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Making Resources in Northern Uganda

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Susan Reynolds Whyte

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The Journal publishes articles within social sciences and humanities: anthropology, education, political science, economics, history, literature, psychology, religion, public health, law, and studies of development, environment, conflict, and displacement. Articles that cut across disciplinary boundaries are particularly welcome. Uganda is a key research focus for the Journal, but contributions from the whole East African region and beyond are encouraged as well. The Journal actively seeks to publish studies that can help to develop a comparative perspective on human security in the broadest sense.

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Making Resources in Northern Uganda

Guest Editor:

Susan Reynolds Whyte

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Editorial Note

The Journal of Peace and Security Studies (JPSS) is a peer-reviewed open-access electronic journal, published by the Institute of Peace and Strategic Studies, Gulu University, with support from the Building Stronger Universities IV Programme, Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

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Acknowledgement

This Special Issue of JPSS (JPSS Volume 3, Number 1) on Making Resources in Northern Uganda is edited by Susan Reynolds Whyte from the Department of Anthropology, University of Copenhagen, on behalf of the Building Stronger Universities IV Programme.

JPSS and the editors of JPSS would like to thank the contributors as well as the peer reviewers, who must remain anonymous, for their commitment and excellent work. Our sincere gratitude goes also to the Building Stronger Universities IV Programme, Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs for financial and scholarly support.

Handover of Editorship

The founding editor of JPSS, Lioba Lenhart, and her colleague, Susan Reynolds Whyte, are rotating out of the editorship. We thank the contributors to JPSS who have made it possible to publish four regionally relevant and engaging issues.

The third editor, Julaina Obika, will continue with a new team from Gulu University and the University of Copenhagen. We wish them every success.

Lioba Lenhart, Susan Reynolds Whyte, and Julaina Obika
JPSS Editors

Introduction: Making Resources in Northern Uganda

Susan Reynolds Whyte, Guest Editor

Department of Anthropology, University of Copenhagen, Denmark

What is a resource? A quick review of various dictionary definitions includes: ‘Something that one uses to achieve an objective’; ‘a useful or valuable possession or quality of a country, organization, or person’; ‘a source of supply, support, or aid, especially one that can be readily drawn upon when needed’, ‘Something that can be used to help achieve an aim’; ‘an available means’. There are thus two aspects of a resource. It is an asset—a property, quality or endowment. And it has a use, it is a means to an end—to sustain life, to deal with adverse circumstances, to improve conditions, and to create benefits. Briefly, we understand resources as assets mobilized for human purposes. It is the purpose that determines the resource. Something is only a resource in relation to an actual or possible use.

Natural resources are an obvious place to start. We think of them as already existing, as something ‘out there’ in the world that humans can exploit, maintain, deplete or conserve. Because of their potential value, they need management and may be objects of conflict. In northern Uganda, oil has become a powerful example of a natural resource with great potential for both economic gain and environmental risk, needing careful governance (Van Alstine et al. 2014). Researchers have studied other natural resources such as water (Nsubuga et al.), minerals, marble, stones and sand (Rugadya 2020), wildlife (Lenhart 2023), firewood (Miteva et al. 2017), and wild plants (Oryema et al. 2010). Land itself can be considered a natural resource (Meinert and Whyte 2023). And of course, money is the multiple-purpose resource that can facilitate education, health care and so much else (Muhangi 2019).

In this special issue, however, we widen the scope to include intangible resources as well. We consider resources to be both material and immaterial means available to achieve an aim. Resources might be personal capacities, like energy and focus, or they might be cultural, like indigenous knowledge. All kinds of assets can become resources when they have a potential or actual use. Looking at resources in this way raises the question of how specific assets become useful. They are not simply ‘out there’ as ready-made resources. They become resources in a social context that includes on the one hand, their production, cultivation, management and on the other, particular needs or purposes.

This view of resources as ‘becoming’ is central to the approach to natural material resources expounded by Richardson and Weszkalnys. They call for a relational understanding of resources: ‘...the combined examination of the matters, knowledges, infrastructures, and experiences that come together in the appreciation, extraction, processing, and consumption of natural resources’ (2014:8). Their concept of ‘relational assemblages’ captures the ‘practices, expertise, infrastructures, etc.’(ibid.:18) that together make resources. The contributors to this issue follow this general approach, applying it to the study of all kinds of resources. They recognize, as well, that: ‘A multitude of political, economic, and cultural factors contribute to the shifts and disruptions in the way that resources are conceptualized and matter over time (ibid:15)’.

Political, economic and cultural factors are fundamental to the studies presented here. They all build on PhD research undertaken in connection with the Building Stronger Universities Programme, a partnership between Gulu and three Danish universities funded by the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Under the theme ‘Rights, Resources and Gender’, PhD research focused on northern Uganda, a region where these topics were especially significant given its history. Geographically distant from the centre of political and economic power, it has a distinctive colonial and post-colonial history. The long war between national military forces and the Lord’s

Resistance Army (1986-2006), with its internment of the population in camps, had massive effects on rights, resources and gender. Issues of transitional justice (MacDonald and Porter 2016) are still prominent after the war. So are rights to land, the only material resource remaining for many after leaving the camps (Meinert and Whyte 2023). Gender relations are an issue all over Uganda, but in northern Uganda they are marked by the distortion of life in the camps (Dolan 2009; Whyte et al. 2013) and efforts to establish claims to land after the camps closed (Hopwood 2016). It is within this setting that our contributors have considered the making and uses of resources.

Agatha Alidri examines prison labour as a human resource during the colonial period, with continuities up to the present. From the early days of British rule, prisoners were required to work; their labour was supposed to offset the costs of their incarceration and contribute to colonial revenue. Basing on archival records and interviews of elderly people in West Nile, she describes the situation in Arua, placing it within the overall context of the Ugandan colonial prison services. In an approach similar to that of Richardson and Weszkalnys (2014), she argues that prison labour resources were created and sustained through an apparatus that promulgated new laws, established courts to enforce them, imprisoned those who broke the laws and justified imprisonment by a racist ideology about civilising Africans. Alidri's concept of apparatus, comparable to the notion of assembly, broadens the perspective from the resource itself (labouring bodies) to the institutions and discourses that produced and justified penal labour. Over time, the value of this human resource was recognized more and more explicitly. Today there is clear affirmation of the need to make prisoners labour—whether on prison farms and public works, in prison workshops, or to maintain the facility. Prisons are grossly overcrowded, with more prisoners on remand than convicts. Arua prison, in West Nile District, has an occupancy rate of 611%. As a resource, prison labour has been made abundant.

Charles Okumu's piece on the great writer Okot p'Bitek reflects on the colonial period as well. Okot grew up and received his British education before Uganda's independence in 1962. Much of his work is about the effects of colonialism and European influence on Acholi society and culture. Okumu explores the ways in which Okot drew on his own experience and knowledge in his novel *Lak Tar (White Teeth)* and his most famous poem 'Song of Lawino'. From his parents Okot imbibed a style of storytelling and an appreciation of poetry, song and dance. From his anthropological studies at Oxford, he gained some distance and came to see Acholi culture as a rich resource—for his academic work, but even more for his literary creations. The term 'auto-ethnography' usually refers to studies carried out by scholars doing research in their own culture. Okumu suggests that Okot was an auto-ethnographic poet. He used his knowledge, some of which was developed through anthropological fieldwork, to write poetry packed with ethnographic detail and critical reflections on the state of Acholi culture. In recreating the Acholi world in his writing, he made it a literary resource. What he might otherwise have taken for granted, became a resource used to long-lasting effect and consumed far beyond the narrow circle of those who read his academic works.

The impact of the LRA war on Acholi material resources is the topic of Sulayman Babiha's contribution. He traces the formation and efforts of the Acholi War Debt Claimants Association (AWDCA), which works to get compensation for the cattle lost during the war. In focusing on cows as a lost resource, rather than other livestock, crops, houses or human beings, the Association claimed for an asset that was tangible, but valuable and significant in many ways, both material and immaterial. This resource shifted shape in the course of claims against government. Compensation was in money not cows. Like other resources, these were in the process of becoming. In this case, cattle became cash, a much less visible resource. When the government finally released some money for the AWDCA to distribute to claimants, there was suspicion about who got what and how much the Association kept back as overhead. Babiha shows how the organization, established in 2005, managed to become the voice of Acholi war claimants. Without support from government or donors, it became the social infrastructure for one aspect of transitional justice. Yet in recent years, government has moved away from using the organization, preferring to deposit the limited compensation it provided directly into individual bank accounts.

As a resource, lost cattle were the reason for the creation of the association. The shift from cows to cash as a resource had deep implications for the association. Thus, Babiiha's article demonstrates two points about resources. They change or become in particular political-economic contexts. And they themselves can change the context, as money changed the politics of the Association.

Enos Kitambo writes about another post-conflict attempt to make resources. In view of high youth unemployment, the Youth Livelihood Programme (YLP) aimed to support youth groups for income generating projects in northern Uganda. Like Babiiha, he focuses on resources for reconstruction, but whereas the AWDC struggled to obtain funds, financing was available in Kitambo's case. The challenge was to make it productive in small scale businesses and agricultural enterprises. Kitambo considers three kinds of resources being mobilized in the Youth Livelihood Programme. The obvious asset was money, the multi-purpose resource that could be used as capital for a variety of enterprises—to buy oxen, purchase seeds, or begin trading in agricultural produce. The second resource needed for almost all the enterprises was land. While the Programme provided financing, the youth had to mobilize land, having none of their own. Yet even with these two resources, many of the entrepreneurial efforts failed. Kitambo found that a third resource, subjective and intangible, was often missing according to his respondents. Personal assets were necessary in order to effectively use the other resources. These included determination, self-discipline, competence, and persistence, together with knowledge and skills. Programme and district officials blamed the youth for being lazy and unmotivated. Surprisingly, even some of the youth criticized themselves for lack of commitment and entrepreneurial 'mindset'. The question is: how could the necessary personal resources have been cultivated? One answer is through better training and technical supervision. A whole assemblage, or apparatus, of institutions, equipment and ideology is necessary to create and cultivate resources. That assemblage was insufficient in the Youth Livelihood Programme.

The final contribution, by Doreen Chemutai, reinforces this view of resources as created and maintained within a broader assemblage. She analyses the way in which women Members of Parliament cultivate voter perceptions in order to win elections. Women compete with men for the open seats in every constituency—not very successfully. But female representation is ensured by the Ugandan system of affirmative action through reserved seats for women MPs in every district. They are expected to advocate especially for issues affecting women. Chemutai shows, first of all, that voters' perceptions are shaped differently in rural and urban areas. Cultivating them in rural areas requires presence in the constituency, personal interaction, and provision of material benefits in the form of projects or gifts. Urban more educated voters attend to performance in Parliament, so MPs cultivated those perceptions by representing the political views of their constituents. Thus, the resource of voter perceptions, is contextual. Cultivating it must be sensitive to different situations. The assemblage within which voter perceptions were shaped and changed included political parties and their popularity within different districts. Voters considered whether their MPs were more beholden to a political party than to constituent interests. The career ladder within Uganda politics could mean less time spent in the home district. An assemblage includes ideologies, and Chemutai shows that gender ideals and expectations play an important role in the cultivation of perceptions. Displaying qualities of motherliness and modesty helps to ensure positive perceptions.

With these five articles by Gulu University scholars, we hope to show how research illuminates some of the fundamental aspects of the resources being cultivated for different purposes in northern Uganda. We appreciate Gulu University, the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Building Stronger Universities programme for the opportunity to build our own resources.

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Arua means ‘In Prison’: Resources in Colonial Punishment Practices

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Abstract

Prisons established in the colonial period in Uganda provided labour to the colonial administration. Whereas other forms of forced labour were phased out, prisoners continue to be used as a human resource on prison farms, in workshops and public work projects right up to the present day. The study of the colonial prison system shows how the formation of a legal and political apparatus was necessary to produce and maintain this prison labour. The apparatus included new laws that created new crimes. Courts and government administrative systems enforced these laws, sending more and more people to prison. An important part of the apparatus was a racist colonial ideology about the need to ‘uplift’ the colonized Africans and mould them into disciplined citizens who would work hard in a capitalist system. In this article, I draw on a larger study of the colonial experience of the Lugbara people of Arua District.

