overall %	29	38	12	10	9	3	100

2.3.1 Farming

'Women have now gone back to farming, but with a business mind.'

(Key Informant interview, Commercial Officer, Gulu district.)

The current period of relative peace has seen most IDPs return to the rural areas where women have resumed farming in numbers almost equal to the pre-war period. However, the way women engage in agricultural production has changed. In some cases, they have responded to the invitations of national and foreign commercial companies to work as contract growers of oilseed crops (sunflower and soya beans), cotton, upland rice and maize, individually or in collectives. Working with community-based organisations and farmers' groups, the Food and Agricultural Organisation (FAO), Agricultural Cooperative Development International/Volunteers in Overseas Cooperative Assistance (ACDI/VOCA), Agency for Cooperation and Technical Development (ACTED) and United States Agency for International Development (USAID) have provided women's groups with seeds, ox ploughs, goats, chickens and access to markets. They offer training in agronomic practices, business skills, credit and savings, nutrition and hygiene. These initiatives were designed to support the resettlement process, reduce poverty and contribute to food security in Northern Uganda. Women are also engaged in value-added, post-harvest handling, the use of labour and time-saving technologies, and have become prominent in farmers' groups under government initiatives, such as the ongoing National Agricultural Advisory Services (NAADS) scheme.

2.3.2 Trade

'Fish-mongering in Gulu is monopolised by women. There are three women's groups engaged in fish-mongering and it is difficult to penetrate this business now.'

(Key Informant interview, Commercial Officer, Gulu district.)

Women make up the majority of market and street vendors, especially in evening markets, and sell cereals, vegetables, fish, other foodstuffs and second-hand clothes. The brewing and selling of alcohol has been in comparative decline in the post-war period, but are still significant economic activities, along with the sale of bottled beers and spirits. Women's trade in food has expanded vastly, with local crops now sold across the region and over the border to South Sudan. Most agricultural products – millet, groundnuts, potatoes, cassava, vegetables, fruits and maize – are in high demand and a new word, *awaro*, has been coined to describe women who buy and sell goods for profit.

Cross-border trade with South Sudan is particularly lucrative and women play a significant role as petty traders on the Juba route. To meet demand they often buy-in foodstuffs from other districts of Uganda: women from Gulu buy *matooke* (plantain) from Mbarara and Ntungamo, and fish from Jinja and Apac. Santa Akongo's case provides further detail.¹⁹

Santa Akongo (Kitgum)

I dropped out of school at 17 years due to pregnancy. I subsequently married the man responsible and had a baby girl. My husband was at that time working with Uganda Electricity Board and I would follow him on transfer. I would only do house work. We separated when we were in Kitgum because of the war in 1986 when the Tito Okello group forced my husband to drive them up to Sudan. He disappeared for very many years.

I came back, without anything, to stay with my mother because I could not manage staying in Kitgum alone. I asked my mum to give me start-up capital for a business. She gave me one big bull and I sold it at Shs 4,000 in 1987. I used the capital to start selling fish. I would buy fish from Apac and sell it in Gulu main market. My friend, a fishmonger in Gulu, helped me to get a stall and allowed me to stay with her for some time. I paid the license, medical fitness, and rent for the stall. My friend took me to Jinja to get one bag of *wanjiri* (small-sized sundried fish) and she sent a little money to Apac to get *tilapia*. Since 1988 till now, I am in the fish business: I bring a pick-up of *wanjiri* once in a month. I also sell *agara* (salt fish) from West Nile where I bring a bundle of 300 pieces every two weeks. My business is valued at approximately Shs 1 million (US\$450). Selling fish is tricky. If you bring a lot it rots, if there is a lot of rain, it is difficult to keep the fish preserved. I go to Jinja and Apac myself while I employ a girl to go to Juba for me. We formed an association called Acholi Women Fish-Mongers in 1995 and I am the chairperson. I have also undergone trainings run by Gulu commercial officers and the Uganda Investment Authority in entrepreneurship, business, marketing, bookkeeping and customer care; and a one-week training in micro-finance.

It was also reported that catering services (especially small-scale, but also some of the larger restaurants in district capitals) are currently dominated by women: as proprietors, suppliers and workers. The owners of Pe Yero, Homecare Malitabu, and Katharina Hotel, are all women. The latter is one of just two pre-qualified entities to supply food to Gulu's local government.

¹⁹ There is anecdotal evidence of sex work as a feature of cross-border Northern Uganda/South Sudan economic activity. Though relevant to wider gender dynamics, this aspect was not discussed with survey participants.

2.3.3 Participation in tendering for contracts

'I have been in the procurement department for nine years. Women have only recently come up to compete for contracts. Women go for small jobs, like routine road maintenance and market management.'

(Key Informant interview, Procurement Officer, Gulu district.)

Women have recently begun to participate in the procurement processes of local governments. In Gulu district, more women than men were appointed as market managers through the tender process during the 2008–09 financial year (see Table 5).

Table 5: Gulu district: Market management 2008–09

No.	Market	Provider	Contract value, Shs
1.	Acet	M	300,000 (US\$135)
2.	Labworomor	F	50,000 (US\$22.50)
3.	Palenga	M	142,000 (US\$64)
4.	Ongako Kal	F	50,000 (US\$22.50)
5.	Paicho	F	50,000 (US\$22.50)
6.	Coo-pe	M	150,000 (US\$67.50)
7.	Bobu Ka (Apio)	F	150,000 (US\$67.50)
8.	Malaba	Company	200,000 (US\$90)
9.	Unyama	F	100,000 (US\$45)
10.	Awach	F	100,000 (US\$45)
11.	Opit	M	450,000 (US\$203)
12.	Lalogi	M	50,000 (US\$22.50)
13.	Ajulu	F	50,000 (US\$22.50)
14.	Awoo	M	50,000 (US\$22.50)
15.	Obiya	F	30,000 (US\$13.50)
16.	Laliya	F	450,000 (US\$203)
	Total	(9 F, 6 M)	2,372,000 (US\$1,068.50)

A similar situation has occurred with regard to maintenance of feeder roads in Gulu district where more women than men have been contracted. Of 73 providers for routine road maintenance in 2008–09, 53 (78 percent) were female and 19 (26 percent) male, while one was a commercial company. These figures confirm an upward trend in women's participation in public procurement. Although women are now competing, the study respondents stated that very few tender for larger contracts, compared to male counterparts, due to the small amount of capital at their disposal.

2.3.4 Women's savings groups

Most agencies providing livelihoods support in Northern Uganda encourage women to form groups as a prerequisite for accessing financial and material capital, seeking to build on the success of the *Bol'i Cup* system that was a feature of camp life. Almost all of the women surveyed confirmed their membership of groups engaged in commercial agriculture (upland rice, beans), poultry production and livestock farming at one time or another. Village savings and loan schemes are now very common. While group formation began organically before and during the war period, there is now a proliferation and many agencies pre-required before making interventions. Difficulties related to this phenomenon are discussed in Section 5.3 below.

The growing number of commercial banks in Northern Uganda has helped women to obtain loan services, and to some extent expand their businesses. However, most are not able to utilise this facility due to lack of collateral. Women are rarely entitled to own land, a prerequisite for securing bank loans, while repayment terms are prohibitively high. Many women, nonetheless, reported opening accounts in different banks, are majority members in Lira and Gulu Savings and

Credit Cooperatives Organisations (SACCOs) (see Tables 6 and 7), and were active in borrowing but diligent in repayment.²⁰

Table 6: Gulu district SACCO membership, September 2009

Sub-county	SACCO name	F	M	T	C/P	V/C	Treasurer	Manager	Sec
1. Paicho	1. Para-Pul	212	202	414	M	F	M	M	M
	2. Paicho	54	36	90	M	M	F		M
2. Layibi	3. Gulu Municipal	302	452	754	F	M	F	M	M
	4. Konye Kenwu								
3. Bobi	5. Pi-Lwak	329	174	503	F	M	M	M	F
	6. Palenga Community	44	55	99	M	M	F	M	M
	7. Bobi Community	23	58	81	M	M	F	M	M
4. Lakwana	8. Atek Ki Lwak	121	234	355	M	M	M	F	M
5. Bardege	9. Akwaya	2,089	939	3,028	M	F	M	M	M
	10. Kasubi Bardege	164	156	320	M	M	F	M	M
	11. Lacor Hospital Workers	420	218	638	M	F	M		M
	12. Rubanga Tek	37	67	104	M	F	M		M
	13. Gulu Catechist Farmers	49	153	202	M	M	M		M
6. Laroo	14. Voluntary	82	63	145	M	F	F	F	F
	15. Laroo	40	25	65	M	M	M		M
	16. Gulu Elder League	128	178	306	M	M	M	M	M
7. Ongako	17. Ongako	348	178	526	M	M	M	M	M
	18. Can pe Ciko	52	10	62	F	F	F	M	M
	19. Gulu Kwo Tek	43	61	104	M	M	M	F	M
8. Bungatira	20. Bungatira Farmers								
	21. Gulu Rural								
9. Lalogi	22. Lalogi Sub-county	13	24	37	M	M	F		M
	23. Lalogi Farmers								
10. Pece Division	24. Gulu Village	148	153	301	F	M	F	M	M
	25. Pece Division	68	65	133	M	M	F		M
	26. Gulu SACCO								
	27. Acholi	123	79	202	M	F	F	M	M
11. Patiko	28. Ajulu								
	29. Oceco Got Mola	41	29	70	M	M	F		M
12. Palaro	30. Palaro	37	52	89	M	M	M	M	M
13. Awach	31. Awach	15	23	38	M	M	M		M
14. Odek	32. Odek								
15. Koro	33. Koro Community								
	34. Akwo ki Lweta	53	28	81	M	F	M		M
TOTAL		5,035	3,712	8,747					

Key: C/P = Chairperson, VC = Vice-Chairperson, Sec = Secretary, M = Male, F = Female. Blank = information unavailable.

Source: UCSCO, Lira Regional Office Records, as of September 2009

²⁰ SACCOs are perceived as serving rural populations better than conventional micro-finance institutions (MFIs), and have been strongly promoted by government as a part of its Rural Finance Strategy. Others criticise SACCOs for creating market distortions, arguing that the scheme leads government to providing the services itself, rather than creating an enabling environment for other schemes to flourish. Cases of fraud and corruption associated with SACCOs, which are frequently formed on political party lines, are also rife. See International Alert (2008). Op. cit.