Keywords: Arua, Lugbara, prison labour, apparatus, resource

Introduction

This article examines prison and prison labour as a material and non-material ‘resource’ within a colonial apparatus. Whereas Bruce-Lockhart (2022:1940), citing Minister of Internal Affairs Basil Bataringaya, observed that modern criminal justice is considered reclamation and social rehabilitation of the offender, this work deems colonial carceral justice as a source of labour for the protectorate. Colonial carceral justice was guided by Lombroso’s theory of atavism and biological determinism, which was prejudicial to blacks and other social groups that he considered inferior (Lombroso 2006:1). The central argument in this study is that colonial prisons in Uganda had a main role to play as a labour resource and institution to discipline the mind and body of the inferior subjects who were considered unruly in behaviour. Building on the case of imprisonment in the Lugbara area of West Nile Region, it shows how the larger apparatus of colonial administration and law produced prisoners whose labour could be exploited for the benefit of the colonial state. Yet convict labour was not only an economic resource for the colonial power. It was political, social and cultural, and both material and non-material. At independence in 1962 and in the post-colonial governments, carceral justice functioned as a political tool to punish the body as means to social rehabilitation of offenders and labour for nation building. Whereas I will not be able to do full justice to the thesis of prisons as resources due to scarcity of statistical colonial data, we shall understand it within the broader framework of apparatus. Richardson and Gisa (2014) suggest that material natural resources are made through processes and within assemblages, which I refer to as apparatuses, where values are at play. This article will show that the same holds for the creation of human resources in the form of prisoners and their labour.

Studying Colonial Law and Prisons

A larger study of law, disorder and crime in Lugbara society (Alidri 2021) provided material for this article on the transformation of prison labour into a resource in colonial Uganda. Historical inquiry and anthropological studies were used to explore, retrieve and reconstruct the past (Carr 1990; Middleton 1963: 82). Official colonial prison reports, archival materials from the National Archives in Kampala and anthropological studies on the Lugbara were used to explore the function of prisons as a colonial hub to mobilize prison labour as a resource. Oral traditions, which provided a vivid narrative of the colonial prisons, were used to retrieve historical information on the nature of colonial law and prison as handed down through generations by word of mouth (Vansina 1985; Atkinson 2010). Oral history was used to recover personal experiences of the contemporaries such as Rasil Opindu and Sila Amaga, born in 1916 and 1936 respectively, who witnessed the dramatic unfolding of colonial prisons and carceral justice under the administration of Sir A. E. Weatherhead, the first District Commissioner in the West Nile District. Despite their advanced age, their narratives sketched the historical realities of both colonial and post-colonial prisons. Ex-convicts were interviewed to explore their experiences while serving their sentence. This enabled the study to explore the historical continuity of prisons in the post-colonial period. The snowball approach was used to identify respondents who had knowledge of the colonial prison system and institutions. In-depth narratives were recorded from the Lugbara cultural leaders (Lugbara Kari), clan elders (Ba'wara), retired civil servants and politicians, elderly women and men, and youth. They were identified based on their knowledge and experience of the history of the Lugbara and prisons in the West Nile region. Collective experiences and memories were retrieved through Focus Group Discussions and group interviews held with the council of elders of Ombia clan in Maracha and elderly women in Ayivu.

Historical Background

The formal history of the prison and prison labour in West Nile is tied to the introduction of colonialism (Bruce-Lockhart 2017:19). Before the arrival of the Belgians among the Lugbara people, the Onzivu clan had settled the area around what became Arua hill. The Belgian troops arrived in the southern Enclave (West Nile) in 1892, becoming the first European forces on the ground, and two years later, on 12th May 1894 in Brussels, the Anglo-Belgian Agreement was signed, which set the limit to Belgian expansion to West Nile by defining the Nile-Congo watershed as the boundary between the British and Belgian territory (Leopold 2009: 466). The Belgians in the service of King Leopold II established a station there, setting up a cell for detaining persons who were considered 'unruly' for attacking the Belgians and failing to supply them with grains, cattle, sheep and goats (Leopold 2009: 466).

The first Belgian station in West Nile was established at Alenjua, present day Alua in Oluko, Arua District, probably in 1898. This station was transferred to Offude or 'Monr Wari', present day Alikua in Maracha District, in 1900, which became the main Belgian station among the Lugbara. Another station was established in Yumbe in Aringa County. Practically the whole of West Nile fell within the Monr-Wari District, one of the three districts of the Lado Enclave. Other Belgian stations built included Dufile (1899), Wadelai (1900), and Yamba near Metu in Madi (Harris 1959: 19; Middleton 1963: 87). The period 1898 to 1914 was characterized by anarchy and skirmishes between the Lugbara and the foreign invaders comprising slave raiders and poachers, and imperial forces of occupation. In 1900, the Belgians set up bases in the towns of Lado, Arua and elsewhere in the Enclave, with some 1500 soldiers under an officer named Chaltin (Harris 1959: 19; Leopold 2009: 466). The stations were kept secure by armed askaris called by the Lugbara *Tukutuku* after the sound of their guns. By 1898, the Belgians were the sole organized military force in the Enclave (Leopold 2009: 466), ushering in the establishment of prisons. The Belgians were content to acquire the support of the surrounding chiefs without going any further afield. The Belgian administration created chiefs called *Makoto* who were in charge of mobilization of resources in the communities (Middleton 2013: 203).

The name 'Arua' came into use between 1892 and 1909. The to and fro movements from the villages to the colonial headquarters to visit relatives who were kept under custody gave the place its name *Aru-a*, meaning 'in prison' or 'from prison' or 'to prison'. Leopold (2005a:31) has a slightly different explanation of the suffix but emphasizes the derivation from the Lugbara word for prison. The place was originally known as Onzivu after the Onzivu clan, who were displaced by the Belgians and British, forcing them to relocate beyond the present day Barifa Forest to Muni where Muni University is established now. The fact that the Lugbara associated the colonial headquarters with the notion 'prison' suggests that the colonial station and incarceration was a striking innovation in their local experience. Indeed, imprisonment had no part in precolonial Lugbara justice. My research found that they perceived the colonial administration, its system of law and order, and the introduction of prisons as causes of increased social and economic instability and disorder.

Prison Labour Resources under King Leopold II's Administration among the Lugbara (1898-1910)

The Belgian period witnessed the introduction of prisons among the Lugbara people, as a detention place for offenders, as well as slaves. Whereas there were no laws to protect the natives under the Belgian administration, colonial law criminalized communities that failed to satisfy the unceasing Belgian demands for foodstuffs and other resources. The punishment was imprisonment with hard labour. The Lombroisan law influenced the Belgian practice of prison labour as resource. King Leopold's territorial expansion 'was not inspired by anything other than the political and economic value of what it might absorb or attain. Its sole principles were those of greed' (Stengers 1969: 261-278). The prisons and prison labour became tools for the economic agenda of the Belgian administration in West Nile and among the Lugbara. According to Rasil Opindu who was the daughter to Awudele, an ally to the District Commissioner Sir Alfred Evelyn Weatherhead, and wife to Opindu the Colonial Court Clerk, the Belgian soldiers subjected individuals and communities considered deviant to hard labour including working on roads and constructing colonial stations. Individuals were released in exchange for animals and grains (Interview Rasil Opindu, 14th May, 2014). Sila Amaga in his narrative noted that, whereas King Leopold's administration among the Lugbara was ruthless, it was more severe among the communities in the contemporary Democratic Republic of Congo where punishment included cutting off the limbs of individuals who had failed to supply the economic resources such as labour, rubber, grains and animals (Interview Sila Amaga, 12th May, 2014).

Prison Labour Resources under British Administration among the Lugbara (1914-1962)

On June 16, 1910, following King Leopold's death, the Lado Enclave was formally transferred to the Anglo-Egyptian administration (Prothero 1920: 23; Blake 1997: xv). Four years later, on April 21, 1914, the territory was ceded to the Uganda Protectorate (Leopold 2006: 187; Acemah 2013). Although the Belgian administration had withdrawn, the prison system and labour remained and were adopted by the British administration.

When the West Nile region was transferred to the British Protectorate in Uganda, Arua Township was established in June 1914 with Sir Alfred Evelyn Weatherhead as the District Commissioner for the West Nile District (Middleton 1971: 16). In the same year, a district jail was established in Arua to keep offenders and suspects under custody. The establishment of this prison was guided by the Uganda Prison Ordinance enacted earlier in 1903, which had established the Uganda Prison Service. The colonial administration further established fifteen gazetted prisons and one judicial lock-up throughout the Protectorate. Hoima was the provincial headquarter for the Northern Province composed of Acholi and Lango regions and the West Nile District (Uganda

Protectorate 1913: 3-5). According to Rasil Opindu, there was a clear difference in the way prisons and prison labour was organized under the British colonial administration in the West Nile District in comparison with the Belgian counterpart. The shift was from ruthless body torture of the suspect or criminal under the Belgians, to an intensive exploitation of prison labour under the British colonial administration.

The prison institution had the responsibility to rehabilitate offenders through a regime of hard work. Rasil Opindu reminisced: ‘a year after my father Awudele gave Jerekede (Sir Alfred Evelyn Weatherhead) land to establish the colonial headquarter, Weatherhead, the District Commissioner, introduced new laws among the Lugbara and began the construction of the Arua prison in 1915’ (Interview Rasil Opindu 2014). In 1919 the administration began to levy taxes and implement extensive forced labour programmes (Leopold 2005b: 214). This resulted in the arrest and detention of a number of tax defaulters. Writing about British colonial Africa in general, Hynd (2015:260) states that the great majority of jailed Africans were imprisoned for minor infractions, mainly defaulting on tax payments and failure to pay fines for minor offenses.

In 1919, Governor Sir Robert Coryndon (1918-1922) proclaimed the Native Law and Native Authority Ordinance of 1919, which led to the establishment of the Native Courts in the West Nile District. The first set of chiefs appointed were Nubi who had served in Emin Pasha’s forces and the King’s African Rifles (KAR). Fademulla Ali Adu (Akutre Anyule), a Nubi who had made his first contact with the British officers at the time the district boundary was being surveyed, was appointed chief of Aringa (Blake 1997: 3; Leopold 2006: 189). Sultan Fademulla (Fadl el Mula) Murjan of Aringa, who had joined the ranks of the King’s African Rifles, was appointed Wakil of Rumogi in 1916. The Nubi chiefs became colonial agents for mobilizing prisoners and labour for the colonial administration.

The colonial chiefs were employed as civil servants to support the administration of the district. Under the Native Law Ordinance of 1919, the Governor constituted native councils and prescribed the extent of the authority they might exercise including in appropriating community and prison labour as resources for the self-financing of the protectorate. The native councils had powers to amend native law by resolution and fix penalties for the breach of such law. This was subject to the Governor’s powers of disallowance (Morris & Read 1966: 35). The Native Law and Native Authority Ordinance of 1919 was part of an apparatus to legitimize indirect rule in the chief-less and non-kingdom societies such as the Lugbara in the northern part of Uganda. It defined ‘chief’ to mean ‘any officer of an African local government recognized by the government as a chief and exercising collective authority’ (Ibingira 1973: 22-23).

The law gave colonial chiefs powers to detain suspects, fine them and subject them to hard labour on colonial works such as construction and maintenance of administrative buildings and roads. The roles of the appointed chiefs included the maintenance of law and order, organizing moot courts, reporting crime, assessment and collection of taxes, enforcing the colonial policies and law, mobilizing labour for and supervising public works and organizing sensitization meetings called Barazas. Berman (1990) observed that the backing the chiefs received from the colonial administrators removed indigenous constraints on arbitrary power. The powers the chiefs accumulated upset the internal balance of the indigenous social formation (Berman 1990:213). The native administration in the service of their master became more oppressive and ruthless, and therefore unpopular in their role of mobilizing forced and prison labour.

As Hynd explains, a variety of forced labour was used in the early colonial period. Although slavery was abolished, slave-like conditions of labour continued for decades. Compulsory labour requirements were enforced by local chiefs up until the end of World War I for infrastructure and military projects. African colonial powers had other ways of coercing their subjects to work, so that it was not until after the inter-war period that the exploitation of prisoner labour became pronounced (Hynd 2015:253-256). Rasil Opindu vividly reminisced that in the 1930s when economic crops such as cotton and tobacco were introduced in the region, prisoners were used in the demonstration and pilot farms around present-day Mvara senior secondary school. Later prisons took to the production of cotton on large scale on prison farms.

The introduction of colonial law criminalized certain acts and cultural practices which led to an increased number of 'crimes' and convictions. It further introduced prisons as detention places for offenders. The Prison Report for 1912 noted a large increase in the number of those sentenced to short-term imprisonment. It noted that the short sentences constituted the most potent recruiting factor for the habitual criminals. The Report brought to the notice of the Government the desirability of adopting more practical and up-to-date measures (Uganda Protectorate 1913:7). In 1930 Arua Prison was upgraded into a modern prison facility to handle the increasing number of prisoners. Minor offenders were detained at the county and subcounty cells supervised by the county and subcounty chiefs respectively and these prisoners provided labour at the lower local government levels.

The Value of Prison Labour

Colonial discourse often pointed to imprisonment as a means to train and reform Africans. In a report by H. Boulton Ladbury, the Chaplain of the Central Prison, the prisons had provision for spiritual growth to provide religious instruction to the inmates. 'It was hoped by these means to assist the prisons authority in their endeavor to form in the convicts a Christian character, to give the prisoners a new outlook on life, and to change these dregs of society into men and women who shall become a credit to the community in which they live' (Uganda Protectorate 1928:14-15). This would groom the convicts into quality human resources who would be able to provide labour even after serving their sentence.

The system of Convict Warders was instituted in the prisons as a move to assist in producing that esprit de corps which was necessary to good discipline. It was hoped that with a stricter discipline which will be rendered possible on the completion of the new jail at Luzira, on the one hand, and the spread of Christian Education on the other, a healthy moral consciousness will be formed which will be a very strong deterrent to wrong doing in these child races of Central Africa. (Uganda Protectorate 1928: 15)

According to the Prisons Report for 1927, disciplined and intelligent convicts, who had shown evidence of transformation in character were seconded as 'Convict Warder' to assist the Warders to maintain law and order within the prisons. Transformed convicts became human resources operating within the confines of the prison. The Commissioner further reported that the employment of convicts as clerks was due to shortage of clerical staff; however, it had proved unsatisfactory and was discontinued (Uganda Protectorate 1929: 8-9).

The prisons had a curriculum of training that was ostensibly designed 'to help prisoners to acquire a trade that will enable them to earn an honest livelihood on their release' (Uganda Protectorate 1913: 3-5). At the same time, skilling the prisoners made their labour a cheap economic resource. One may speculate that the prisoners benefited only coincidentally, as their improvement was not the primary aim of the prison curriculum. Ostensibly, the earnest desire of all was the reclamation of the prisoners from degradation and vice to a life of usefulness and self-respect. However, as Hynd (2015: 250) writes, colonial prisons had '...a conscious strategy to constrain bodies rather than discipline minds, serving to bolster the authority of colonial administrations and facilitating colonial economies rather than primarily to rehabilitate offenders.

After World War I, the Colonial government continued entrepreneurial training and skill development in the prison curriculum. According to the annual reports, prisoners' labour was directed towards the following: tailoring, carpentry, brick-making, basket-making, mat-making, swamp and drain clearing, planting, stone-breaking and general domestic duties such as upkeep of police and prison warders lines, and assistance to the Municipality (Uganda Protectorate 1925: 5).

The tailoring industry at the prisons repaired tents and produced khaki mail bags, specie bags, mattress covers, canvas chaguls and canvas mail bags. Clothing included khaki suits, pants, coats, armllets, caps, canvas capes, female prisoners' uniforms, and other garments including blue overalls. The prisons were perceived as a source of revenue for the protectorate government. The Commissioner reported that this industry alone had saved the Government £1,300 in the year 1924. The estimated savings to the government by the carpentry industry was £150, for basket-making it was Shs. 1,136/-. The labour value of swamp and drain clearing was Shs. 2,504/70 /- (Uganda Protectorate 1925:6).

Extramural convict labour was employed on farming, afforestation, anti-malarial work and utility work on the township (Uganda Protectorate 1935: 6). The hours of labour were 7 a.m. to 4 p.m. and each prisoner was to dig one hundred and twenty square yards (Uganda Protectorate 1944). In the period following World War I, prisons experienced an upsurge in the number of admissions. The rise was commensurate to the labour demand for the post-war recovery programme, which aimed at increasing productivity of agricultural raw materials for the home industry. These reports on the details of work, production and value indicate that the prison was a hub for mobilizing cheap, regular and reliable labour for the colonial administration and economy.

Punishment and Labouring Bodies

Foucault (1977) relates the different punishments to the systems of production within which they operate. He argued that in a slave economy, punitive mechanisms served to provide an additional labor force. The prison constituted a body of 'civil' slaves in addition to those provided by war or trading. Foucault further noted that with feudalism, at a time when money and production were still at an early stage of development, there was increase in corporal punishments. With the development of the mercantile economy, the body being the only property accessible, forced labor and the prison factory appeared. However, Foucault noted that as the industrial system required a free market in labor, in the nineteenth century, the role of forced labor as mechanism of punishment diminished and 'corrective' detention took its place (Foucault 1977: 24-25). However, in colonial Uganda both moral reform and prison labour co-existed as prison purposes, reinforcing each other. Foucault further argues:

The systems of punishment are to be situated in a certain 'political economy' of the body: even if they do not make use of violent or bloody punishment, even when they use 'lenient' methods involving confinement or correction, it is always the body that is at issue— the body and its forces, their utility and their docility, their distribution and their submission. (Foucault 1977:25)

The discipline and punishment of prisoner's bodies are described in the colonial records and the relation to labour resources is evident. One example concerns diet. From 1912, prisons introduced penal diet, with or without solitary confinement, as a new form of punishment for indiscipline. Punishable infractions included: bad character, smuggling tobacco into prison, possession of contraband tobacco, refusing to obey orders of prison officers, assaults on prison officers and inmates and refusing to work. In his Prisons report for the year 1927, Tremlett (Uganda Protectorate 1928) indicated that 'the punishment of penal diet and solitary confinement appears to have the desired effect on the behavior of those deserving it.' The penal diet included being denied meat or food for some days or feeding once a day depending on the severity of the offense. However, given the value of prison labour as a resource, the colonial administration adopted a change in penal diet which included providing meat in the diet, and providing two meals (breakfast and lunch) each day. This would keep them healthy and physically fit to provide labour. In his 1935 report, the Commissioner emphasized the importance of prison labour, noting that:

The inclusion of such large quantity of meat in the diet of native prisoners, in view of the fact that meat under normal conditions is not eaten regularly by natives is often criticized as an unnecessary and inappropriate luxury. It is necessary, however, to remember that by incarceration in prison for lengthy periods the prisoner is not only deprived of his liberty, his own food and drink but is also required to be maintained in a physical condition fit for hard labour. (Uganda Protectorate 1935: 11)

The humane treatment of the prisoner through provision of a balanced diet was to maintain a prisoner in health and strength in order to meet the labour demand of the Protectorate.

Whipping (5-24 strokes) was a form of colonial punishment aimed at inflicting pain on the body to induce hard work and exploit prisoner's labour to the maximum. The Bushe Commission of 1933, which objected to whipping, had noted that eleven months might elapse from the accused's arrest until the determination of his case (Morris & Read 1972: 93). This delay was due in part to the human resource challenge in the judiciary and was not intended as a punishment. Yet by incarcerating bodies it served to recruit prison labour. Under colonial rule, prisons and punishment were bound up with economic value and were situated within the 'political economy' of the body.

Colonial Law as Apparatus for Domination and Resource Exploitation

As a resource, prison labour was part of a much larger apparatus that produced and continued to shape it. Agamben (2009:2), citing Foucault, defines 'Apparatus' as 'discourses, institutions, architectural form, regulatory decisions, law, administrative measures, scientific statements, philosophical, moral and philanthropic propositions' which have a dominant strategic function to respond to urgency. It is located in a power relation and a strategic means to manipulate relations of forces. It is as well a rational intervention to relations of forces to develop them in a particular direction, to stabilize them and utilize them. An apparatus in this work is understood as a game of power and a set of strategies to manipulate power relations and exploit the prison labour resource. Agamben (2009) expands Foucault's apparatus to include anything that has '....capacity to capture, orient, determine, intercept, model, control, or secure the gestures, behaviours, opinions, or discourses of living beings. Not only, therefore, prisons, madhouses, the panopticon, schools, confessions, factories, disciplines, juridical measures....but also, the pen, writing, literature, philosophy, agriculture....and—why not—language itself...' (Agamben 2009: 14). The history of prisons and prison labour in colonial Uganda is embedded in the broader system of political economy, including colonial views on the 'uncivilized native'. The apparatus was constructed through the system of Indirect Rule.

In West Nile, Nubian officers were recruited as district and county 'chiefs' to impose British administration and taxation, and they came to dominate the long-distance trading and much of urban life... the military role of the Nubi was partially transferred to [the Lugbara] as the Nubi became disproportionately involved in the colonial army and other coercive institutions such as the police and prison services. (Leopold 2006: 181)

The colonial army and police became enforcers for the effective mobilizing of both community and prison labour. In 1925, with the native local authorities achieving their initial taxing powers (Therkildsen 2006: 4), the chiefs, village heads and the parish chiefs had the role of assessing taxpayers, enforcing tax collection and arresting and imprisoning tax defaulters. Each native administrative unit was given a target amount of tax to collect. Detention of tax defaulters

in the county or subcounty cells was to force the subjects to pay taxes. Thus, the imposition of taxes led to imprisonment and contributed to the increase of prison labour.

The introduction of Indirect Rule by Lord Lugard witnessed the establishing of a European form of law and order on the already existing African indigenous systems and institutions such as the native courts. Lugard appreciated that indigenous communities had mechanisms of making rules and adjudicating disputes within the family and society, overseen by selected members in whom indigenous authority was vested. The colonized people did not have the equivalent of the colonial or modern prison system. Indirect rule witnessed the invention of 'customary law', a hybrid of indigenous and modern law, and the introduction of the native courts. Therefore, indirect rule and the colonial law were established on the already existing indigenous systems and institutions.

Colonial law and order were enshrined in Lord Lugard's indirect rule policy and perceived as a strategy to introduce European civilisation among Africans. As Hailey noted, Native administration and colonial law 'would assist in the introduction of higher standards of economic and social life in African society' (Hailey 1951: 6). This made colonial law to function as colonial machination to introduce Western modes of life and governing among the Africans. To justify colonialism, Lugard argued that colonialism was beneficial to both Europeans and Africans, with the latter benefitting from an influx of manufactured goods and the substitution of law and order where barbarism was the order of the day. Europeans on the other hand profited from an increase in the services and resources which arose from the opening up of Africa at the end of the nineteenth century (Lugard 1922). He further noted that protectorates were mostly declared over uncivilized territories in which the native governments were incapable of maintaining law and order. It is worth noting that some of the raw material, such as cotton, used to manufacture the goods was a product of prison labour. In the name of the civilising mission, which was implemented concurrently with prison punishment, African labour was exploited and the colonial prison became one hub in that exploitation. Lugard argued that the courts of law and police were instituted for the benefit of both Europeans and natives. He asserted that colonial law was 'a moral benefit' to African societies because it curbed lawlessness and assisted in tribal evolution and progress to a higher plane (1922:233). Colonial law was used as a tool to direct African labour, including prison labour, to agricultural and revenue generating production.

Allott (1984) argues that native courts and native customary laws were an essential part of the apparatus of indirect rule and British colonial administration in Africa (1984: 58). The Indirect rule was also part of the apparatus by which African labour was exploited through Africans themselves. This affirms the Comaroff and Comaroff claim that customary law was a colonial invention introduced to the service of the colonial administration. Although customary law was developed from the indigenous moral values and practice, it aimed at promoting the colonial form of law and order which would enable the colonial administration to mobilize and exploit African labour. Chanock argues that indigenous societies never had customary laws and this was a colonial creation: 'The law (Customary) was the cutting edge of colonialism, an instrument of the power of an alien state and part of the process of coercion' (Chanock 2001: 4). Customary law was therefore a colonial resource for control and domination. Rebranding indigenous law as 'customary law' was an imperialist strategy aimed at distorting and weakening indigenous law in order to consolidate colonial rule among the subject. Hobsbawm & Ranger described this as 'the invention of tradition' a syndrome of colonialism. The hybrid political elders drew upon colonial invented tradition-customary law to define and justify their role in society (Hobsbawm & Ranger 2012 211).

Colonial law and courts, police and prisons, and its personnel such as the judges and magistrates, administrative officers and police and prisons officers were means to mobilize labour by criminalizing the subjects (Killingray 1986: 413; Roberts & Mann 1991: 3). Under the guise of what Lugard described as an 'ordered Government' defined as one with its own native parliament, liberty and justice replacing native barbarism, chaos, bloodshed, and war (Lugard 1922: 617), crime was punishable by imprisonment including hard labour which was a resource to the colonial government.

The enactment of the Penal Code in 1930 led to the replacement of the Indian Penal Code with the English law in the Central Government courts. The Criminal Procedure replaced that of 1919. Offences such as treason, murder, manslaughter and rape were transferred to the Criminal Procedure Code and could not be handled by subordinates. Special districts were declared in which a magistrate tried Africans for criminal offences (Morris & Read 1966: 42).

The Lugbara perceived colonial administration and form of law and order as having caused increased exploitation of native labour, social instability and disorder. Colonialism introduced new laws and crime categories which were political and economic in nature; they related to respect of authority, taxation, labour, property and production. The effect of colonial law was the criminalization of the African for new offences, leading to increased crime rates.