Table 7: Lira district SACCO membership, September 2009

Sub-county	SACCO name	F	M	T	C/P	V/C	Treasurer	Manager	Sec
1. Amach	1. Amach Farmers	33	75	108	M	M	F	M	M
2. Amugu	2. Amugu	16	43	59	M	M	M		F
3. Olilim	3. Olilim	54	90	144	M	M	F		M
	4. Ipito Gweno	304	263	567	M	M	F	F	M
4. Aromo	5. Aromo	19	103	122	M	M	M	M	M
	6. Baar Rural Development	139	309	448	M	F	M	M	M
	7. Baar Apwo	60	50	110	M	F	F	F	M
5. Ojwina Division	8. Lira Diocese	418	261	679	M	M	M	M	M
	9. Lira District Women	151		151	F	F	F	M	F
6. Aloï	10. Aloï	87	78	165	M	F	M	M	M
7. Ogur	11. Ogur	67	26	93	M	F	F	M	F
8. Ojwina Division	12. Oribcing Women Group	713	1,171	1,884	F	M	F	F	M
9. Amach S/C	13. Amach SACCO	72	191	263	M	M	F	M	M
10. Railway Division	14. Railway Div	2	3	5	M	M	M		M
11. Lira	15. Lira SACCO	101	70	171					
12. Adyel Div	16. Starch Factory	49	89	138	M	M	M	M	M
	17. Lira Female Teachers	221	18	239	F	F	F	M	F
13. Central	18. Lira Central	128	180	308	M	M	M	F	M
	19. Lira District Elders	256	47	303	M	M	M	F	M
14. Ojwina	20. Ojwina pur kede kwoch	206	32	238	F	F	F	F	F
	21. Lira District								
	22. Hunger Alert								
	23. Odokomit	158	143	301	M	M	F	M	M
	24. Otim ikomwa								
	25. Bar-Ogole	75	185	260					
15. Orum	26. Orum			0	M	M	F		M
16. Abako	27. Abako	60	140	200	M	F	M		M
17. Apala	28. Apala	32	86	118	M	M	F		M
18. Adwari	29. Adwari	60	100	160					
19. Adekokwok	30. Yelle Atek	10	40	50	F	F	F	M	F
	TOTAL	3,491	3,793	7,284					

Key: C/P = Chairperson, VC = Vice-Chairperson, Sec = Secretary, M = Male, F = Female. Blank = information unavailable.

Source: UCSC0, Lira Regional Office Records, as of September 2009

2.3.5 Paid employment

Several NGOs and development agencies have introduced voucher- and cash-for-work schemes. As will be discussed below, most require that half the beneficiaries are women, as part of a commitment to “gender mainstreaming”, while others target women as a particular group. This casual labour has spelled further economic opportunities for women in the region. Women are also represented in most civil service departments, parastatal organisations, NGOs, banks and factories. The formerly male-dominated armed forces (the army, police, prisons and private

security agencies) now employ a sizeable number of women at different ranks. Other women are employed as domestic staff and gardeners.

Arach (Gulu)

I am a 28-year-old university graduate, single with two children. War forced us to leave the village while I was a second-year student in secondary school and we went to Gulu town. My uncle continued to pay fees for me and I finished the sixth year of secondary school amidst difficulties and hardships. I used to work in people's gardens for money on weekends and holidays to enable me to buy school materials and other requirements.

Determined to get a university education, I approached the then Gulu woman MP, who secured me a job in a hardware shop as a shop attendant/sales woman. I passed and went to a national teachers college but would work at the shop during the holidays and weekends. After finishing the diploma course, I joined university, where the company agreed to pay half of my tuition.

Right now I am still at the hardware shop. Working here has helped me a lot. I bought two plots of land in Pader using wages, and on one plot I have constructed a house which I rent out. I have made many friends among the customers who come to buy their building materials here. I am so engaged in the shop and have not needed to explore other opportunities out there.

My life has changed greatly since the end of the war. Our operation used to be limited but now I can go to the field, supervise work in cases where the company has been contracted to build somewhere or for road construction. When I go to supervise I get allowances which I used not to get during the war.

Generally, I could say this war has acted as an eye-opener to very many people, especially the women, in that they have started participating in economic activities actively, as it used not to be before here in Acholi. Women used not to own property. It was even unheard of to find women owning land or animals while the husband is around. All this has changed.

In spite of the advances apparent in the above discussion, only 49 of 200 women interviewed replied affirmatively when asked if they had benefitted from post-war economic opportunities. Seeking to explain this discrepancy, researchers noted a common conceptualisation of "post-war economic opportunities" as referring to outside interventions by government and development agencies, rather than self-generated options. Nonetheless, the rich and detailed insights shared by respondents illustrate that a notable shift in economic opportunities has indeed taken place, and that women have taken on a number of new and profitable roles. In so doing they are making a significant contribution to Northern Uganda's economy.

3. Implications for women's empowerment and political participation

One aim of this report is to understand how the change in women's economic lives following the war in Northern Uganda impacted on their participation at other levels. Many have benefited from the training and empowerment schemes provided by NGOs and development agencies while others became involved in community peacebuilding initiatives in IDP camps (see below). These experiences have enhanced the gains in mobility, confidence and public access created by their increased economic presence.

3.1 Holding the purse-strings: Increased decision making in the home?

'Women take care of the family needs. They can afford to pay for their children in good schools, both in primary and secondary – even the women in the villages here.'

(Key Informant interview, MP, Aswa county.)

The conflict in Northern Uganda has led to a shift in household roles and responsibilities, with women increasingly in charge of the family livelihood, and working in income-generating activities to secure this. Participants in the survey reported that their profits from economic activities helped them meet family expenses, such as food, clothing, medicine, school fees, bedding and utensils. Others have rented larger houses and moved on from their camp accommodation. These benefits are summarised in Table 8 below.

Table 8: Reported benefits from women's post-war economic activities

Benefit	No.	%
None	31	33
Pay school fees	19	20
Afford basics	18	19
Trade/business income	13	14
Savings and loans	7	7
Group synergy	2	2
Other	5	5
Total	95	100

When asked in what household decisions they now actively participate, women prioritised the following, set out in Table 9 below.²¹

Table 9: Family decisions in which women are involved

Decisions	No.	%
Children's welfare	70	32
All	52	24
Family welfare	44	20
Income, expenses and business	19	9
Farming	15	7
None	14	6
Other	6	2
Total	220	100

²¹ Comparative data from the pre-war period was not revealed by the study, but women reported an increased influence in decision making in general terms.

Twenty-four percent of the women surveyed, especially widows, separated and divorced females, reported participating in *all* family decisions. Women in polygamous – as compared to monogamous – marriages were also more likely to participate in making decisions. Overall, 52 percent participated in decisions related to family and children’s welfare. Interestingly, given the large number engaged in economic activity, only nine percent said they were involved in making decisions about income, expenses and business, while seven percent participated in farming decisions. The explanation for this may lie in women’s interpretation of the terms “farming”, “business” and “investment” as larger-scale activities (in which few are involved), despite the economic value in terms of the small-scale ventures where they do predominate. Very few women (six percent) said they took no part at all in family decisions. Table 10 highlights additional details related to women’s decision-making role in the home.

Table 10: Different aspects of women’s decision making in the home

Question	%				No.
	Yes	No	N/A	Other	
1. Are you involved in deciding which school a child in your family should go to?	81	7	11	2	196
2. Do you take part in deciding the selling of the family harvest?	65	6	29	1	192
3. When going away from your home, do you ask permission from your husband or spouse?	63	14	23	0	193
4. Do you decide on the purpose for which family land is used?	62	24	10	3	197
5. Do you decide on how to use money earned from the sale of the family harvest?	57	11	29	3	195
6. Are you involved in deciding the sale or purchase of animals in your family?	54	15	29	2	196

Key informants added to the perception that women have taken on an expanded level of responsibility in household management, including decision making, as their economic influence has grown. This was attributed to women’s enhanced financial capacity since the conflict, in some cases greater than their husbands’. Although women in urban areas are perceived as having more power in the household than their rural counterparts, the actual responses challenge the assumption of an urban/rural difference. This may be because almost all women were in IDP camps during the war and the more marked urban/rural differences have since blurred. Compared to married women, single women and widows have exclusive control of decision making and property ownership, and take decisions without reference to the extended family. The fact that this category of women forms a sizeable number in Northern Uganda impacts on the larger picture of women’s power in the community. The overall picture is one of relative women’s empowerment, both at individual and collective levels.

3.2 Beyond the household: Women’s increasing public presence and political participation

‘There is a big impact. Once you are empowered with resources, you are more bold and confident to take up leadership positions.’

(Key Informant interview, Commercial Officer, Gulu district.)

Where women were traditionally confined to the domestic sphere, the survey confirms they now are present in a number of public arenas. Women have a stronger profile in marketplaces, and are increasingly taking leadership positions in market organisation (see Table 4 above). They attend workshops and training courses run by NGOs and development partners, and researchers noted how familiar women have become with the language of rights, both in urban and rural settings.

This may be due to the amount of sensitisation work conducted during the war when people were living in camps.

At a community level, women are part of the various decision-making spaces and community programmes. As already discussed, they are well represented in groups and associations, including small but significant advances at leadership level within SACCOs, as well as through the NAADS programme (see Table 11 below).

Table 11: Lira and Gulu district SACCOs leadership, September 2009

District	Chairperson		Vice-chairperson		Treasurer		Secretary	
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
Gulu	22	4	14	8	10	12	20	2
Lira	19	5	15	9	10	14	18	6

About half of the women surveyed, with a slight majority in Gulu district, indicated that they are able to influence public opinion and community members in some way. Table 12 shows the views of women regarding participation in public influence and decision making.

Table 12: Aspects of women's public influence and decision making

Question	%	
	Yes	No
1. Are you a member of any group or organisation?	42	58
2. Are you able to influence the opinions of other community members?	45	55
3. Have you made any financial contributions to a public or community project over the last 12 months?	22	78
4. Do you hold any position in the local (LC 3, sub-county level, or LC 5, district level) or central government?	3	97
5. Have you ever contributed to an election campaign of any candidate?	14	86
6. Have you ever been a campaign agent for candidate?	13	87
7. Did you vote in the 2006 general elections (presidential, parliamentary or local)?	79	21
8. Do you plan to vote in the 2011 general elections (presidential, parliamentary or local)?	92	8
9. Have you ever participated in presenting any petition (written or verbal) to any authority?	5	95
10. Have you ever participated in any government/LRA peace initiative?	8	92

According to a number of key informants, women have been propelled by their economic power to compete for leadership positions. To some extent it is possible to correlate political power at the community level with income: 40 percent of women who said they were unable to influence the opinions of other community members were in the lowest income category (those with an income of less than Shs 60,000 (US\$27) per month. Ninety-seven percent of women in the lowest income bracket said they did not hold any position in local or central government, implying that a low income is associated with exclusion from official positions. Most women holding government positions reported a monthly income above Shs 180,000 (US\$81), although two councillors reported an income below Shs 60,000 (US\$27) per month. Forty percent of the women who had provided financial support in electoral politics earned above Shs 360,000 (US\$162) per month. The case of Lamunu, below, typifies the connection between economic opportunity and political influence. However, the number of women who held political leadership positions (three percent), directly advocated for issues through direct or indirect petitions to government (five percent), or participated in government/LRA peace talks, show that women's leadership is still some distance from active political participation.