The British made laws in their oversea colonies through which crime was invented, criminals made and prisons created in the service of the colonial administration. The colonial administration used strategies to criminalize the subject by providing a hegemonic definition which perceives crime as 'an action or omission that constitutes an offense that may be prosecuted by the state and is punishable by law' (Michalowski 2016: 184). The state uses law as a tool to define crime as illegal acts against the state and the political elite. State law was a tool to mobilize penal labour.

Crime, Punishment and Prisons as Colonial Resources

Tales about Arua town characterized it as a place where natives were imprisoned, flogged, and subjected to hard labour and penal diet as forms of punishment (Interview Jackson Avutia 2014). The colonial administration in West Nile introduced prison confinement as a new form of punishment. Among the Lugbara people, punishment (*panga* in Lugbara) is an act inflicted on a person for an offense or misconduct. It depended on the nature and gravity of the offense. As punishment, a child who disrespected an elder was rebuked or caned instantly (Interview Jackson Abiria 2014). The common offenses included murder (the intentional killing of a person), manslaughter (the accidental killing of a person), patricide (the act of killing one's father), fratricide (the act of killing one's sibling), matricide, (the act of killing one's mother), infanticide (killing of an infant), uxoricide (the act of killing one's wife) and mariticide (the act of killing one's husband). While the colonialists defined these as offenses against the state, indigenous practice treated them as transgressions against the ancestral spirits, gods, the dead and the living. The offenses attracted punishments ranging from rebuke, caning, compensation, curse to excommunication. Indigenous punishment bore social and moral considerations and value. Detention in the Lugbara context was considered disruptive to social functioning and cohesion as it was retributive.

Bernault (2003) noted that 'Colonial conquest used the prison as an early instrument for the subjugation of Africans' (2003:3). Before colonial powers were in full control of territories, they erected prisons in all European garrisons and administrative outposts. In addition to prisons, the European colonizers introduced a range of techniques of confinement and discipline, including asylums, hospital wards, workers' camps, and corrective facilities for children. However, European colonizers continued to use primordial forms of punishment, such as corporal sentences, flogging, and public exhibition. In Africa, the prison supplemented public violence. Colonial administration emphasized the economic ends of the prison, and its role in the organization of forced labour (Bernault 2003:3). African prisons were models of social control imported from the West and covered a wide range of state and social strategies destined to restrain forms of deviance defined by criminal law, and to promote the reproduction of social order needed to exploit African labour. Social control is considered an instrument of the state, which represents the ruling classes, to impose and legitimate social coercion (Bernault 2003: 3-4).

The argument is that the usefulness of punishment and prison to the colonial administration was in their ability to subdue, control and exploit the African subjects' labour to meet colonial political and economic needs. Colonial prisons were means to repress the subjects and freely

exploit their labour. Foucault (1977) believes that: ‘Prisons do not diminish the crime rate: they can be extended, multiplied or transformed, the quantity of crime and criminals remains stable or, worse, increases’ (Foucault 1977: 265). Similarly, colonial prisons continued to increase and thrive. As Neveu (2007:21) asserts, prison labour is a ‘jailed resource’. Colonial prison labour was a form of institutionalized modern slavery under the colonial economy and a resource used for the economic and political interest of the colonial administration. This is substantiated by the colonial archival prison reports.

The Increasing Role of Prison Labour

The Prisons Committee Report of 1936 recommended a policy shift towards explicit promotion of prison labour, arguing that manual labour would lay the foundation for ‘good citizenship’, where ‘good citizenship’ meant ‘modern, economically productive and disciplined colonial subjects.’ Industrial training workshops increased and became Prison Industries, providing revenue to the colonial government. Prison farms had existed earlier but became stand-alone enterprises during World War II (Bruce-Lockhart 2022: 60). Long-termers of one or two convictions were sent to the prison farm.

The entrance of Uganda into the global economy, increased the significance of prison labour in the national and international economy. Prison labour was important for the post-war recovery as demand for raw materials increased in the metropole, putting pressure on the colonial governments to increase production to meet the growing demand for raw materials and goods back home in Europe. The district prisons accommodated short-termers to whom only limited reformatory measures could be applied. These included brick-laying, making handicrafts and furniture and providing labour in public works to meet colonial revenue and labour needs (Uganda Protectorate 1944).

The prison record for 1947 indicated the Lugbara committed to Luzira Central prison formed the third highest population of 165 prisoners. Baganda convicts were 615 and Batoro were 231. The same year Arua District prison received 326 committals, the fifth highest figure in the Protectorate with daily average prison population convicted and remanded standing at eighty-six (Uganda Protectorate 1948: 6, 20, 21). In 1948, the number of Lugbara committed dropped to 130 (Uganda Protectorate 1949:7).

In-mates in Arua Prison were transferred to provide labour on prison farms at Ope nzinzi in Adjumani and Ragem in Junam. Apart from growing cotton, the two prison farms produced food crops to support other prisons, especially Luzira prison which had specialized in prison industry characterized with an assorted economic activity. Similarly, the prison farms in the West Nile District produced cotton for export.

Summing up the character of the Ugandan prison system during the colonial period, Bruce-Lockhart writes:

Uganda’s prison system, much like others elsewhere, was a site of violence used by the state to manage those perceived to be “deviant.” This was especially clear in the late colonial period, when the state responded to anticolonial mobilizations by incarcerating thousands of Ugandans and deporting their leaders, another form of punitive confinement. During the post-World War II period, the prison also had an important economic purpose: along with being a place to punish those who didn’t participate in the colonial capitalist economy, it also became a site where prisoners’ labor could be exploited in the name of “development.” Many of the features of the colonial penal system would leave a lasting imprint after independence. (Bruce-Lockhart 2022:69)

The apparatus that produced prisoners and their labour was strengthened in the immediate post-colonial period when political uncertainty accompanied the constitutional crisis arising from the relationship between the Government of Uganda and Buganda Kingdom. In 1967 the Public Order and Security Act was passed, legalizing preventative detention and the imposition of restrictions on the movement of persons in the interests of public order, public security and defence. It increased the number of political prisoners, setting a dangerous precedent and a new pattern as it introduced and legalized the practice of Government arresting and detaining people without trial. After 1971, Idi Amin's regime witnessed the creation of paramilitary organizations that included the State Research Bureau, the Military Police, and the Public Safety Unit who effected arbitrary arrest and imprisonment without trial (Bruce-Lockhart 2017: 22-24).

In her book *Carceral Afterlives*, Bruce-Lockhart traces the 'imprint' of the colonial penal system from 1962 to the accession of the present government in 1986. Here I jump to the present day in order to draw out some further continuities.

Prison Labour and Post-colonial Continuity

The legacy of the colonial era lives on into the present. Arua still means 'in prison'—for more and more people. The Report of the Auditor General for the year ending June 2022 found that Arua prison, with a capacity for 193 prisoners, held 1,179, giving an occupancy rate of 611%. In Uganda as a whole prisons are extremely overcrowded. The explanation given by the Auditor General was that more people were being arrested, longer sentences were being given and the case backlog in the courts meant a high number of prisoners were kept on remand. The report showed that prisoners on remand exceeded the number of convicts. Petty offenders were kept on average 3.7 months in contrast to the two-month mandatory remand period.

Today, as the Auditor General Report (2022) noted, many offenses are criminalized, so even petty offenders are imprisoned; longer sentences are being imposed. Most important, the courts produce a very large number of prisoners on remand because they are slow and have a large backlog. The inefficiency of the judicial system is responsible for half of the inmates in today's prisons. We can thus see that today, as in colonial times, prison labour as a resource is made available and maintained through a broader apparatus. The law, the courts and aspects of political economy together function to produce prisoners.

The role of prison labour as resource is stipulated in the core function of the Uganda Prisons Service (UPS), an organ of the state under the Ministry of Internal Affairs. The constitution of the Republic of Uganda, 1995 (Article 215 - 217) establishes the Uganda Prisons Service and the Prisons Act of 2006. The legislated mandate is custody of prisoners and rehabilitation of offenders while the assigned mandate is production of cotton, seed and furniture for Ministries, Departments and Agencies. This is further seen in Uganda Prison's Strategic Objective Number 4: Enhance prisons production and productivity while facilitating delivery of correctional services.

The Uganda Prisons' workshops are controlled through funding, setting standards, and reward and punishment to improve the workshops' performance in terms of efficiency, effectiveness and sustainability (Akodo & Nandudu 2012:394). This is further seen in the national Offender Rehabilitation and Reintegration figures. The number of prisoners on formal education programs in the FY2019/20= 2,839, FY2020/2021= 2,756 and FY2021/2022= 3,153. The number of Prisoners under vocational skills training programs in the FY2019/20= 21,449, FY2020/2021= 21,996 and FY2021/2022= 18,193. The number of prisoners doing vocational training is many times greater than those doing formal education. The national statistics point to the importance of prisoner labour as economic resource.

In a 2019 conference presentation, the Commissioner of Prisons stated that: 'Rising rates of incarceration and shrinking State budgets have renewed interest in putting imprisoned persons to work helping to defray the costs of their incarceration and reducing the potential for violence that results from enforced idleness in crowded cellblocks'. He spoke of the 'labour potential' in

the daily average 29,000 convicted prisoners (he did not mention the equal number on remand). Among the country's 254 prisons are 23 prison farms with considerable resources of arable land—48,000 acres in all. 'We must develop the human resource... Offenders have great potential that can be tapped for both individual and state productivity', he concluded (Aloka 2019). The presentation showed the efforts to use this 'human resource' to produce, cotton, maize and seeds on prison farms and furniture and other craft items in Prison Industries.

Putting prisoners to work is construed as good for them; they learn livelihood skills and work discipline, which may benefit them after release. It is also good for the underfunded prison system in that prisoners' labour contributes to the maintenance of the institution that incarcerates them. This same logic was evident in the colonial records, albeit with more racist overtones. African prisoners were to be 'civilized' through training and labour. And the prisons, together with the colonial apparatus of which they were part, became more self-sufficient through prison production (Hynd 2015:265). This need to generate income for running the prisons is explicit in the title of the Commissioners presentation: 'Transforming Prisons in Africa to Productive Services: a Strategic Objective'.

The conditions under which this potential was being tapped had been critically examined in a comprehensive report by Human Rights Watch (2011) eight years earlier. The report found that prisoners were being forced to work under difficult conditions, sometimes even when ill. According to law, prisoners on remand should not be forced to work, yet they were treated as labour resources alongside convicts. Three models of agricultural labour were identified. 1) Prisoners were made to work on official prison farms; the proceeds were supposed to go to prison headquarters for distribution to prisons nationwide, but some might be held back to support the producing prison. 2) Prison labour was contracted to outside people with the declared intent of supporting the administration of the prison, which received insufficient financing from the centre. 3) Prisoners provided free labour for staff's private farms (HRW 2011: 26-29).

The Human Rights Watch study suggests that colonial treatment of prisoner bodies—inflicting pain in order to extract labour—has parallels in the present. It also raises the question of who benefits from the labour resources. Ostensibly, prisoners work to maintain the prison and prison system, just as colonial era prisoners contributed to the self-sufficiency of the Protectorate. Hiring out prisoners to private employers might serve the same purpose, but it is hard to know if the proceeds always revert to prison administration. Certainly, in cases where prisoners are made to do domestic and agricultural work for staff, the beneficiaries are individuals rather than institutions, as was also the case in the colonial era (Hynd 2015:268).

Conclusion

The central argument of this article is that colonial prisons in Uganda had a significant role as labour resource. The study of the colonial period shows how the formation of a legal and political apparatus was necessary to produce and maintain this resource in the era of colonialism and capitalism. The promulgation of laws and the establishment of a court system provided the framework for prisons and prison labour. The examination of the colonial apparatus also shows how racist assumptions about the white man's 'civilizing mission' were part of the facilitating apparatus.

Several different justifications for penal labour appear in the records from colonial to contemporary times. Hard labour may be considered a punishment in itself on a par with other bodily assaults. It may be seen as formative, teaching discipline and productive skills that will be useful for the prisoner after release. Such assertions were part of the denigrating discourse of the colonial period on the need to 'uplift' Africans. A common rationale for prison labour is the need to contribute to the sustainability of the system. In the colonial period, prisons were supposed to be self-supporting and also to contribute to the functioning of the colonial system. The same rationale is evident today, as we saw in the 2019 assertion of the Commissioner of Prisons that prisoners must defray the costs of their incarceration. The unspoken interest in, if not explicit

justification of, prison labour is that it provides value to individuals, who make use of it for personal purposes, and to a larger system linked to state hegemony and to international capitalist concerns.

Once an apparatus has brought a resource into existence, that resource can become a commodity or, as in this case, it can be obliged to produce commodities. As I have shown here, the colonial apparatus itself and the prison labour resources that it made possible were characterized by deep inequalities of power. What I have demonstrated is that penal labour itself, obviously an example of power disparity, must be understood within wider relations of domination inherent in the apparatus of law and courts.