Lamunu (Lira)

I am a diploma holder, aged 38. I am currently teaching in primary school. I dropped out in Primary 5 due to pregnancy and delivered twins. My auntie stayed with the one-year-old babies and sent me back to school. I sat for Uganda Certificate of Education examinations in 1996. I would help auntie to brew and sell alcohol, after which I went back for a diploma.

I started rearing chickens as I waited for a job posting. My husband provided me with capital. Unfortunately my husband was later killed by rebels. I started teaching while caring for my four children. Currently I have a third husband with whom I have two more children. I do farming, in addition to teaching and chicken-rearing.

I am a member of a group which sells herbal medicines and food supplements on commission. There are a lot of economic opportunities for women, which they learnt from NGOs, such as rearing chicken, keeping cattle, beadwork, and so on. The post-war situation has changed to some extent because a lot of hotels have come up in town and there is a high demand for chicken, which is good for me because I always have a market.

Economic participation has made a difference in my life because now I earn a lot of money, about Shs 500,000 (US\$225) a month from my salary and business, and it has given me confidence that I can do more. I was an agent for one candidate in the previous elections; but the candidate withdrew at the last moment. I love politics and campaigns, and hope one day to campaign myself for a government position. Maybe with time, I will stand for a government post and leave teaching, and be able to build a big permanent house for family. My major problem is the high cost of food.

There is also an aspect of “political apprenticeship”, whereby women who have joined groups have also acquired a range of skills relevant to activism in public life.²² Engagement in such activities has provided training spaces for women in public leadership. Though the political impact should not be exaggerated, this dynamic has created openings in an otherwise male-dominated world.²³

Women are politically active as voters, as evidenced both by the overwhelming majority who voted in the 2006 election (79 percent); and the 92 percent who intend to vote in the 2011 general elections. Some have acted as campaign agents though, because of low incomes, few reported providing candidates with financial support. Women also reported high levels of confidence in other women as leaders, as shown in Table 13 below.

Table 13: Willingness to vote for women

District	Lira				Gulu			
	Yes		No		Yes		No	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
President of Uganda	64	66	33	34	66	70	29	30
Constituency open seat MP	85	92	7	8	73	82	16	18
LC V chairperson	64	72	25	28	62	69	28	31
LC III chairperson	63	70	27	30	65	71	26	29
LC I chairperson	68	75	23	25	69	74	24	26

On average, with variations between districts, around 70 percent of women said they would vote for a woman as president, constituency MP or chairpersons of LC V, LC III and LC I if they stood

22 This idea is explored in A. M. Goetz (2003). ‘The problem with patronage: Constraints on women’s political effectiveness in Uganda’, in A. M. Goetz and S. Hassim (Eds.) (2003). *No shortcuts to power: African women in politics and policymaking*. London: Zed Books.

23 J. Ahikire (2007). *Localised or localising democracy: Gender and the politics of decentralisation in contemporary Uganda*. Kampala, Uganda: Fountain Publishers.

for office. Due to a widespread belief that the job of MP is “easier”, there is more willingness to vote for a woman MP than all other positions named in the table.

Asked why they would vote for women, various participants responded that not only were women capable of holding those positions, but that they would better represent women's needs and interests. The minority, who argued that they would not vote for women, said Ugandan politics is too violent and militarised for women. They said that men are “naturally” more suited for such positions; that if they voted for a woman, she would never “go through” because of election rigging; and that if a woman was voted in, she would not “succeed” and their votes would be wasted. These arguments reflect the dominant patriarchal ideology in which men are “natural rulers”. Moreover, despite the 70 percent of women who said they would vote for women, voting patterns in the two districts have not followed such a trend. While there is a readiness to vote for women, this contrasts with the persistence of the patriarchal attitudes held by women, compounded by the fact that very few women actually stand for office.²⁴ In Northern Uganda these dynamics are further complicated by the fact that many women who do stand for election hail from the ruling National Resistance Movement (NRM) party, whose popularity is very low, implying that issues of political allegiance may outweigh gender in influencing women's voting patterns.²⁵

Despite the ambitions of individuals like Lamunu and the confidence women express in other women as leaders, very few hold positions in local government beyond the mandatory positions set aside in LCs, as provided for in the Local Government Act 1997. Some women are preparing to contest the 2011 elections, including the posts of mayor and LC V chairperson in Gulu district, but the overall picture shows women lagging behind in terms of political aspirations. The Gulu District Council consists of 26 LC V members, of whom 11 are women, but only one of the latter actually ran for office. Eight of Lira's 21 LC V councillors are women, but all were appointed as a result of affirmative action and only one chairs a committee.

It should be noted that the correlation between an increasing number of women standing for public office, and enhanced gender equality, is not straightforward. Government has made significant progress in promoting affirmative action at local and national levels – 30 percent of Uganda's 332 parliamentarians are women, up from 18 percent in 1995 – and Uganda (along with Rwanda) is often seen as a model for women's political participation in Africa. However, despite the activism of some individual MPs – and occasional coordination on specific issues, such as the recent campaign against female circumcision – there has been less success in pushing through a package of women's rights, despite the advocacy of the Forum for Women in Democracy, Ugandan Women's Network (UWONET), Action for Development and the Ugandan Women Parliamentary Association.²⁶ Government reluctance to enact laws related to women's rights, such as the Domestic Violence Act (finally passed in 2010 after long delays and iterations) sounds a cautionary note that even at the policy level (let alone implementation) and bottlenecks remain. Women activists complain of political-party manipulation that compels female candidates to follow party agendas, rather than pursuing their own priorities.²⁷ However, many women MPs display a lack of concern on gender issues; and others stand accused of corruption and other abuses of office. The mandatory “woman MP” policy, moreover, may contribute to a “numbers game” by the NRM to boost its support in Uganda's growing number of districts (the increased number of women MPs since 1995 can be explained by the increased number of districts over the same period).²⁸

24 J. Ahikire and A. Madanda (2009). 'From no-party to multiparty competition: Analysing women's candidature in Uganda's 2006 national elections', *African Journal of Political Science and International Relations*, 3 (11). pp.460-475.

25 In the 2006 elections, all NRM women MPs in Acholi region lost their seats. See 'Eighty MPs Lose their Seats', *New Vision*, 27th February 2006.

26 'Uganda and the development goals', *The Guardian*, 29th March 2009.

27 EASSI and International Alert (2007). Op. cit.

28 E. Green (October 2007). 'Patronage, District Creation and Democracy in Uganda', LSE.

In other words, women can be as guilty as men of flawed, ineffective or partisan leadership. In this sense, women's political participation at the highest echelons of parliamentary and ministerial government should be seen as a means towards the gradual balancing of political agenda-setting between genders, rather than an end in itself. Nonetheless, it is a critical step on the path to gender parity.

3.3 Women's involvement in the peace process

From 1993–94 Betty Bigombe, then Minister for the Pacification of the North, was tasked with initiating talks with the LRA, the earliest example of a serious attempt by the government to talk peace with the insurgency leaders.²⁹ After several courageous meetings between the Bigombe team and the LRA – the first in Pagik, Gulu district in November 1993 – there was cautious optimism that peace might be achieved, though this soon evaporated and the violence resumed.

As documented elsewhere, women played a critical role in peace activism at a community level throughout the years of conflict.³⁰ During the conflict period, most women tried to remain with their families and support peace in their communities, appealing to fighting groups to disavow violence, encouraging rebels to return home and lobbying the government to promote reconciliation. Women were active in forming community-based organisations and local NGOs sought to address the consequences of conflict by promoting reconciliation, reintegration and regeneration.³¹

Northern Ugandan women were also instrumental in drawing international attention to the conflict. When the LRA abducted 139 girls from St. Mary's College, Aboke in October 1996, affected parents formed the Concerned Parents Association (CPA) to campaign for their release. Led by Deputy Headmistress Sister Rachele Fassera, parents Angelina Atyam and Okello Phoebe Norah, and others, CPA initiated a high-profile advocacy campaign that gained worldwide support and influenced the agenda in negotiations to end the conflict. Strong government backing helped to erode popular belief in the north of a "conspiracy of silence" and lack of political will to end the conflict.

Despite these initiatives, and the specific suffering women experienced in the war, government negotiators at the Juba Peace Talks were exclusively male (although the deputy chairman of the LRA delegation was a woman, as were several members). Neither the chief mediator's office nor other actors at the negotiating table made any attempt to include women in the process. In response, UWONET organised a march for peace in October 2007 to highlight UN Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325 (see box below), demanding that at least one-third of the Juba Peace Talks team be women.³² The demonstrators marched through conflict-affected districts before presenting a symbolic "Women's Peace Torch" to the negotiating teams – whereupon both sides shook hands for the very first time. The protest had some impact: UWONET gained observer status at the talks and four women were added to the government team.³³ Women's involvement in the Juba peace process was supported by the United Nations Fund for Women (UNIFEM), which funded their participation and advocacy to ensure women's voices were heard in the negotiations.

29 Civil Society Organisations for Peace in Northern Uganda (CSOPNU) [2003]. 'Pursuing Peace in Northern Uganda, Lessons from Peace Initiatives'. See www.csopnu.net/

30 Conciliation Resources [2002]. 'Protracted Conflict, Elusive Peace: Initiatives to End the Violence in Northern Uganda', *Accord*, 11 (2). It should be noted that women and girls were also perpetrators of violence, particularly those abducted by the LRA. See SWAY (2008). Op. cit.

31 R. Oywa [2002]. 'Women's Contribution to Peace Building in Northern Uganda'. See www.c-r.org/our-work/accord/northern-uganda/womens-contribution.php

32 EASSI (2008). *Uganda's Progress in Women's Rights Advancement 2000–06*.

33 The impact of UNSCR 1325 in the Juba Peace Process is discussed in detail in S. Ayoo [2009]. *Women and peace: Assessing women's participation in the Juba Peace Process from the lens of UNSCR 1325*. Kampala, Uganda: Care International; and AMWA (2007). *Women, Peace and Security: Lessons in Domesticating UN Resolution 1325 in Africa*.

UN Security Council Resolution 1325

The UN Security Council adopted Resolution 1325 (UNSCR 1325) at its 4213th meeting on 31st October 2000 in response to growing advocacy about both the experience of women during the conflict and their role in peacebuilding. Through UNSCR 1325, the Security Council:

1. **Urges** Member States to ensure increased representation of women at all decision making levels in national, regional and international institutions, and mechanisms for the prevention, management and resolution of conflict;
2. **Encourages** the Secretary General to implement his strategic plan of action calling for an increase in the participation of women at decision making levels in conflict resolution and peace processes;
3. **Urges** the Secretary General to appoint more women as special representatives and envoys to pursue good offices on his behalf, and in this regard calls on Member States to provide candidates to the Secretary General for inclusion in a regularly updated centralised roster;
4. **Further** urges the Secretary General to seek to expand the role and contribution of women in UN field-based operations, and especially among military observers, civilian police, human rights and humanitarian personnel;
5. **Expresses** its willingness to incorporate a gender perspective into peacekeeping operations and urges the Secretary General to ensure that, where appropriate, field operations include a gender component;
6. **Requests** the Secretary General to provide to Member States training guidelines and materials on the protection, rights and the particular needs of women, as well as on the importance of involving women in all peacekeeping and peacebuilding measures; invites Member States to incorporate these elements, as well as HIV/AIDS awareness training, into their national training programmes for military and civilian police personnel in preparation for deployment; and further requests the Secretary General to ensure that civilian personnel of peacekeeping operations receive similar training;
7. **Urges** Member States to increase their voluntary financial, technical and logistical support for gender-sensitive training efforts, including those undertaken by relevant funds and programmes, *inter alia*, UNIFEM, UNICEF, UNHCR and other relevant bodies;
8. **Calls** on all actors involved, when negotiating and implementing peace agreements, to adopt a gender perspective, including *inter alia*: (a) The special needs of women and girls during repatriation and resettlement and for rehabilitation, reintegration and post-conflict reconstruction; (b) Measures that support local women's peace initiatives and indigenous processes for conflict resolution, and that involve women in all of the implementation mechanisms of the peace agreements; (c) Measures that ensure the protection of and respect for human rights of women and girls, particularly as they relate to the constitution, the electoral system, the police and the judiciary;
9. **Calls** upon all parties to armed conflict to respect international law applicable to the rights and protection of women and girls as civilians: in particular the obligations applicable to them under the Geneva Conventions of 1949, and the Additional Protocols thereto of 1977; the Refugee Convention of 1951, and the Protocol thereto of 1967; the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) of 1979, and the Optional Protocol thereto of 1999; and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child of 1989 and the two Optional Protocols thereto of 25 May 2000; and to bear in mind the relevant provisions of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court;
10. **Calls** on all parties to armed conflict to take special measures to protect women and girls from GBV, particularly rape and other forms of sexual abuse, and all other forms of violence in situations of armed conflict;
11. **Emphasises** the responsibility of all States to put an end to impunity and to prosecute those responsible for genocide, crimes against humanity, war crimes including those relating to sexual violence against women and girls, and in this regard stresses the need to exclude these crimes, where feasible, from amnesty provisions;
12. **Calls** upon all parties to armed conflict to respect the civilian and humanitarian character of refugee camps and settlements, and to take into account the particular needs of women and girls, including in their design;

13. **Encourages** all those involved in the planning for disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration to consider the different needs of female and male ex-combatants, and to take into account the needs of their dependants;
14. **Reaffirms** its readiness, whenever measures are adopted under Article 41 of the Charter of the United Nations, to give consideration to their potential impact on the civilian population, bearing in mind the special needs of women and girls, in order to consider appropriate humanitarian exemptions;
15. **Expresses** its willingness to ensure that Security Council missions take into account gender considerations and the rights of women, including through consultation with local and international women's groups;
16. **Invites** the Secretary General to carry out a study on the impact of armed conflict on women and girls, the role of women in peacebuilding, and the gender dimensions of peace processes and conflict resolution; and further invites him to submit a report to the Security Council on the results of this study and to make this available to all Member States of the United Nations;
17. **Requests** the Secretary General, where appropriate, to include in his reporting to the Security Council, progress on gender mainstreaming throughout peacekeeping missions and all other aspects relating to women and girls;
18. **Decides** to remain actively seized of the matter.

According to a 2004 study by the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa and EASSI on the steps government had taken to meet the targets of the African Gender Development Index, Uganda scored nine percent on the recommendations of UNSCR 1325. Government had not ratified the resolution and did not envisage implementing legislation soon. Since the Juba Peace Process, the government now has an action plan to promote uptake of both UNSCR 1325 and UNSCR 1820 (which emphasises the importance of combating gender-based violence (GBV) during conflict); and the Goma Declaration on Eradicating Sexual Violence and Ending Impunity.³⁴ It is hoped that the action plan will give women their due place in current and future peacebuilding initiatives.

³⁴ Republic of Uganda (2008). The Uganda Action Plan on UNSCRs 1325 and 1820; and the Goma Declaration on Eradicating Sexual Violence and Ending Impunity in the Great Lakes Region (18th June 2008).

4. Constraints on women's economic and political empowerment

This report found that women in Northern Uganda have a stronger voice at household and community level due to shifts in gender roles and responsibilities in the economic sphere relative to the pre-war period. It has also discovered that women are more conscious of state-level, political processes and their relevance to daily life, as evidenced in their enthusiasm for voting. However, the participation of women in state structures of power does not reflect their increased influence in household and community affairs, or the peace economy. While women often struggle single-handedly for family survival and development, political power remains entrenched with men. The change in women's economic visibility has not translated into shifts in the dominant cultural values, which continue to be restrictive.

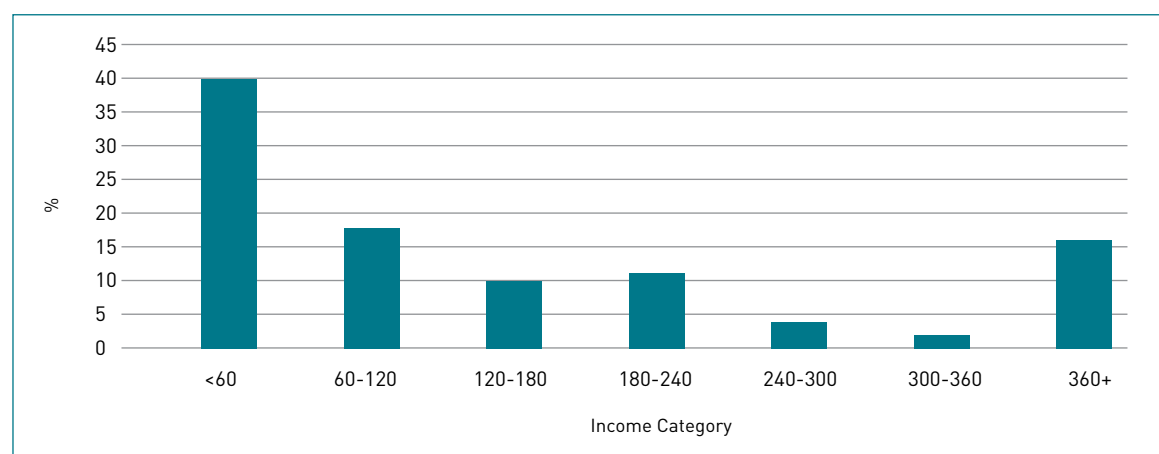
4.1 Women's workload: Old burdens and new responsibilities

One powerful explanation for the limitations women face at economic and political levels in Northern Uganda is that they are predominantly concentrated on achieving basic family survival, at least during the immediate recovery period. Income is unlikely to be invested in building political influence. Many respondents highlighted the heavy workload they endure. The new roles they have adopted are *in addition* to the old ones. This limits political ambition and aspiration, and the ability to engage in more complex, economic ventures. Public participation is largely in spaces where women hope to further consolidate their family survival strategies. There is also a feeling in communities that to further burden women by placing them in political positions would be "unfair" at this time.

4.2 Big effort, small returns

Women are working hard in post-war Northern Uganda and, as discussed throughout this report, making significant gains in earnings relative to the pre-war period. However, these accomplishments do not take them much above the poverty line, given a regional context of extreme poverty. Fifty-three percent of those surveyed reported an income below Shs 100,000 (US\$45) per month, and only 18 percent earn more than Shs 300,000 (US\$135) per month. Figure 3 below illustrates the current limitations on returns to women's economic activity.

Figure 2: Income category in Shs (000s, N=158)



Evidence of the challenges still facing women related to the scale of their economic activity can be found in the infrastructure sector. Key informants noted that women were unable to take advantage of economic opportunities arising from the PRDP's current focus on infrastructural development. Though women have had some success in public procurement, they have failed to start the kind of companies that will compete effectively during the bidding process. For works over Shs 200 million (US\$90,010), bidders must provide evidence of earlier contracts, bank guarantees, performance bonds, bid security, insurance and financial capacity. These requirements do not apply to contracts worth Shs 15-30 million (US\$6,750-13,500), but the majority of women do not have the capacity to undertake even these works. Women have not yet penetrated the brick-making industry and so are unable to supply construction sites. Women – and their children – monopolise the quarrying sector where they supply aggregate, but typically use hand tools to crush stones; benefits are negligible and returns low. In short, women's greater economic visibility has been achieved in the context of limited options.

4.3 Exclusion of women from land ownership

A 2004 study of patterns in land registration and ownership in Uganda from 1980–2002 indicated that male land ownership dominates in all regions, with an average of 63 percent. This pattern is particularly striking in Northern Uganda where male ownership stands at 78 percent.³⁵ According to another recent study, a majority of women in Northern Uganda reported “staying” on family land, though none owned land personally, as women are not entitled to do so under customary, land-ownership rules.³⁶ They may have user rights, through their husbands, but lose them on separation, or in the event of his death. Women's restricted rights to land translate into lack of choice over use, crops, livestock and other resources, yet they are still responsible for meeting family needs through their own labour.³⁷ Strengthening women's rights to land and housing is fundamental to improving their livelihood options, since they are otherwise susceptible to insecurity and exploitation. They are also prevented from providing collateral to raise the capital needed to expand their businesses.

4.4 Group formation: Losing the wood for the trees?

Development agencies, NGOs or government, as discussed above, have urged women in Northern Uganda to form groups as a pre-condition for accessing services, loans, farm inputs and grants. The ideology of “collectivisation” is a recognised tool of mainstream development in the region. But as women struggle to stay afloat, they are bombarded with demands for paperwork before they can qualify for assistance. The different actors require different information on a group's formation, related to their own programming guidelines (see box below). Women feel compelled to join a group in order to receive help, with the result that they tend to join multiple groups, leading to a “burden of participation”.³⁸

35 Associates for Development and Centre for Basic Research (2006). 'Gender monitoring baseline survey for the land sector strategic plan in 20 districts'. Ministry of Water, Lands and Environment.