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Okot p'Bitek and the Resources of Acoli Culture

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Abstract

Okot p'Bitek, born in 1931, midway through the British colonial rule in Uganda (1900-1962), is an internationally renowned poet, polemic writer and cultural activist. From an early age Okot imbibed Acoli culture from his parents who, though converts in the Protestant Church in Gulu, continued to practice their Acoli culture. This article explores the creative use of the structure and poetic features of orality as resources in his literary writing. My study of his creative writings is underpinned by an autoethnographic theoretical framework. The main research tool is document analysis focusing on the two texts: *Lak Tar Miyo Kinyero iwi Lobo* and *Wer pa Lawino and its English version, Song of Lawino*. My literary analyses of the texts confirm that they are embedded in the rich Acoli cultural resources. Okot's upbringing in a family that was culturally active provided him with resources including Acoli oral narratives and proverbs from his father and the song genre from his mother who was a great composer-singer. He harnessed these resources through his formal study in anthropology at Oxford University (1960-3).

Keywords: Acoli, Cultural Resources, Creativity, Autoethnography

The singer may be dead but if the song is good, it will live on.
(Professor Margaret Macpherson's Eulogy at Okot's funeral, 1982).

Introduction

Okot p'Bitek, born in 1931, midway through the British colonial rule in Uganda (1900-1962), is an internationally renowned poet, polemic writer and cultural activist. His formation is a blend of informal education under the guidance of his parents and formal schooling, which started in Gulu Primary (1938-1944) and continued in Gulu High School (1945-7) both run by the Church Missionary Society (CMS). He received 'European' education in King's College Budo in Buganda (1948-1950); Mbarara in Ankole (1951-3); Aberystwyth in Wales (October 1957-June 1960); Bristol (October 1956-June 1957) and Oxford (October 1960-June 1963) in England. Okot's Oxford education came at a time when he was more mature in Acoli cultural knowledge and this maturity was further enriched as a result of his social and cultural anthropological education at Oxford. The fieldwork for his B.Litt Thesis in Social Anthropology: '*Oral Literature and its Social Background among the Acholi and Lango*' (1963) exposed him more thoroughly to the rich oral literature (orature) resources of the Acoli people. His anthropological training allowed him to take another perspective on his own culture, to appreciate more fully the value of his heritage and to draw on it as a resource.

In this article I explore the ways in which Okot drew on the resources of Acholi culture. He used the structure and poetic features of orality in his prose and poetry, especially the song genre and the narrative style of storytelling. He explicated the content of Acoli culture in his scholarly and polemic writings, drawing on his knowledge of Acoli life-worlds. But his creative

writing is also deeply ethnographic, indeed autoethnographic. Strikingly, most of his literary productivity flowered after his academic fieldwork. It was as if that scholarly effort gave him broader knowledge and deeper appreciation of the rich cultural resources he might otherwise have taken for granted. In his creative writings, his personal life experiences (biography) are blended and discernible, while the content of Acoli culture and the tensions engendered by colonialism are conveyed in sensitive detail. His academic work has garnered renewed interest in light of the decolonization discussion (Allen 2019), but his literary work is perhaps an even more powerful example of how cultural resources can be used by a gifted auto-ethnographer. It is to his novel *Lak Tar* and his songs that I turn attention here.

Acoli culture encompasses the language, customs, beliefs, rules, knowledge and collective identity of the Acoli people who also appear as characters in Okot's creative writing. Resources refer to the wealth of knowledge of Acoli culture which Okot draws from and uses in his creative writing. Okot's knowledge of Acoli social and cultural life is therefore the main resource in his creative and polemic writings. Okot the poet, like the Acoli oral poets, are feared as they use their cultural resources to either build or destroy those who do not uphold the social norms of the Acoli society.

Parental Influences

Okot's parents were steeped in Acoli culture and yet they were Anglican converts. He thus had deep familiarity with both worlds as is reflected in his writings and cultural activism. Prior to his anthropological education, they introduced him to two important aspects of Acoli orature: folk narratives and oral songs/poetry. In his response to Lee Nichols' question as to what elements in his family background may have had an influence in his becoming a writer and the kind of writer he became, Okot points to his informal education:

Well, both my parents were fantastic performers. I think from my father I learnt a lot of stories and style of telling stories. But from my mother I learnt a great deal about poetry, song and dance. And she was always very naughty, you know and teasing me all the time. Whenever she produced a new song she would call me and say, 'Listen to this new.' And the next week the song would be known throughout the village and danced and performed (Okot 1981: 243).

His early interest in the resources of Acoli culture was encouraged by his parents and especially his mother. He was, from the outset, mother's boy especially since he was an only child and boy at that. She was both a cultural inspiration and resource for him. It is no wonder that his greatest work, published as *Song of Lawino* (1966) in English, and later in the Acholi original as *Wer pa Lawino* (1969), is dedicated to her. A further tribute to her was the inclusion of many of her songs among those that he collected during his fieldwork and published as *Horn of My Love* (1974). From his father, he learnt the art of narration and 'lots of stories', many of which he published in *Hare and Hornbill* (1979). Among the Acoli, the proverb is a very rich cultural resource applied in ordinary conversation, teaching moral lessons in narratives and in oral songs/poetry especially by composer-singers as a rhetorical poetic device to express emotions. Okot published his collection of proverbs in *Acoli Proverbs* (1985).

Lak Tar: Acoli Oral Narrative and Cultural Critique

From his father Okot learnt the art of storytelling and Acoli wisdom (philosophy) which he applied creatively in his only novel published in the Acoli language: *Lak Tar Miyo ki Nyero i wi Lobo*, shortened to *Lak Tar* (1953/ latest edition 2021) and translated into English as *White Teeth* (1989). The novel is a critique of the Acoli traditional marriage custom which was being exploited by

colonially enlightened Acoli parents whose value systems were being monetized. The genesis of the novel is based on what happened to Okot when he tried the Acoli courtship practice on an educated Acoli girl from a royal family when both were students in King's College, Budo (1948-50). Okot fell passionately in love with the girl who unfortunately knew him as coming from a poor family and therefore not fit to court her even by Acoli customary standards. She was royal (*nyaker*) and he was non-royal (*labong*). Okot's pride was wounded but instead of sulking, he sat in his dormitory and composed an opera called *Acan*. The content of the opera spoke of the poor boy who is rejected but who hopes to grow into someone important in future. She should wait and see. It was a very touching composition coming from deep within Okot's heart. The Budo Nightingales Choir, of which Okot was a founder member, practiced and blended it with a Mozartian tune from the *Magic Flute*. At the concert, which was attended by the Governor of Uganda, Okot's opera won the first prize for original composition. This brought fame to Okot as an individual and Budo as a school and it wiped out Okot's shame over unrequited love (*The Budonian* 1996).

Okot developed the opera into a novel whose title he drew from a proverb: *Lak tar miyo Kinyero i wi lobo*: people laugh because they want to show the whiteness of their teeth rather than expressing joy. The laughter is in defiance of poverty or misfortune which one can neither change nor succumb to. From the success of the opera, Okot had the last laugh at the girl who rejected his love because he was from a poor family, the son of a mere catechist who sold sugar cane and fruits to supplement his meager income.

The structure of the novel is based on some of the Acoli quest narratives where the poor hero goes on a quest and, depending on his behaviour or circumstances, comes back either rich or poorer than when he set out. Okot knew those narratives which he learnt from his father or from the *wang-oo*, the traditional evening fireside school. In *Lak Tar*, Okeca's quest is for money (bridewealth) to enable him to marry his beautiful Cicilia. Like Okot, Okeca is from a poor family. His father died when he was young leaving him with thirty goats, which were later inherited together with Okeca's mother and her two children by his father's brother. This left Okeca without any inheritance and hence a challenge in finding bridewealth to marry his Cicilia. In Acoli culture, when a young man failed to raise bridewealth, his paternal and maternal uncles were responsible for providing it. In Okeca's case, both uncles refused. Traditionally, the option was for a young man to use a sister's bridewealth for his own marriage. Unfortunately, Okeca's only sister was young and sickly so he could not wait for her bridewealth.

The amount of cash demanded by girls' parents in the 1940s was one thousand shillings, which was difficult to get for many of the young men from poor families. Some young men who failed to raise the high bridewealth committed suicide but Okeca chose to go to the source of wealth in Buganda, the seat of the colonial government, where there were many opportunities to get paid employment. Many Acoli youth like him had gone to Kampala; some had made quick money and come back to marry while others ended up as gang members who were more in jail than out of jail. However, these failures were never talked about back home since only the successful ones came back to tell their stories. Okeca had only heard of those who made money but later when he came to Kampala, he found out some of his clansmen were living from hand to mouth with no permanent abode and some were jailbirds.

Okeca went out with thirty shillings saved by his mother from her peasant cultivation. He travelled on the bus from Gulu to Masindi Port, where he met some of his financially successful clansmen returning home. One of them gave him a knife for self-protection and indeed it became very useful in Kampala when he had to defend himself against the police and a crowd of onlookers who accused him of being a thief trying to rob an Indian Singh of thirty shillings. When he was taken to court, he pleaded not guilty and here Okot's legal training came into play. Okeca was not shaken by the black-robed judge. He maintained his innocence and pleaded fear of the speeding motorcars. To avoid being knocked dead, he ran fast across the road and inadvertently collided violently with the Indian and knocked him down. The thirty shillings found on him were not stolen; it was the money he had come with from home. The judge admired the clarity of his statements

and found him not guilty. In this episode Okot wrote his own personal life story into the novel. Okeca's fear of the fast-moving motorcars was Okot's own experience when his former Headmaster, Erisa Lakor, his clansman from Patiko, brought him to Kampala to join King's College Budo in 1948 as a 'bush-boy' from Gulu. He was overwhelmed by the fast motorcars and the big crowd (including hawkers and thieves) moving on Kampala road.

The Acoli concept of *wan acel*, which I translate as 'we are one/oneness' holds the Acoli people together wherever they are. When Okeca arrived in Kampala, he stayed with his clansman Corporal Okello, but then, since he could not get a job in Kampala and the traditional extended family hospitality is not applicable in Kampala, he had to move out of Okello's home. Fortunately, through the network based on *wan acel*, he got a fixed term contract job in Jinja at Kakira Sugar Factory as a cane cutter. Because he was hard working, he was soon promoted to the rank of headman though he was not educated. He became one of the leaders of the Acoli community at the factory. Many of the young Acoli men looked to him for guidance and support. One of the boys got tired and wanted to return home before completing his contract. This could be done if one got a letter from home informing him of death or sickness of a close relative which required his presence. The young man approached Okeca for such a letter. The trick was to have the letter written from the workplace but using the home address in Acoliland. Since Okeca could neither read nor write, he asked a Langi fellow headman called Ogwang to write the letter. Whatever grudge Ogwang had against Okeca, he used Okeca's physical address at the Sugar Factory and this of course exposed Okeca as being part of the fraud to get Acoli boys home without completing their contracts. The Langi man admitted to having written the letter and Okeca was demoted to a casual labourer with reduction in his wage. This incident is creatively contrived by Okot to illustrate his indigenous knowledge of the old rivalry between the Acoli and Langi dating back to the migration period from Bar-el-Ghazal in South Sudan in the 1600s and the many wars the two tribes fought over territorial rights (Crazzolaro 1960). Here, Okot used the historical context of the Acoli-Langi conflict as a resource.

After carefully ensuring that he got all his savings from the Indian managers, Okeca escaped from the sugarcane factory through the plantation to Jinja railway station. His argument for breaking his contract was that he voluntarily came to work in the sugarcane factory, and he could also voluntarily leave the job. His moral conscience was clear: he was only exercising his free will based on the Acoli philosophy of '*an kena atiyo ki tamma...I alone can exercise my free will.*'

Passing through Kampala, his hard-earned cash was stolen from him at the bus station by a clever thief who cut the money out of the pocket where he had sewn it. He didn't realize the theft until he reached Masindi Port and had no money for the last leg of the journey to Gulu. All the Acoli men he asked for help refused and he walked the last 15 miles back to Gulu arriving poorer than he left home. The narrative cycle is complete: no bridewealth and no marriage.

Okot combined the Acoli narrative technique as a resource with his personal knowledge of the story of the young man and recreated it into a novel, also writing himself into it. Okeca's first encounter with the fast-moving vehicles in the big city, Kampala, is dramatic and could only be narrated by Okot who had a similar experience when he was taken to Budo by his former Headmaster, Erisa Lakor. Okeca's suffering in the course of looking for the bridewealth is Okot's criticism of enlightened Acoli parents who were 'selling' their daughters to enrich themselves. This criticism is also found in Reuben Anywar's *Acoli Ki Ker Megi* (1954) which documents the history and culture of the Acoli culture under different chiefdoms. The Acoli Local Government and the traditional leaders had by-laws regulating the amount (*akumu*) to be paid, but many parents, including the administrators of the by-laws, ignored them. (Currently, there are new by-laws recently passed by the Acoli traditional leaders to curb the current high bridewealth [Kalokwera 2021].)