36 M. V. Nakiboneka (2009). *Op. cit.*

37 Danida (2009). *Op. cit.*

38 The survey showed that 42 percent of respondents belonged to groups. Analysis suggested that the figure may be higher, but that respondents are influenced in their answers by their perception of what is at stake, or what might be on offer. Focus group discussions brought out the issue that the pressure on individuals to join groups is excessive. There is some suggestion that group formation can sometimes work against the entrepreneurship it is intended to stimulate.

Typical selection requirements for groups (presented differently by different agencies)

- Geographical coverage
- Minimum/maximum number of members
- Bank accounts
- Registration at sub-county or district level
- Various forms to fill out
- Specific category of group e.g. widows
- Specific services
- Collateral
- Members' savings, co-financing

4.5 Reshaped patriarchy/negative masculinities

Traditional masculine identity in Acholi and Lango cultures depended on men's ability to protect, provide for and rule, a *status quo* that has been severely destabilised by the conflict. Some evidence from the survey indicated that, while women may have gained more influence in the household and community, normative social restrictions encourage them to participate in a horizontal (e.g. community-level groups etc), rather than a vertical manner (e.g. standing for public office, participating in fora where local or national agendas are decided).

The views expressed during the survey confirmed that women's empowerment, relative to the pre-conflict period, has generated further social tensions. Some men (if not the majority) react negatively to women's increased economic power and visibility. Some participants in the survey agreed that women may shun standing as candidates for election as a result of this hostility.

One clear outcome of the social turbulence in Acholi and Lango cultures is an increase in domestic violence, which peaked during the conflict period. Some respondents noted that the level of violence against women (VAW) had begun to fall, but there was general agreement that it continues to act as a deterrent to women's further political participation. Conflict has all but destroyed more positive masculinities, leaving the majority clinging to destructive identities as defining characteristics. Violence is apparently a means for men to assert themselves at a time of great social change and personal disempowerment. It was identified as the second most significant challenge faced by women in the home, after poverty, as indicated in Table 14. Other researchers exploring the effects of conflict on masculine identity in detail have highlighted not only increased VAW, but also alcoholism, militarism, criminality and suicide.³⁹

Table 14: Challenges faced by women in the home

Challenge	No.	%
Poverty	50	23
VAW	42	19
Food insecurity	40	18
Overwhelming responsibility	31	14
Lack of school fees	25	11
Ill-health/death	19	8
None of the above	10	5
Other	4	2
Total	221	100

³⁹ See C. Dolan (2002). 'Collapsing masculinities and weak states – A case study of Northern Uganda' in F. Cleaver (Ed.). *Masculinities matter! Men, gender and development*. London: Zed Press.

This unique combination of overwhelming domestic responsibilities and VAW creates enormous barriers for women in the economic and political spheres. High levels of permitted VAW send a signal to society at large regarding women's "place", acting as a deterrent on political advancement – whether women actually experience violence directly, or not.

The case of Atim, below, highlights how violence imposes constraints on women's activism.

Atim (Lira)

While in the camp, my husband embarked on heavy drinking and he used to be beaten by the soldiers. He got another wife and abandoned me with the children. To date, he has become a headache to me. He takes decisions, and sells cattle and food stocks without consulting me.

I used to be a public figure but I cannot take part in any community work because of constant embarrassment by my husband. He can stage a fight on me anytime with abusive language in public.

At one time I was taking a bath and he pulled me out of the shelter and beat me naked. Basically, I have become nothing in the eye of the public because of this constant embarrassment.

Based on my experience, and many other women who are going through similar problems, the only recommendation I can give is that men should be sensitised on how to treat women. Some men do not bother how their children eat, study or sleep. They treat women like property.

Survey participants shared the view that the widespread problems of alcoholism and VAW should not be seen as part of men's intrinsic nature, but as a result of fractures in men's sense of themselves; they have to figure out how to relate to the increase in women's economic power, coupled with a decrease in their own, in addition to other impacts. These profound social problems require long-term efforts to help normalise gender equality and women's empowerment, and promote reconciliation. A real peace economy cannot flourish when people are traumatised, or otherwise alienated from productive contributions to family and community life.

4.6 Violence in the wider political culture

One aspect undermining low political participation in general, and of women in particular, is the anticipated level of violence in political processes, such as elections. Women spoke of their fear of standing for opposition seats, due to the increasingly common political violence. One result of this dynamic is that certain positions have come to be identified with "militancy", and women are automatically seen, even by other women, as too "weak" for the challenge. Previous studies have shown that the majority of women have chosen to remain silent about their political convictions in order to keep peace.⁴⁰ This issue requires further research and action, especially in the context of Northern Uganda.

40 J. Ahikire and A. Madanda (2009), op cit.

5. Women and recovery in Northern Uganda: Government and development partner planning

This report will now examine how government and development-partner planning for Northern Uganda's recovery is factoring in the changing gender roles and dynamics described above.

The right of women to participate actively and equally in development processes has become a global norm since the Platform for Action adopted at the UN Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995. This summit followed on from the 1979 UN Convention for the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), which enjoined governments to eliminate gender discrimination. In July 1997 the UN Economic and Social Council defined the concept of gender mainstreaming as follows:

'Mainstreaming a gender perspective is the process of assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action, including legislation, policies or programmes, in any area and at all levels. It is a strategy for making the concerns and experiences of women, as well as of men, an integral part of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes in all political, economic and societal spheres, so that women and men benefit equally, and inequality is not perpetuated. The ultimate goal of mainstreaming is to achieve gender equality.'

The third of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) promotes gender equality and empowerment of women. The 2005 Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness and 2008 Accra Agenda for Action also include commitments to promote more systematic and coherent emphasis on gender equality and mainstreaming as one of several cross-cutting issues essential to more effective development assistance. Most recently the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) Development Assistance Committee published *Guiding Principles for Aid Effectiveness, Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment*, endorsed at a senior-level meeting of the OECD in December 2008.

The Ugandan Constitution, and subsequent 1997 National Gender Policy (and 2007 update) also commit the government to promoting gender equality within Uganda.

Despite these principles and commitments, a brief evaluation of efforts to harness the economic initiative of women in Acholi and Lango districts as part of the recovery of Northern Uganda points to significant omissions by the government and international partners.

5.1 The Peace, Recovery and Development Plan for Northern Uganda

'A woman is now charged with more responsibilities than a man, but there is little on the table to show she will get a fair share of the money.'

(Key Informant interview, Beatrice Anywar, Kitgum Woman MP.)⁴¹

While many who participated in the survey for this report had experience of NGO and development agency initiatives, particularly in the form of agricultural inputs or work or loan schemes, government programmes did not feature prominently in their perceptions and responses. As indicated in Table 3, Section 2.3, only nine percent of the women considered government schemes relevant to their post-war economic opportunities and needs. Only Key Informants had real insight into government approaches.

⁴¹ 'Uganda: Women seek gender recovery plan in the north "not just roads".' Quoted in Africa News update (September 2009). See www.ipsnews.net/africa/index.asp

The lack of impact on women's perceptions of the PRDP should not be taken entirely at face value, since measuring its extent was never a major focus of the research. Moreover, the seemingly low awareness may be explained by other factors, such as the delayed initiation of the PRDP and poor communication about its scope and goals. Examination of the priority attached to women's perspectives and broader gender issues in the PRDP, however, tends to confirm the experience of the Juba Peace Talks, where women's representation was largely overlooked.

The PRDP, the government's framework for recovery in Northern Uganda, was launched in September 2007, with the goal of stabilising the region in order to consolidate security and lay the foundations for recovery.⁴² The PRDP goal is to be realised through four core strategic objectives, attached to priority programming areas:

PRDP strategic objectives

1. Consolidation of state authority

- (i) Facilitation of peace agreements
- (ii) Police enhancement
- (iii) Judicial services enhancement
- (iv) Prisons enhancement
- (v) Rationalisation of auxiliary forces
- (vi) Local government enhancement.

2. Rebuilding and empowering of communities

- (vii) Humanitarian assistance
- (viii) Return and resettlement of IDPs
- (ix) Community empowerment and development.

3. Revitalisation of the northern economy

- (x) Production and marketing enhancement
- (xi) Infrastructure rehabilitation and urban improvement
- (xii) Environment and natural resource management.

4. Peacebuilding and reconciliation

- (xiii) Public information, education and communication and counselling
- (xiv) Amnesty, demobilisation and reintegration of ex-combatants.

Implementation of the PRDP is overseen by the Office of the Prime Minister (OPM) and takes place through the existing decentralised and centralised government structures, as well as development partners. In its first year of implementation, the PRDP was modified to focus on infrastructural development in the education, roads, health and water sectors (mainly reconstruction of facilities).

Women's advocates argue that the PRDP has displayed a lack of gender analysis and planning from the outset, despite the 1997–2008 Poverty Eradication Action Plan (PEAP), which the Ministry of Gender evaluated in terms of its gender impacts.⁴³ With UNIFEM's support, women's groups created a Women's Task Force for a Gender Responsive PRDP (WTF), which now has representatives in all PRDP structures in the OPM, including the Planning and Monitoring Committee, the PRDP Technical Working Group and the Northern Uganda Data Centre, among others. The WTF has focussed on addressing the PRDP's approach to gender-equality issues

⁴² Government of Uganda (GoU) (2007). Op. cit.

⁴³ Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development (December 2008). *Evaluation of the Gender Outcomes in the Poverty Eradication Action Plan (PEAP) 1997–2008*.

and women's needs and rights, as well as the lack of women's input in programme design and implementation. Activists note that the PRDP framework does not incorporate regional and international, gender-instrument norms. For example, a UNIFEM-funded gender consultant was recruited to integrate gender concerns into the PRDP's four key pillars, but recommendations were not fully adopted. In the view of some advocates, the PRDP remains "gender-blind". Given women's suffering in the conflict and their economic gains, as captured in this report, the oversight implies a failure to capitalise on their successes in the interests of amplifying advances for the benefit of all.

The NGO Isis-WICCE recently published a report that made recommendations on each of the PRDP's four pillars, based on extensive field research conducted for the WTF in the focal areas of Northern Uganda.⁴⁴ The document is an important starting point for planning interventions that correspond to women's priorities. Table 15 presents the specific recommendations made through the needs assessment analysis in relation to the programme areas 9.4 (livelihood support and social protection sub-component), 10 (production and marketing enhancement), and 11 (infrastructure, rehabilitation and urban improvement). These are the areas most directly relevant to women's economic and political participation in Northern Uganda, though others are indirectly also important.

Table 15: Highlights of WTF recommendations and proposed strategies for PRDP programmes, as they relate to women's economic and political participation in the peace economy

PRDP programme	Specific recommendations	Strategies
Programme 6: Local governance enhancement	Strengthen the planning structures at the various levels of local government to enhance meaningful responses to the needs of women.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Train local authorities and officials, specifically gender officers, at district and sub-county levels, in gender-sensitive planning and budgeting • Increase proportion of female technical staff • Create and fill posts for gender officers where this has not been done • Develop and provide clear guidelines and tools for gender-responsive planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation • Increase space for women on the planning structures at all levels of local government • Women's organisations must advocate for space to participate in budget processes at district levels • WTF and other stakeholders to increase advocacy and lobbying for resource allocation for programmes that address women's needs • Run a campaign to sensitise the public on the importance of women's involvement in decision making.
	Strengthen the capacity of women for effective participation in leadership and decision making at the local government level.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Train women on assertiveness, campaign skills, public speaking, negotiation, lobbying, advocacy, fundraising and gender budgeting • Engage women's organisations with expertise for capacity-building • Women's organisations must engage in community monitoring of service delivery.

44 Isis-WICCE (2009). *Redefining Peace and Development: Women's Recommendations for the PRDP*.

<p>Programme 9.4: Livelihood support and social protection</p>	<p>Ensure that vulnerable groups of women are informed and organised for a stronger voice in their demand for social protection and access to livelihood support.</p> <p>Women's groups should access an equitable share of the resources allocated for livelihood support.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deepen the vulnerable groups' political skills and analysis so that they can negotiate for services • Disseminate information to vulnerable groups on existing state-funded, donor-funded and CSO-supported social protection and livelihood support programmes • Inform women of their land rights under customary tenure and formal legal frameworks • Capacity-building of vulnerable groups through organisation of skills trainings • Promote group-specific social protection initiatives for each category of vulnerable women. • Involve men and communities in supporting various categories of vulnerable women • Government programmes should cover women and vulnerable women as beneficiaries (NAADS, NUSAF-2, NUREP, KIDDP) • At least 50 percent of the beneficiaries of livelihood support programmes should be women's groups • Provide capacity-building of groups in book-keeping, conflict management, entrepreneurship, etc.
<p>Programme 10: Production and marketing enhancement</p>	<p>Enhance women and women's groups' access to agricultural extension services.</p> <p>Strengthen women and women's groups' access to finance for agricultural activities.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Target women and vulnerable groups of women through NAADS, NUSAF-2 and other programmes • Position women by linking them to duty bearers through election of their own leaders • Provide new technologies and training for women and vulnerable groups on how to use them • Ensure gender equity in access to, and ownership of, land by women. • Government and finance institutions implement affordable lending systems to support women's income-generating activities – piggeries, apiaries, poultry and small-scale businesses • Negotiate terms of repayment of loans to banks for women • CSOs should link women's groups to SACCOs • Link women and women's organisations with established organisations to act as guarantors for women without collateral.

Programme 11: Infrastructure rehabilitation and urban improvement	<p>Women should be engaged in selection, rehabilitation and maintenance of community roads.</p> <p>PRDP should prioritise and support adoption of alternative sources of energy and promote energy-saving technologies.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Include women in road selection and maintenance committees through central/ local government • Award women road maintenance contracts • Introduce food (or other resources) for work incentives. • Central and local governments, donor agencies and CSOs should provide technical and financial support for household solar power and biogas projects • Promote energy-saving stoves and other devices • Provide energy for institutions that directly benefit women and children such as clinics and schools.
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The Isis-WICCE report makes the overall recommendations that: (i) decision making, planning, resource allocation and implementation of the PRDP must be grounded in women's realities; (ii) women and women's organisations must play an active role in PRDP implementation, monitoring and evaluation as contributors of ideas and as beneficiaries; (iii) the capacity of PRDP implementers for gender mainstreaming and women's empowerment must be strengthened; and (iv) specific and sufficient human and financial resources must be committed to address women's needs and gender-equality issues.⁴⁵

It should be noted that the words "gender" and "women" are often conflated in development discourse – and much of the advocacy for a more gender-sensitive PRDP is primarily concerned with a greater accent on women's needs, perspectives and participation. The work of the WTF and Isis-WICCE provides a roadmap for promoting increased attention to women's needs within the PRDP. Given the traditional marginalisation of women, this emphasis is necessary. At the same time, as Isis-WICCE and others assert, Northern Uganda has experienced a significant shift in gender roles, and in order for the recovery process to minimise the resulting domestic and community conflicts, a balanced gender analysis that considers the challenges facing both men and women should be central to all planning.

5.2 Development partners

In terms of the international principles on gender and the role of women in development outlined above, most multilateral and bilateral development agencies have made their own commitments and drawn-up policy guidelines on mainstreaming gender in their activities, including initiatives to target gender inequality and preliminary gender analysis to inform programme design.⁴⁶ Yet, despite these commitments at headquarter level, this report found evidence of a lack of consistent thinking about gender in the context of interventions designed to assist Northern Uganda's economic recovery.

One initiative that seeks to integrate gender issues into economic recovery programmes is the Farmer Field and Life Schools (FFLS) programme, jointly designed by the FAO, UNIFEM and United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), with implementing partners, described below.

⁴⁵ Ibid. p.7.

⁴⁶ See J. Winship (2004). *A summary of gender strategies of multilateral development agencies and selected bilateral donors*. USAID. Available at www.usaid.gov/our_work/cross-cutting_programmes/wid/pubs/donor_stratgies.pdf; see also: www.nsi-ins.ca/english/pdf/Gender_FS_Paper_Donor_Perspectives.pdf

Farmer Field and Life Schools

FAO has been providing support to rural communities through a participatory learning methodology called Farmer Field Schools (FFS) for over 15 years. Lessons from the experience indicated that successes, in terms of increased livelihood returns for farmers, sometimes led to marked increases in GBV. In response FAO began to address livelihood interventions through a gender lens, linking up with UNIFEM (leading on strengthening the inclusion of women's concerns) and UNFPA (leading on strengthening community response to GBV), seven NGOs and the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development. This led to the integration of the "life skill" component into the FFS curriculum, including in-depth dialogue with farmers' groups about culture, its negative aspects, and how the latter could be addressed so that women and men could work together collaboratively. These processes have included exploration of changing gender roles, and to embrace positive changes.

At the start of work in any new community, partners implementing the Farmer Field and Life Schools (FFLS) programme employ the "Social, Economic and Gender Analysis Tool" to create a baseline understanding of the dynamics affecting that particular community.

FAO report that in some communities where the programme has been running for the three years, it is not uncommon to see husbands taking their children for immunisation, while women take care of the farm. Previously, no matter what other pressing work was at hand, women were responsible for all aspects of childcare.

Current FFLS activities are underway in the districts of Amuru, Adjumani, Katakwi, Amuria, Kitgum, Lamwo and Abim. In Kaberamaido and others, the programme is now coming to the end of its first phase. A new phase is envisaged, including up-scaling to new districts. The programme is funded by Norway and other donors.

Roco Kwo ('Transforming Life'), implemented by Care International with Norwegian support, is another innovative programme. The project targets 270,000 beneficiaries, of which 70 percent are women, and focuses on women as levers for lifting their communities out of poverty. The project works with communities, in collaboration with the private sector, to stimulate productivity and the competitiveness of women's produce on the market.

Another such case is the Agri-Business Development Initiative (aBi), part of the *U-Growth* programme and jointly funded by Danida, Sida, Belgium, the European Commission and government. This nationwide programme aims to support agri-business growth across Uganda, including in the north. It was originally envisaged that the aBi would have a gender component, led by Danida, with US\$8 million set aside for women's projects. It has taken time to determine how this money could be best spent. Following background analysis and a gender situational analysis, the aBi recently launched with plans to integrate gender equality into all its sub-components, including through managing a Gender for Growth Fund (G4G) to support projects that boost women's agricultural activity. G4G will support proposals with the following ingredients: (i) fairer gender relations as a critical and key intervention to increase productivity in value chains; (ii) increased competitiveness of women farmers and entrepreneurs in the selected sub-sectors, or any other with special focus on Northern Uganda; (iii) economic and legal justice for women, with particular focus on land questions.

Follow-up research is required to analyse the types of impacts the gender analysis and planning of the FAO, Care and *U-Growth* programmes is having on the recovery contexts where they are being implemented. A full gender audit of programming in Northern Uganda was beyond the scope of this report, but discussions with a number of agencies including UNIFEM and UNFPA, suggest that many have yet to begin to develop strategies to address gender as part of their recovery programming, despite the careful efforts described above.

Interestingly, many development partners had a focus on women during the late war-period in response to evidence of the shocking levels of GBV, a wider women's empowerment agenda, and informed by the proven maxim that 'women reinvest 90 percent of their income in their families and communities, compared to men who reinvest only 30 to 40 percent'.⁴⁷ The emphasis on women during the emergency period was a significant factor contributing to women's economic and political gains discussed in this report.

As mentioned in Section 2.3.1, a number of development partners continue to target women with agricultural inputs and related support in the early-recovery period, including FAO, USAID, AVSI, ACDI/VOCA and ACTED. Common to many of these is a conceptualisation of women as "vulnerable" or "ultra-poor". While challenges undoubtedly exist, such as the concerns expressed over competing demands associated with group formation, these inputs have been instrumental in enabling women and communities to recover.

Initiatives reflecting the MDGs' emphasis on gender equality in education and health services are also in evidence in Northern Uganda: UNICEF supports girls' education and women teachers in schools and at a policy level through studies supporting the government's Gender in Education Policy; and the World Health Organisation (WHO) has programmes to improve support for victims of GBV, and women's access to reproductive health services.

Critics of the MDGs approach to gender argue that it has led to a focus that emphasises important social services, but pays relatively little attention to gender in economic opportunity and decision making.⁴⁸ Beyond initiatives that reach out to women along the axes of their vulnerability, or through the specific lens of the MDGs, research for this report indicates that many development partners are still finding their way on gender in terms of their recovery goals. Women's role at the forefront of the region's livelihood economy, and increased participation in household and community decision making, is therefore at risk of being overlooked.⁴⁹

A gap has emerged between a broad emphasis on gender mainstreaming at an institutional policy level; and in programme design in Northern Uganda's recovery strategies. With a nod to headquarter requirements and global norms, many development partners in Northern Uganda do include the stipulation that 50 percent of beneficiaries be women, especially with regard to voucher, cash and food-for-work schemes, vocational training, and agricultural inputs or extension services. Several desk officers interviewed for this report pointed cited this as evidence of "successful" mainstreaming – although this quota approach falls short of the qualitative integration of gender envisaged in the gender-mainstreaming discourse outlined above, and research did not reveal any attempts to disaggregate what impacts such quotas have on gender dynamics or women's lives. Few agencies

47 Taken from 'Why gender equality is essential for development', in OECD (2008). *DAC guiding principles for aid effectiveness, gender equality and women's empowerment*. Paris, France: OECD.