When the marriage breaks down, the girl's parents were required to return the bridewealth but many failed as they had used the money to marry wives for their sons or spent on other social amenities. Okot illustrates this scenario when his own marriage to Mary Anek broke down in 1966.

He asked her family to return the bridewealth he paid for her. Since her father could not pay back, Anek wrote him a cheque and this is beautifully captured in the poem, 'Return the Bridewealth' (Cook and Rubadiri 1971: 130-131):

I tell the woman I cannot trace her father.
I say to her I want back the bridewealth that my father paid
When we wedded some years ago...
The woman reaches out for her hand bag
[...]
She takes out a new purse,
She takes out a cheque
[...]
She screams,
Here, take it! Go marry your bloody woman!
I open the cheque
It reads,
Shillings One thousand four hundred only.

Okot said he happily cashed the cheque and spent the money. Many other people are not as lucky as Okot in getting their bridewealth back. Where there are children in the marriage, the man does not push too hard for his bridewealth since he takes custody of the children if the woman decides to remarry.

An unmarried man has no respect in Acoli society; therefore the orphaned Okeca embarked on the quest for bridewealth to marry his beloved Cicilia. Okot writes himself into the novel through the expansion of the theme of unrequited love because he is from a poor family. Using personal biographical information and incorporating familiar cultural knowledge makes him both an ethnographer and autoethnographer of Acoli people.

Okot the Ethnographer and Autoethnographer of Acoli Indigenous Knowledge

Okot was a Nilotic and there was no better place for him to study his Nilotic people than with renowned Africanists such as Evans-Pritchard and the Lienhardt brothers, who were authorities on the Nilotic peoples of the Sudan, and John Beattie who was an authority on the Banyoro, who are culturally closely related to the Payira clan in Acoliland (Anywar 1954).

According to Taban lo Liyong, 'If the Quaker and Catholic Professors at Bristol's Education Department (1956-7) blew Okot's religious (Anglican) mind and he dropped his Anglican name Jekeri, the Oxford Africanists in the Department of Social and Cultural Anthropology brought to fruition Okot the cultural nationalist' (Interview with Taban lo Liyong in Gulu on 20th August, 2011). His interest in Acoli culture was sharpened through his theoretical study of Cultural and Social Anthropology. This sharpening was 'quickened' through his fieldwork among the Acoli people whom he now saw differently as people who had a rich authentic culture and not primitive as the colonialists (Africanists and colonial administrators) made them (Acoli/African) feel. Thus, had Okot not been subjected to the negative attitudes of the colonialists about the Acoli (African) people, he would not have opted to study and research in the orality and social content of the Acoli people in depth. He became both an ethnographer and autoethnographer of Acoli culture unearthing its resources which he later used in his creative and academic writings.

My discussion of Okot's extensive use of Acoli culture as resources in his writings is underpinned by the theory and practices of autoethnography, which Deborah Reed-Danahay (1997:1) defines as:

...the ethnography of one's own group [*for example the Acoli*] but also to the use of personal narrative in ethnographic writing [*Okot's*]

creative writing]...it is a genre that places the self of the researcher and/or narrator/poet within a social context. Autoethnography, broadly conceived, stands at the intersection of three genres of narration and critical reflection that may overlap in any particular work. These include: portraits of a social group the author-anthropologist is affiliated with; the life writing or other anthropological acts that incorporate ethnographic description of their social group; and anthropological writing that includes reflexive descriptions of research experiences during ethnographic fieldwork.

The illustration below clarifies diagrammatically the intersections (Patterson 2014).



Bunde-Birouste and colleagues (2018) place autoethnography within the theory and methods of ‘critical ethnography’ and ‘ethnographic method’. Citing Liamputtong, they clarify that ethnographic research ‘...enables a detailed, often termed, ‘thick’ in-depth description of the culture under study’ (2018:3). This is only possible because the researcher is situated within the community under study. They argue that ‘Automethodologies are formed by the intersection of three components: “auto” the self, “graphy,” the research process, and the epistemological frame, for example, “ethno,” knowledge of culture, community and social world’ (2018:4). From Reed-Danahay’s definition and that of Bunde-Birouste and colleagues, Okot emerges as the ethnographer of the Acoli people as a social group in his B.Lit field work. The use of his own experience combines with his ethnographic study of the Acoli to make him an autoethnographer. In turn, this knowledge feeds into his stories and poems. What is striking about Okot’s work as a whole is the relation between his (auto) ethnography and his creative writing. He drew upon his ethnographic knowledge of Acoli culture as well as narrative and poetic features of Acoli oral traditions as resources for his creative writings. His most famous literary works are packed full of details about Acoli material culture, social relations and worldview.

Ethnography and Creative Writing: Acoli Indigenous Knowledge as Resource in *Song of Lawino*

Throughout this section, I will draw examples from the 1989 Fountain Publishers combined school edition of *Song of Lawino* and *Song of Ocol* with an introduction by George Heron. This edition is commonly available rather than the original single texts by East African Publishing House

(EAPH) that published the 1966 and 1970 editions of *Song of Lawino* and *Song of Ocol* respectively. I will refer to *Song of Lawino* as *SoL* and the page references are to the combined 1989 Fountain Publishers edition. In what follows, I present examples of Okot's poetic use of resources from Acoli culture, taking them in the order in which they appear in *Song of Lawino*.

A word about pumpkins

SoL has 13 sections (some scholars refer to the sections as chapters) whereas *Wer pa Lawino* has 14 sections. Okot did not translate section 14 in *Wer pa Lawino* and when I asked him, he claims that he was tired. But my argument is that the 14th section may not have added much value to *SoL* because here Lawino re-emphasizes the importance of the pumpkin as a symbol of Acoli culture, but equally its importance as an all-season food crop not only in Acoliland but in many nations. This indigenous knowledge would not add much value to English readers but instead minimize the dramatic ending of *SoL* where Lawino's final appeal to the culturally semi-recovered Ocol is that he should remove 'the roadblock' and 'give me a chance to dance and praise him' (p. 123). The long explanation of the food value of the pumpkin would have also lessened the dramatic ending with the final warning, 'Let no one uproot the pumpkin.' It is no longer Lawino warning the Ocols but the poet himself: 'do not abandon your rich cultural heritage with its indigenous knowledge and wisdom which are the natural resources that sustain and maintain the cultural norms of the Acoli people. The "recently" acquired colonial knowledge and culture are not deeply rooted in you.' Lawino satirically laughs at Ocol 'who can neither perform the Acoli nor the colonial dances' and yet he shamelessly wanted to 'uproot the pumpkin and cut the ancestral shrine'. This would leave him rootless and easily tossed around finding peace neither in the royal family he belongs to nor the sectarian-individualized colonial society he hungers for.

Describing character

Right from the beginning of the poem, Okot draws on the indigenous knowledge of the social status of royalty in the Acoli social world. Chiefs are respected and songs about them are songs of praise not insults. Lawino thus chides Ocol, son of the Chief:

Listen Ocol, you are the son of a Chief,
Leave foolish
Behaviour to little children
It is not right that you should be laughed at in a song!
Songs about you should be songs of praise!

Stop despising people
As if you were a little foolish man,
Stop treating me like salt-less ash
Become barren of insults and stupidity;
Who has ever uprooted the Pumpkin? (*SoL*, 37-8)

Among the Acoli, salt was made from decocting the ash of certain dried plants. The remaining wet waste was either used as manure or thrown on the rubbish heap and treaded upon. Okot poetically uses this indigenous knowledge to describe Ocol's arrogance in the way he treats not only Lawino but black people in general. Hence Lawino's complaint that Ocol should stop treating them 'likes salt-less ash'. In Section 14 of *Wer pa Lawino* which is not included in *SoL*, Lawino advises Ocol to use the salt-less ash as manure to grow the pumpkin instead of uprooting it. With Okot's extensive indigenous knowledge, the different plants, animals and insects with peculiar characteristics become cultural resources he poetically used in *SoL*. For example, in the stanza below, there is a concentration of similes drawn from plants, animals and insects with peculiarity comparable to Ocol's insulting tongue:

My husband's tongue
 Is bitter like the roots of the *lyonno*¹ lily,
 It is hot like the penis of the bee,
 Like the sting of the penis of the bee
 Like the sting of the *kalang*²
 Ocol's tongue is fierce like the arrow of the scorpion,
 Deadly like the spear of the buffalo-hornet
 It is ferocious
 Like the poison of the barren woman
 And corrosive like the juice of the gourd. (SoL, 38)

The bitterness of the tongue is not only directed at Lawino but to her relatives and blacks in general. Okot again draws on Acoli similes as cultural resource in conveying Ocol's arrogant behaviour:

He behaves like a hen
 That eats its own eggs
 A hen that should be imprisoned under a basket.
 His eyes grow large
 Deep black eyes
 Ocol's eyes resemble those of the Nile Perch!
 He becomes fierce
 Like a lioness with cubs,
 He begins to behave like a mad hyena. (SoL, 39)

The similes are used satirically to undercut Ocol's pride and present him as a non-conformist to Acoli culture.

Kinship and marriage

The comparison with 'a hen /That eats its own eggs' is symbolic when we learn from Lawino that Ocol hates noise from his own children. He may be wishing that he never had those children like the hen that will never see its chicks since she has eaten them at the egg stage. It is therefore out of shame that he wants to 'uproot the pumpkin' thus cutting himself from the culture that values children, family and relatives. In the Acoli social world, the centre of anyone is the family and Okot elaborates this philosophy in an essay, 'Man the Unfree' (Okot 2011:20):

Man cannot and must not be free. 'Son', 'mother', 'daughter', 'father', 'uncle', 'grandfather', 'wife', 'clansmen', 'mother-in-law',... and many such other terms, are the stamps of man's unfreedom. It is by such complex terms that a person is defined and identified. ... The central question, 'Who am I?' cannot be answered in any meaningful way, unless the relationship in question is known. Because 'I' is not only one relationship but numerous relationships.

¹ The *lyonno* is a climbing plant which belongs to the lily plant type but has very bitter roots which are sometimes harvested, washed and boiled and the juice mixed with other herbs as medicine.

² *Kalang* is a small black insect that moves in groups in a military formation but once the head is killed, the rest scatter in disarray. The *kalang* stings mostly the bare buttocks of people who sit on bare earth or those walking barefooted either in the compound, along the footpaths or in the garden where there is competition for space or way. It is a very painful sting.

Thus, Ocol cannot run away from Lawino or divorce her as his traditional wife. He can cohabit with Clementine or marry her as his second wife. Lawino would welcome her as a co-wife because, in Acoli society:

When I have another woman
With whom I share my husband,
I am glad
A woman who is jealous
Of another, with whom she shares a man.
Is jealous because she is slow,
Lazy and slow,
Because she is cold, weak, clumsy!
The competition for a man's love
Is fought at the cooking place
When he returns from the field
Or from the hunt,
You win with a hot bath
And sour porridge.

...

The wife who jokes freely,
Who eats in the open
Not in the bed room,
One who is not dull
Like stale beer
Such is the woman who becomes
The headdress keeper.

(*SoL*, 43-44)

Lawino's words of wisdom express cardinal rules that govern the homes of polygamous families. She would therefore rather have Ocol marry Clementine (Tina) as a second wife and not cohabit with her as his concubine. Lawino is not afraid of competing with her as she is confident she will be the winner in the traditional social context. She is 'The headdress keeper', the senior wife in whose house/hut, the husband keeps his dancing gear including the 'headdress.' Her sustained satirical criticism of Tina in Section Two is not because she is jealous, although she cannot deny being 'a little jealous' but because Tina is a concubine who has diverted Ocol from his husbandly duties: a husband to her and father of their children.

Courtship

In Section Four of *Song*, Okot returns to traditional courtship. In *Lak Tar*, Okeca and his friends had three possible places of meeting girls: on the way to the well, to collect firewood or to the market. In *Song*, the focus is on Ocol's courtship at Lawino's home:

Ocol my husband,
My friend,
What are you talking?
You saw me when I was young.
In my mother's house
This man crawled on the floor!¹
The son of the Bull wept
For me with tears,

...

Every night he came
To my father's homestead,

He never missed one night
Even after he had been beaten
By my brothers.

...

You trembled
When you saw the tattoos
On my breasts
And the tattoos below my belly button;
And you were very fond
Of the gap in my teeth!