48 See F. Watkins (2004). 'Evaluation of DFID Development Assistance: Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment'. Internal draft. DFID.

49 One example is the European Commission ALREP that began in July 2010 (around the time the EC launched its *Plan of Action on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in Development Cooperation*) and will run to 2014. Its purpose is to: 'engage the war-affected population of Northern Uganda in productive and profitable agricultural and agri-business activities to ensure food security and increase household income'. Its goals include increased agricultural productivity; rebuilding productive infrastructure in support of farming; increased efficiency of input and output markets; increased availability of agricultural finance; and increased capacity of local government at district and sub-county levels. However, there is no specific focus on women, despite the fact that one of the background studies that informed the programme design included a chapter on gender that echoed many of the findings of this report. Meanwhile, DFID is embarking on a *Multi-level Effectiveness for Gender Equality* programme in partnership with UNIFEM, aimed at supporting UN joint programming on gender equality in Uganda. The programme includes improving women's economic opportunities and livelihoods as one of six key target areas. DFID also has an overall global strategic objective on gender equality and a *Gender Action Plan* in Uganda. DFID's largest contribution to the PRDP through its £100 million Post-Conflict Development Programme (PCDP), however, does not reflect any substantive gender analysis of the current context – although it refers to gender issues as "important" and a gender consultant was involved in its design. Women feature as part of the target group to be assisted in one core component providing support to the extremely vulnerable. Several other core programmes will ensure that up to 50 percent of beneficiaries are women. Otherwise, there is no real attention to gender dynamics within the PCDP. While there is some prospect that women's economic activity will emerge from a soon-to-be finalised "economic recovery analysis", pointing the way to their gradual incorporation, the opportunity to articulate the link between high-level institutional commitment to gender equality and the new *Multi-level Effectiveness* programme on the one hand, and DFID's contribution to recovery of Northern Uganda on the other, clearly has further potential to be tapped.

undertake the scale of gender analysis needed to understand what other forms of programme might more constructively address the region's gender dynamics.

As discussed in this report, the conflict in Northern Uganda was characterised by an intense and prolonged period of community displacement, itself a significant social experience. Women were at the forefront of livelihood strategies in the camps and the return process, and today make up the majority of heads of household in some areas. Yet policymakers do not always understand or prioritise women's perspectives or the related shifts in their relations with men. If these changes in gender and community dynamics are not reflected in programming, there is a danger that recovery interventions will miss promising opportunities to enhance positive trends and, at worst, inadvertently intensify community-level challenges and tensions. At present, the absence of a more accurate gender focus can be described as a further "constraint" to women's economic and political development that could be added in Section 5 above.

Northern Uganda's experience in this is not unique. A 2004 report concluded that 'available evidence ... suggests the benefits of gender mainstreaming and impacts on gender equality are at best embryonic and, at worst, still to become visible'.⁵⁰ More recent literature points to a continued lack of progress.⁵¹ It is beyond the scope of this research to dig deeper into the causes and consequences of this gap between institutional policy and development in practice. Its focus is on how development partners' lack of serious commitments to apply international principles on gender issues may compound government's slow start in this area, to detrimentally affect recovery of Northern Uganda if not addressed soon.

Context analysis to inform interventions: Gender sensitivity? Conflict sensitivity?

Over the past decade there has been growing understanding that humanitarian and development assistance can exacerbate conflict and feed violence.⁵² This awareness has led to the development of "conflict-sensitive approaches" to assist agencies in better understanding the relationship between development and conflict; and to adapt and plan assistance so the potential for violent conflict is reduced, and positive outcomes increased.⁵³ As with gender, though to a lesser extent, multilateral organisations and bilateral donors have developed international guidance on conflict to ensure that their interventions properly take into account its dynamics.⁵⁴

International Alert's *Investing in Peace* Issue No. 1 report, 'Building a Peace Economy in Northern Uganda', asserted that conflict-sensitive approaches to recovery in Northern Uganda are particularly important, given the ongoing conflict dynamics and the close links between economy and conflict in the region.⁵⁵ This report flagged the threats that slow implementation of the PRDP, corruption, approaches to land acquisition for investment, and poor information flow all present to trust-building between northerners and the government. It concluded that it was critically important that funds be quickly channelled to create a "peace dividend" in the north and provide visible evidence of government's commitment to rebuilding the region. In particular, the report argued that the widespread perception that government was failing to spread the benefits of development evenly across the country must be reversed.⁵⁶

50 F. Watkins (2004), *op. cit.*

51 A. Rao and D. Kelleher (July 2005). 'Is there life after gender mainstreaming?', *Gender and Development*, 13 (2).

52 K. Bush (1998). 'A Measure of Peace: Peace and Conflict-impact Assessment of Development Projects in Zones of Conflict', *Working Paper No. 1*. See www.idrc.ca/uploads/user-S/10533919790A_Measure_of_Peace.pdf

53 International Alert, Saferworld, Fewer et al (2004). *Conflict-sensitive approaches to development, humanitarian assistance and peacebuilding*. London, UK: International Alert et al.

54 OECD DAC Principles.

55 International Alert (2008), *op. cit.*

56 The ruling NRM is extremely unpopular in Northern Uganda, mustering only eight percent of total votes in the 2006 elections. The question of land greatly influences. The fact that much of the population was moved into IDP camps – or "protected villages" – during the 1990s as a result of government policy has fuelled the suspicion that the government exploited the LRA insurgency to alienate the Acholi from their lands. These perceptions have undergone various incarnations over the decades, becoming more aggravated as time passes. See R. Gersony (1997). *Op. cit.* p.59-60, and RLP (2004). *Op. cit.* According to a recent World Bank survey on lands and conflicts (discussed further in this report), 23 percent of northerners interviewed felt that the government, army and "rich people" have taken a significant interest in their land without explaining their motives. See M. A. Rigadya, E. Nsamba-Gayiyi and H. Kamusii (2008). *Analysis of post-conflict land policy and local administration: A survey of IDP return and resettlement issues and lessons*. Kampala, Uganda: World Bank.

At local levels, the report found that programmes have the potential to exacerbate community and household tensions as stakeholders compete for access to the benefits of development investment. These tensions include gender conflict, arising from the habit of development partners favouring women as beneficiaries during the emergency years. Avoiding negative impacts requires careful analysis of local conflict dynamics, coordination among development agencies and government actors, as well as effective planning and communication.

Conflict and gender are seen as “cross-cutting issues” in development policy and practice. The danger of cross-cutting issues is that they are liable to be neglected in favour of priorities that emphasise quick outputs and returns. Government and development partners can address both issues by ensuring that good contextual analysis, including conflict and gender issues, is conducted as early as possible and on an ongoing basis to inform programme implementation and design.

6. Supporting women's changing fortunes and gender-sensitive recovery in Northern Uganda: Recommendations to government and development partners

The recent period of relative peace in Northern Uganda has allowed most former IDPs to return to their home areas and begin rebuilding their lives. Women have emerged since the long war as critical economic actors, making use of prevailing economic opportunities to secure their families' livelihood, security and progress. The conditions of camp life and post-conflict recovery have caused a significant shift in gender roles, and a period of rapid change and turbulence is ongoing.

Women's advancement in small-scale agriculture and trade, their experience of training and empowerment programmes, and their activism in community peace initiatives have led to increased confidence and leadership in decision-making processes at household and community levels. Women's political participation beyond the quota-based positions allocated in local government and parliament, however, has been minimal. There are also identifiable structural constraints to the growth of women's entrepreneurial activity. These limitations in the political and economic spheres are due to women's immediate needs, overwhelming domestic workloads, lack of capital and rights to land tenure, and negative masculinities, such as male dominance and violence. Existing conditions imply a need for specific steps to leverage opportunities for women's economic empowerment and political participation, promote gender parity and ensure harmony in gender relations, as necessary pre-conditions for a real peace economy to flourish.

Such initiatives are all the more critical given lessons from the earlier phases of the Northern Ugandan conflict and other post-conflict contexts. As noted, conflict leads to dynamic social, economic and political changes that sometimes provide opportunities for positive social change. It is equally common for such gains to be lost as societies revert to pre-conflict norms.⁵⁷ A 2001 study by Accord, related to Northern Uganda, reported similar shifts in gender roles to those discussed in this survey and concluded that, important though they were, they had not led to any radical changes in values and ideologies concerning gender.⁵⁸

A wide constituency of stakeholders is currently engaged in post-war reconstruction, rehabilitation and development in Northern Uganda. While many programmes prioritised women as beneficiaries during the emergency phase and some continue to do so to facilitate the return process, women's role as key economic actors in the peace economy is often overlooked. With some interesting exceptions, most programmes that target women continue to define them as "vulnerable". There is a risk that such labelling becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy, as opportunities to foster women's entrepreneurial potential are ignored in the rush to design long-term development initiatives. Very few interventions to date have factored in the wider context of gender relations in Northern Uganda, despite international policy commitments on gender equality and mainstreaming.

How can government and development partner interventions be nuanced to accent and sustain women's new role as critical actors in the livelihoods economy and community-level decision makers? How can they assist women to build on and expand beyond existing levels of engagement in order to move towards real gender parity? And how can the social tensions associated with changing gender relationships that result from conflict be mitigated through the design and implementation of recovery initiatives?

57 A. M. Tripp et al (2009). Op. cit; EASSI and International Alert (2009). Op. cit; Meintjes et al (2001). Op. cit.

58 J. El-Bushra and I. Sahl (2005). Op. cit.

This report recommends the following priorities for the constructive support of women as drivers of a peace economy in Northern Uganda that also envisages positive adjustment of gender roles and relations.

6.1 Make gender a core element in the design and implementation of recovery interventions

Government and development partners must scale-up efforts to address the gender dynamics playing out in Northern Uganda's recovery, so as to maximise positive changes and minimise the potential for domestic tension. Uganda has a strong gender policy framework, but the capacity of the OPM, the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Affairs, and Community Development Officers and Gender Officers to promote the social transformation essential for women's economic advancement and increased political participation needs to be enhanced. These departments' financial capacity has a significant bearing on the challenges faced by women in Northern Uganda.

The PRDP monitoring framework should incorporate gender in its indicators, as recommended by the WTF, and all PRDP interventions should be determined by a gender analysis exploring specific opportunities and risks in the communities concerned. The tension and change influencing gender relations in the region, as highlighted in this report, present both opportunities and risks to peaceful recovery. These issues need to be analysed and factored into programme design and implementation.

Definitions of women that emphasise their vulnerability should evolve to take account of their diverse experiences now that the emergency period is over. A number of categories of vulnerable women, particularly the elderly and infirm, require further support and it is critical that their needs be addressed as the focus of interventions shifts to prioritise long-term development. Yet a large number of women are engaged in entrepreneurial activities that are the main source of sustenance for their families and communities. While they also face overwhelming difficulties, including persistent domestic violence and unequal access to land rights, their description as "vulnerable" is not entirely accurate. Interventions that seek to enhance the region's overall economic performance will naturally benefit the larger-scale actors – who are exclusively men – and neglect the many opportunities to harness the economic potential of women in favour of support to the extremely vulnerable.

All recovery programming in Northern Uganda should:

- Reconceptualise the role of women in Northern Uganda's peace economy, moving beyond "vulnerability" to recognise women as economic actors and agents of social change
- Acknowledge, analyse and reflect in programming the critical role women play in the livelihood economy
- Ensure efforts to promote recovery and development of Northern Uganda are based on gender-sensitive context analysis
- Train local authorities and officials at district and sub-county levels in gender-sensitive planning and budgeting
- Create and fill posts for gender officers in local government where this has not been done
- Increase space for women on the planning structures at all levels of local government, as well as consultation with women at the grassroots
- Develop planning and monitoring tools for the conflict and gender impacts of interventions.

6.2 Support economic empowerment of women as part of building a peace economy

Taking into account emerging best practice on conflict-sensitivity and gender programming, and as part of a holistic effort to support the overall peace economy in the region, government and development partners should make a concerted effort to harness women's potential as key actors in economic recovery through more effective support of their activities. Where women are targeted as beneficiaries, this must not be solely on the basis of vulnerability; more entrepreneurial, empowered and productive women should also benefit. Recovery interventions should place emphasis on increasing women's agricultural production and productivity, given the high number of women-headed households and the gains made to date.

First and foremost, initiatives are required to address the constraints facing women who seek to expand their economic activity. The central problem is the over-burdening of women as new economic activities are added to already heavy workloads. Improving service provision in terms of access to water, fuel, health centres and schools will have a clear benefit in terms of the time saved to invest in further productive activity. Such interventions should be based on consultation with women about their needs, rather than be driven by top-down procedures.

The provision of training and support so women can expand the scale of their businesses is a priority programming area. Women need better access to value-adding agricultural technology and markets. Business development services targeting women will help them take advantage of post-war economic opportunities.

At the same time there is a need to harmonise interventions. One challenge highlighted by the research is the widespread programming requirement that women form groups before qualifying for benefits, a process that involves an excessive degree of administrative work. The emphasis should be on coordinating existing groups, rather than forming new ones for each intervention. The potential for discord to emerge within and between groups should also be assessed in the design of new interventions.

It is further advised that women be provided with affordable, women-friendly financial services in terms of repayment conditions, interest and accessibility. There is a critical need to initiate more equitable land ownership, both as a source of collateral that would enable women to expand their economic activities, and as a stimulus for security and gender parity. Local governments should consider affirmative action for women in tenders for public works, supplies and services.

All interventions should be designed according to gender and context analyses, including consultations with women, to ensure maximum impact.

- **Scale-up community infrastructure programmes, reducing obstacles to women's economic participation**
- **Improve women's access to markets and agricultural technology**
- **Provide women-friendly financial services**
- **Prioritise efforts to secure women's rights to housing and land**
- **Offer business development services and skills transfer opportunities to women**
- **Harmonise use of group formation as a prerequisite for assistance to women**
- **Promote affirmative action for women in awarding of local government contracts.**

6.3 Support women's political advancement

Women are taking increasingly prominent positions in household and community-level decision making, but this has not permeated the political sphere beyond the mandatory quotas for women in public office. One opportunity is to strengthen the empowerment component of existing initiatives, for example within groups. Where group formation is a dominant feature of development assistance to women, it is often administered in a political void, without maximising the potential for women to develop their political activism. Groups should be open to women developing activities that bring them together; and offer training on political participation. Support should continue to be directed to women's CSOs and peacebuilding initiatives, particularly those that promote women's voices in political life and in monitoring the implementation of recovery programmes. In addition, training programmes that provide women with the skills necessary to engage in political life should be made available. There is also a need for political leadership schemes that encourage women to stand for office; encourage women and men to vote for women candidates; and mobilise women in leadership positions to use their positions to advocate for gender parity and women's concerns.

Recognising that fear of violence in the electoral system has emerged as a barrier to women's participation, all actors should work to maintain a free and fair electoral process in 2011, and a continued effort to sustain peace in Northern Uganda thereafter. Government should implement its action plan on women in peacebuilding, ensuring that women take their proper place in ongoing and future peacebuilding initiatives.

- Encourage political confidence and engagement on local political issues within women's groups
- Train women on assertiveness, campaign skills, public speaking, negotiation, lobbying, advocacy, fundraising and gender budgeting
- Fund CSOs providing support to women to engage in political life and the monitoring of recovery programmes
- Mobilise women and men to vote for women, and work with women MPs to promote women-focused politics
- Implement a government action plan on women in peacebuilding.

6.4 Invest in constructive social transformation

If women are to realise their full economic and political potential in the peace economy, it is essential that gender relations are normalised and the goal of gender parity becomes more socially acceptable. Northern Ugandan society requires targeted programmes to help it recover from the traumas of war and the challenges of rapid social change.

All programmes related to economic recovery, whether agricultural inputs and skills, voucher, cash or food-for-work schemes, infrastructure projects, employment or business development interventions, should actively explore gender dynamics with beneficiary groups, identifying obstacles and perceptions. These should be factored into design so that opportunities for sensitisation and conflict resolution are maximised through programme delivery.

There is an urgent need to bring men back into household support as an obligation, rather than a choice. A focus on men is beneficial for both women and men – and above all for children who will benefit from an environment characterised by mutually-supportive gender role models. Positive masculine identities will reduce the heavy physical and emotional burden that many women currently bear by ensuring a more equitable distribution of labour. Mobilisation and support to men should be part of the healing process, enabling them to participate in the reconstruction of society. The mobilisation of men should include clear messages on how they would gain from a more cooperative, productive and violence-free home and community.

Ongoing patterns of VAW should continue to be addressed. According to UNIFEM's *Progress of the World's Women 2008-09* report on VAW:

*'Involving men and boys in actions to prevent and respond to violence against women is critical in finding a meaningful solution.'*⁵⁹

Existing initiatives on VAW, led by the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development, UNFPA and others, should be expanded to ensure sensitisation of men, the enhancement of community vigilance and the effectiveness of protection agencies. The recently enacted Domestic Violence Act should be implemented in full.

- **Build opportunities to explore the transformation of gender roles and relations into the planning and implementation of all economic recovery interventions across the programming spectrum**
- **Increase community training on gender relations in order for men to better appreciate the role of women and see them as partners, rather than a threat to their masculinity**
- **Scale-up the availability, inclusivity and impact of psycho-social recovery programmes across all groups**
- **Scale-up sensitisation programmes on domestic violence and augment effectiveness of community policing**
- **Implement the 2010 Domestic Violence Act.**

59 UNIFEM (2009). 'Who answers to women: Gender and accountability, progress of the world's women report 2008-09'. p.11.

Annex 1

Table A: Summary of study sample

	District	Gulu			Lira		
		District level	Bungatira sub-county	Bardege division	District level	Apala sub-county	Ojwina division
A	Key Informants						
	Women's organisations			1		1	2
	Community Development Officers (CDOs i/c Gender)		1			1	2
	Government officials including CDOs, trade and industry officers	1			1		2
	Local political leaders – LC V and III	1			1		2
	NAADS	1			1		2
	Women's in-depth interviews		10	10		10	40
	MPs (male/female)	2			2		4
B	Focus Group Discussions (no. of participants)						
	Women, including widows		12	13		14	49
	Mixed (men and women)			15		10	25
C	Case studies		2	2		2	8
D	Survey		50	50		50	200
	Total	5	75	91	5	77	336

The study methods included:

1. Structured and semi-structured interviews with individual women using a questionnaire
2. Key Informant interviews and in-depth discussions
3. Focus group discussions with selected women, men and local leaders
4. Case studies focusing on life histories of four women from each sub-county/division to capture their voices and experiences
5. Document review and analysis involving a range of relevant documents, including reports on women's economic and political participation; the pertinent policies, workshop reports and publications by various stakeholders were reviewed

6. Facts sheets to capture specific data from the district, such as number of women's groups, mixed or not-mixed, women's positions in political and community leadership, composition of NAADS groups at sub-county level, number of women who have taken loans from different MFIs and participation in district contracts.

Use of multiple methods and tools enabled researchers to understand the issues surrounding women's economic participation in relation to decision making and political influence in post-war Northern Uganda. The different methods were complementary of each other. This triangulation of methods enabled the research team to tap into the deeply embedded gender relations in economic and political opportunities.

In undertaking the fieldwork, research assistants (RAs) were recruited in the districts to assist in data collection and as interpreters in focus group discussions and in-depth interviews. RAs also wrote short reports on their field impressions which were discussed as a first step to analysis.

Data management, analysis and report writing

For quantitative data, researchers reviewed completed questionnaires on a daily basis to ensure completeness and accuracy. Quantitative data was analysed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences. Frequencies were run, and percentages and cross-tabulations used to interpret the findings.

Qualitative data was analysed thematically. This involved developing broad themes and examining relationships underlying the different explanations. This analysis involved feminist methodological insights on women's representation and activity.

Quality control was achieved in various ways. The questionnaire was pre-tested to check its suitability, reliability, coherence and clarity. RAs were trained on the survey tool and each question thoroughly discussed to ensure that the spirit of the question and the data required were clearly understood. Since RAs were resident locally, they were able to contextualise issues as they arose, improving the quality of the questions. The researchers participated in data collection, supervised the research and checked the filled questionnaires. They also participated in individual and joint report writing, as well as report-review sessions, to ensure quality. Overall quality control was achieved through review meetings and discussions with EASSI and Alert.

EASSI and Alert organised a validation exercise where tentative findings were presented in the two districts. This exercise helped validate the key interpretations of the post-war experience, and to refine the thinking and analysis concerning changing gender relations at household and community levels. Indeed, the process confirmed the need for accountability to those being researched, as popularised by feminist researchers.



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