(SoL, 51)

Traditionally, a young man who has met a girl outside her home and proposed love comes to her home to show his seriousness. She introduces him to her family members, but he does not frequent her home like Ocol who came to Lawino's home '... every night'/ Even after he had been beaten/By my brothers' (Song, p 51). The beating is not to maim you but just to let you know that the boys care about their sister whom they hope will bring them bridewealth when she becomes your wife. After the marriage, there is a new bond of relationship between the 'beaten suitor' and the protective brothers of the girl. Ocol does not have this bond with Tina's brother(s) because she is his concubine not second wife. Lawino displays her physical beauty, which is a total contrast to Tina's emaciated body, a perfect modern ideal, as her type 'aspires/ To look like a white woman' (SoL, 40). Lawino's tattooed body and the gap in her teeth (*kere*) are two marks of beauty that made Ocol 'tremble' and 'cry with tears for her' (SoL, p51).

Cosmetics

In Section Five, Okot's indigenous knowledge of the Acoli beautician's body shop with its variety of oils, creams and hair colouring substances is poetically used as a cultural resource. Lawino adds the oils and creams to her already beautiful body and indeed, even educated men like Ocol could not resist her:

When you go to dance
You adorn yourself for the dance,
If your string-skirt
Is ochre-red
You do your hair
With ochre,
And you smear your body
With red oil
And you are beautifully red all over!
If you put on a black string-skirt
You do your hair with *akuku*³
Your body shines with simsim oil
And the tattoos on your chest
And on your back
Glitter in the evening sun.
And the healthy sweat
On your bosom
Is like the glassy fruits of *acuga*⁴.

(SoL, 55)

³ Odonga in *Lwo –English Dictionary (2012 ed.)* defines *Akuku* as, 'a black sand (iron ore with mica) used for smearing the head and female loin dresses (*cip ki ceno*).

⁴ *Acuga* are small black wild fruits/berries that grow on shrubs. They are sweet and edible.

This stanza is one of the best poetic uses of indigenous knowledge by Okot. As readers we can visualize and even smell the traditional perfumes on the girls.

And as the fragrance
Of the ripe wild berries
Hooks insects and little birds,
As the fishermen hook the fish
And pull them out mercilessly,

The young men
From the surrounding villages
And from across many streams,
They come from beyond the hills
And the wide plains
They surround you
And bite off their ears
Like jackals.

(*SoL*, 56)

The irresistible ‘fragrance’ of the body perfumes draws ‘young men’ from near and far just like the insects and birds cannot resist the fragrance from flowers which contain the nectar they are after. Lawino and the Acoli girls’ beautification with traditional fragrances is contrasted with Tina’s excessive use of synthetic foreign cosmetics in her quest to look ‘like a white woman’. The slimming chemicals have caused her anorexia and hence her thinness making her walk noiselessly like a ghost (*SoL*, pp.39-44).

The house

In Section Six, ‘The Mother Stone Has a Hollow Stomach’, Okot, through Lawino, displays his indigenous knowledge of Acoli domestic aesthetics, when he describes in detail Lawino’s mother’s house built by her father. Lawino takes Ocol on a guided tour of the house and its beautifully arranged contents:

Come brother,
Come into my mother’s house!
Pause a bit by the door,
Let me show you
My mother’s house.

Look,
Straight before you
Is the central pole
At the foot of the pole
Is my father’s revered stool.

Further on
The rows of pots
Placed one on top of the other
Are the stores
And cupboards.
Millet flour, dried carcasses
Of various animals
Beans, peas,
Fish, dried cucumber...
...

Here on your left
Are the grinding stones:
The big one
Ashen and dusty
And her daughter
Sitting in her belly
Are the destroyers of millet
Mixed with cassava
And sorghum.

...

Do you know
Why the knees
Of millet –eaters
Are tough?
Tougher than the knees
Of the people who drink bananas!
Where do you think
The stone powder
From the grinding stones goes?

(*SoL*, 62-3)

Firewood

Lawino takes Ocol to the fire where her mother has different types of firewood and here, she scientifically identifies and discusses the properties of each firewood. She confidently and with humble pride says:

If you ask me
About firewood
I can describe them to you in detail
I know their names
And leaves
And seeds and barks.

For example, *Labwori*:

...is alright
If it is perfectly dry.
But if it is still green
The smoke it produces
Is like spear!
It is useful for
Chasing men from the hut
Men who sit close
To the cooking pot!
Their eyes fixed into the pot!
*Odure*⁵ who does not
Listen when others sing
Odure, come out

⁵ *Odure* is the name of a small boy who was fond of sitting by the fireside in the ‘cooking hut’ of his mother. One day a spark of fire burnt his testicles. This incident became known throughout the village and a composer-singer turned it into a song. The song warns those who frequent the cooking hut that they might suffer the same fate like *Odure*.

*From the kitchen
Fire from the stove (cooking stones)
Will burn your penis!*

(SoL, 63)

The good firewood includes: *Opok* which ‘is easy/To split with the axe’; ‘*Yaa* [shea nut tree] burns gently/It burns like oil’; but ‘*Poi* is no use for firewood/It is rock;/It is useful only/As walking staff/For the aged (pp. 63-4). Lawino cannot be faulted in her knowledge of firewood properties. Okot’s creative use of indigenous knowledge is poetically enhanced by use of Acoli similes. For example, ‘*Yaa* burns like oil’ and the smoke produced by green *Labwori* is ‘Like spear! /It is useful for /Chasing men from the hut (cooking hut)...’ In normal life, a man who is angry with another man would use a spear to chase him. In both examples, the similes are appropriately used based on Okot’s indigenous knowledge.

Seasons

Okot’s creative use of the resources of Acoli culture extends to two main seasons: wet and dry seasons in Acoli social and agricultural calendars.

Wet season means
Hard work in the field
Sowing, weeding, harvesting
It means waking up early before dawn
It means mud
And the thick dew.
Herdboys dislike it.
Lazy people hate it.

Dry season means pleasure,
It means dancing,
It means hunting
In freshly burnt plains.

...

Dry season means wooing
And eloping with girls.
It means the *moko* dance
When youths and girls
Get stuck to one another.

(SoL, 74-5)

Age and names

The Acoli women remember the births of their children not by dates but by the particular season or events that took place at the time of birth. Ocol abuses Lawino that she does not know when their children were born but remembers by recalling the season/events when she gave birth. Some children’s names too depend on the season or events at the time of their birth. A combination of birth and naming of children is therefore based on indigenous knowledge and Okot poetically presents them in *Song of Lawino* to counteract Ocol’s accusation of Lawino having a head which is ‘numb and empty’ (p 75). In addition to the seasons and naming, an important distinction which Okot makes is between the indigenous knowledge of a person’s age and numerical age:

A person’s age
Is seen by looking at him or her
A girl is grown up
When her breasts have come;
A young man’s voice breaks

And hair appears
On his face
And below his belly button.

...

A person's age
Is shown by what he or she does
It depends on what he or she is,
And what kind of person
He or she is.

You may be a giant
Of a man

...

But if you are unmarried
You are nothing.

(SoL, 75)

The Acoli social system has names for the unmarried and they are social outcasts to the community but not their respective families. The male is called *labot* while the female is known by various names but the common one is *carama*. They are not respected in the community and some people secretly believe the reason for not being married is because of impotency or barrenness. Whatever the reason for being unmarried, the Acoli society has negative attitude to such people. The suffering is worse for the male who is disrespected by the sisters-in-law who order him to carry food from the cooking hut to the outdoor fireplace (*wang-oo*). If he refuses, he will forgo his share of the food. The females often blend with the female members of the family but other neighbouring women who are not related to her keep her at a distance especially from their husbands. Some people regard her as a potential prostitute, *wange tar/malaya*.

In Section Eight, Okot introduces Christianity but with a twist: he is critical of the missionaries who teach rote learning and worse, do not want to answer questions from the intelligent potential converts like Lawino. Ignoring the missionaries and the Christian names for which the converts labour, he focuses on Acoli names which are more meaningful and have cultural identities;

My husband rejects Acoli names,
Meaningful names,
Names that I can pronounce.
He says
They are *Jok* names

...

My Bull name is Eliya Alyker
I ate the name
Of the Chief of Payira
Eliya Alier
Son of Awic

Bull names are given
To Chiefs of girls
Because like bulls
They lead their age-mates.

Like the full moon at night
They dominate the stars

Apiyo and Acen
 Are *Jok* names
 Twins are *joks*
 Akelo is the one
 Who comes after twins
 Ajok and Ajara
 Grow extra fingers or toes
 Adoc comes out
 Of the belly feet first.
 Akot (*Okot*) does not mean
 ‘Born in the rain,’
 But ‘afterbirth
 Contained bubbles of water’
 And this is a sign of rain.
 ...
 The first born
 May have a name
 But he is always called Okang.
 He is the first
 To listen to the songs
 Of birds;
 He is proof
 That the woman is not barren;
 He is the owner of the shrine
 That shall be built
 In honour of his father.
 He is respected.

(*SoL*, 84-6)

Lawino’s expertise in explaining Acoli names is a reflection of her creator’s deep indigenous knowledge that he used as a resource and crafted in his poetry. It is important to note that Lawino is here gender insensitive as she mostly explains female names. Among the Acoli, female names mostly begin with ‘A’ while that of the male begins with ‘O’. Okot cleverly explains the meaning of his name but using the female name ‘Akot’, thus writing himself into his poetry.

The lines mostly contain two or three words but where an explanation is needed, the numbers of words increase, losing the staccato structure. The focus is on the meaning rather than the poetic structures. Each Acoli name has a meaning unlike the ‘borrowed Christian names’ that Lawino rejects because to her, they are meaningless just like Ocol says Acoli names are ‘Jok names/And he wants nothing/To do with Jok’ (p 84). Lawino’s final verdict on the Christian names is that:

To me
 They all sound
 Like empty tins,
 Old rusty tins
 Thrown down
 From the roof top.

(*SoL*, 87)

The Acoli attach cultural values to the names they give their children. Naming ceremonies are part of the rites of passage in a child’s life. On the third day a male child is named according to the names (*nying pen*) either predetermined by the circumstance of the birth or conception or names selected for him by the parents or relatives. Some of the predetermined names include those related to Jok as Okot explains or those due to circumstances of conception such as Okumu/Akumu where the mother conceived immediately after menstruation when conception is least expected

(safe period). This makes Okumu/Akumu a child of *Jok* just like Opiyo/Apiyo/Ocen/Acen (twins) and Okello/Akello, the child who follows twins. The name(s) given that day is called *nying pen* because that is the day when the umbilical cord is cut and buried as part of the ceremony. That home becomes the home of the child who will in future claim partial ownership since his *pen* is buried in the compound. The explanation I have given here applies to the female child who is named on the fourth day after her birth. Twins have a more elaborate naming ceremony as they are *special children of Jok*. Their burial too is different from the other non-children of *Jok*, a subject Okot discusses in detail in *Religion of Central Lwo* (1973).

Healing and cleansing

In Section 13, 'Let Them Prepare the Malakwang Dish', Okot displays his knowledge of Acoli traditional medicines with their various healing properties as resource. Here Lawino, having painstakingly identified Ocol's illness as due to his wholesale acceptance of colonialism, proposes the healing process including the restoration of his manhood. Ngugi wa Thiong'o, as cited by Sylvester Danson Kahyana (2017) refers to Okot as one of East African's foremost surgeons concerned with 'the psychological wound inflicted on a whole generation by colonialism and Christianity' (Ngugi 1973: xiii). Okot the surgeon empowered Lawino, his mouthpiece and medicine woman, to prescribe Acoli traditional medicines to heal his patient Ocol and his fellow middle class educated Acoli. Lawino begins by ensuring that the patient is not:

...utterly dead
And fit only for the stomach of the earth,
If your heart string
Is not completely cut,
...
If some blood is still flowing
However faintly
Take courage
Take a small amount of porridge,
Let them prop you up
Drink some fish soup
Slowly, slowly
You will recover. (SoL, 120)

It is only after this initial diagnosis and feeding treatment which revives the patient that the actual ceremonial healing process begins. Okot, drawing on the medical resources of Acoli culture, sets in motion a full treatment process followed by a ritual sacrifice of a bull at the ancestral shrine performed by elders; begging forgiveness from his mother for insulting her and her generation of relatives; removing the selfish road block he had imposed on Lawino and finally a request from Lawino to Ocol to let her dance before him. I will only present a few examples of the traditional medicine and what it cures in Ocol's 'psychological wound' inflicted by colonialism and Christianity:

Chew the roots of *omwombye*⁶
It is very bitter
But it will clear your throat.

Let them prepare the *malakwang*⁷ dish

⁶ *Omwombye* --- a creeping plant on an ant hill, the bark of its roots taste a bit like pepper, it is used as medicine for many conditions, such as stomach and eye diseases, etc. It is similar to *lurono* plant which has a root but mint like in taste (Odonga 2012).

⁷ *malakwang*--- sour-tasty green vegetables cooked and enjoyed by the Acoli people.

Eat the roots of *lurono*⁶
And the roots of your tongue
Will be loosened.

...

Let them drop simsim oil
Into the holes of your ears
Let them scoop out the gum
That has filled your ear for so long,
The thick dust you collected
From the altar
And chaff
From the books
And the useless things
From the magazines and newspapers
And the radio and television!

...

Bring the ripe seeds of *labikka*⁸
And scratch Ocol's eyeballs
And remove the blood
That has clotted there,
Put the rhino-horn powder
In his eyes,
Let it stab away
The pus that blocks his eyes!
The blindness that you got in the library
Will be removed by the diviner!

...

Brush your tongue
So thickly coated with insults;
Here is warm water
There is salt in it,
Gargle it.
Clean your mouth
Spit out the insults with the water!
The abuses you learnt
From your white masters

...

And son of the Bull
When you are completely cured

...

Go to the shrine of your fathers
Prepare a feast,
Give blood to your ancestors

...

Let the elders
Spit blessing on you
Let them intercede for you

⁸ *labikka*---spike plants that grow wild and produce thorn-like seeds used to open up wounds or remove scales from the eye-balls.

...

Beg forgiveness from them
And ask them to give you
A new spear
A new spear with a sharp and hard point
A spear that will crack the rock

...

Ask them to restore your manhood
For I am sick
Of sharing a bed with a woman!

Ask them to forgive
Your past stupidity,

...

May they take away all your shyness
Deceit, childish pride, and sharp tongue!

For when you insulted me,

...

You were insulting your grandfather
And your grandmothers, your father and mother!

...

You were abusing your entire people [*blacks*]

...

When you have recovered properly
Go to your old mother
And ask for forgiveness from her
Let her spit blessings in your hands.

...

As your first wife,

...

I have only one request

...

Buy clothes for the woman
With whom I share you

...

When you gained your full strength
I have only one request,
And all I ask is
That you remove the road block
From my path.

Here is my bow-harp
Let me sing greetings to you,

...

Let me praise you

...

Let me dance before you,

My love,
 Let me show you
 The wealth in your house,
 Ocol my husband,
 Son of the Bull,
 Let no one uproot the pumpkin. (SoL, 123)

That is Lawino at her best as a medical practitioner, ritual advisor, intercessor on behalf of her relatives, of Ocol and the entire black peoples, kind hearted woman who cares for her husband's concubine whom she partially acknowledged as 'the woman with whom I share you' after totally discrediting her in Section Two of her *Song*. She has humbled herself by politely requesting Ocol to let her sing one praise song and dance for him as this might bring a change of heart partly because the cleansing ritual will restore Ocol's manhood and she will have a fully functional husband. However, the last words in *Song* are the proverbial warning: 'Let no one uproot the pumpkin.'

Conclusion

In his polemic writings and essays (which I have not dealt with here), Okot discusses Acoli aesthetics and religion, and presents detailed treaties on Man and his place in the world. The best collections of his essays are in one collection: *Artist the Ruler: Essays on Art, Culture and Values* (1988). Here Okot argues, with examples, that the Artist is the ruler through his poetic and artistic creations. Among the Acoli, the artist, especially oral poets were and still are feared as they can build or destroy through their songs, folk narrative or creative art (paintings and drawings). Okot is an exemplary Acoli artist who evokes wonder if not fear. He is able to build up a person and a perspective, and equally capable of cutting down with sharp criticism. In doing so, he provides material that is read and reflected upon to a far greater extent than his strictly ethnographic publications. His creative writing moves people and makes them reflect on the challenges and dilemmas of encounters with colonization, schooling, urbanization, monetization and changing systems of value. Indeed, his literary work has itself become a resource.

Okot's creative (poetic) use of the resources of Acoli culture and the literary borrowings from Acoli oral poetry give his poetry a freshness that made him the founder of a new poetic school, 'the song school'. Two of his immediate 'imitators' were Joseph Buruga in *Abandoned Hut* (1972) and Okello Oculi in *Orphan* (1968). In her eulogy of Okot p'Bitek, Professor Margret McPherson made an important statement: 'The singer may be dead but if the song is good, it will live on' (Okumu 2020). Okot's *Songs* have indeed outlived him, and many scholars will continue to research and write about them. I hope my article is a beacon lighting the way for further research into Okot's use of the resources of Acoli culture.

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War Reparations in Northern Uganda: Interrogating the Role of the Acholi War Debt Claimants' Association

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Abstract

The Acholi War Debt Claimants Association, the people's initiative to claim for war reparations in northern Uganda, was formed in 2005 before the final peace talks that took place in Juba, South Sudan. The state did not have a transitional justice policy until 2019. Thus, the Association became the primary voice for Acholi claimants who lost their livestock in the 20-year insurrection. Primary data on the Association was assembled in 2011, 2016 and 2022, enabling me to follow its trajectory over a decade. In this article, I show why cattle and goats were such important resources for Acholi people, and how the Association – a non-state agency – worked to process claims for their replacement. To the extent that these claims were met, compensation was given in (invisible) money rather than (tangible) livestock, which engendered opacity, suspicion and conflicts between the Association and government, and within the Association itself, leading to new conflicts.

Keywords: War reparations, Acholi War Debt Claimants Association, livestock compensation, transitional justice, northern Uganda

Introduction

The Acholi people's demand for compensation for their resources lost in the twenty-year war started way back in the early 1990s, long before the *Joseph Kony* insurgency came to an end. But to date, almost thirty years later, the matter is yet to be concluded. The protracted insurgency which started in 1987 (Gesseldorf et al. 2012, Gersony 1997) devastated the livestock resource base of the Acholi people so badly that it deprived the majority of the population of their life-long savings – their cows. The Acholi kept livestock (cows, goats, sheep, and chickens) as a form of storage for their wealth although they were not traditionally among the cattle-keeper communities in Uganda. Taking away their cows therefore left them with no fallback position. This not only made them poorer but also worsened the economic disparity which already existed between Acholi-land (and the north in general) and the rest of Uganda (GoU 2007). That might explain why the international development agencies which played a big role in the peace talks in Juba, South Sudan, between the rebels and the government of Uganda, advocated for the people to be compensated for violations of their rights (Amnesty International 2008). Hence, the agreements signed in Juba between 2006 and 2008, specifically mentioned that government was to pay reparations. However, the agreements were marked by 'significant flaws and fell short of ensuring prompt and effective reparations for the victims' (Amnesty International 2008:5). Additionally, the government of Uganda lacked a transitional justice policy; hence, there was no concrete plan or mechanism for implementing the provisions on reparations. It should be noted here that Acholi War Debt Claimants Association (AWDCA), hereafter referred to as the Association, was formed in 2005, much earlier than the peace talks or the agreements. By the time the peace agreements obliged the government to pay for reparations regardless of whether the violations had been committed by the

rebels or government forces, the Association's claims system to demand for restitutive justice was already in place.

In this article, therefore, I have not focused so much on transitional justice in its broader scope. Instead, I focus on the role the Association played in the pursuit of compensation claims it made on behalf of the war victims in Acholi subregion. These are individual victims who lost their livestock during the twenty years of war between Joseph Kony and the government of Uganda. Any reference to transitional justice will simply be for post-war theoretical contextualisation.

I examine the circumstances that led to the formation of the Association (AWDCA) – a local initiative that did not involve government or donors, but which mobilised the community to demand for their rights as victims of war. It established itself as a link through which Acholi people could claim for their lost resources from the state. I show how, in spite of its internal weaknesses, the Association eventually became the main infrastructure for processing war reparation claims in Acholi-land; and how cattle came to stand for lost resources in a land where livestock rearing is not the primary economic activity. But I also show why and how such an important tool that had achieved so much ended up engendering new conflicts in post war Acholi-land contrary to the intended purpose.

Background

I had just resumed data collection for this article when the government announced its renewed commitment to compensate war debt claimants with an extra one hundred and fifty billion shillings (UGX 150 bn.) in additional war reparations funds for Acholi, Lango, and Teso subregions. The first fifty billion shillings (UGX 50bn.) was launched by president Yoweri Museveni in Lira in March, 2022 (Emwamu & Muron 2022). The unique situation was that for the first time since government started paying war reparations in 1994 (Olaka 2009), claimants were not going to be paid through their Association. Each claimant was required to fill the yellow form issued by his/her Local Government, and to have a bank account so the money would be deposited directly into his/her personal account. All previous payments had been effected through the Association.

It should be noted that in spite of its internal weaknesses, the war debt claimants' association in Acholi-land had hitherto made its mark as the 'official' voice of the people on war reparations both in the population and in relation to government. A number of small groups from different parts of Acholi had attempted to engage the state on war reparations but they had all either withered away or rebranded into something else, leaving the Association unrivalled. Over time, the Association had become so synonymous with war reparations in the subregion that all matters to do with compensation for war victims in Acholi were either directly addressed to or negotiated through it. So, I wanted to find out whether this was still the case and how they had reached that position.

The first time I visited the Association offices in Gulu town in 2011, the new committee chaired by Eng. Noah Opwonya had been in office for only one year having overthrown Norbert Adyera and his team at the end of 2009 after accusing them of corruption, nepotism, and mismanagement. But in spite of the seeming internal divisions within the Association, the government had gone ahead to release the second instalment of the compensation funds to them. Did this mean that the infrastructure of the Association established by the pioneer leadership was solid enough to warrant government trust to that extent?

When I finally met Adyera, the founder chairman, I was surprised he was a middle-aged man. Having interacted with Eng. Opwonya's group of fairly elderly people in their late 60s or early 70s, I had expected Adyera to be in a similar age range, but no. He told me in an interview that when he and six others initiated the Association in 2005, he was in his early 30s and did not even have any cows to claim. So, what motivated him, I asked. He said he initiated the Association to actualise his father's dream. His father, who had a terminal illness and was bed-ridden at the time, asked him to organise the victims so they would not be cheated out of their lost livestock resources. Adyera told me that his father had viewed the organisation as a bridge (peace-building)

between the government and the people of Acholi at a time when there was a lot of mistrust between the two. In his writing, Gersony (1997) points out how the people blamed the loss of their livestock on the army, while the army was convinced the people collaborated with the rebels. Acholi War Debt Claimants Association was finally initiated at a public meeting held at Gulu Public Primary School on July 9, 2005 with Adyera as its first chairman. He stressed that the pioneer team were so committed and prepared to volunteer; they worked for free to ensure the Association took off.

He said that as pioneers, they were convinced the benefit to the community would not stop at being compensated for their lost resources. It would also help rebuild their self-esteem as Acholi people, which was important in motivating them to fight poverty and food insecurity in the immediate aftermath of the war rather than depend on the ever-dwindling donor handouts. The government, on the other hand, he said, would benefit by, among other things, winning back the confidence of the Acholi people, especially those who were convinced their livestock had been 'looted' deliberately in order to impoverish them.

On his part, the pioneer secretary of the Association explained the difficulties they had to endure at the beginning. He narrated how the state had viewed them with suspicion and was not willing to cooperate with them. At the same time, no foreign agency funded their activities. So, unlike other community-based organisations at the time, the Association did not access any donor funding. Even the letter they wrote to the president in 2006 appealing for a negotiated settlement remained unanswered for a full year. It was not until they went to court that he finally responded. Adyera emphasised that it was their spirit of voluntarism and sheer commitment that motivated them to continue the struggle. In the end, they were able to establish an infrastructure within the Association that enabled them to mobilise and organise claimants from the grassroots in the entire Acholi subregion to claim for their rights.

In the next sections we examine and try to make sense of the Association's role in the struggle for war reparations for Acholi people in view of the absence of a transitional justice policy.

War Reparations and Transitional Justice

In the context of transitional justice, the concept of war reparations comes as part of the process of peace building aimed at sustainable post war economic recovery (van Boven 2009). The theory holds that when administered in conjunction with other elements of transitional justice such as a truth and reconciliation commission, reparations can foster peace and development, especially when they address the economic imbalances that may have contributed to the conflict in the first place (Nkurunziza 2008).

In the case of Acholi-land, there were claims of socio-economic inequality as the reason for the war, but also outcry for compensation for livestock resources lost during the war. But amid all this, there was no policy on reparations or transitional justice. Thus, even after the government committed itself to pay for reparations in the Accountability and Reconciliation Agreement of 2007 and the Disarmament, Demobilisation, and Reintegration (DDR) component in 2008 during the peace talks in Juba, there was no policy or legal framework to operationalise it.

Conventionally, reparations refer to redress given to victims of serious or gross human rights violations or abuses. They are treated as an integral part of the transitional justice mechanism following a violent conflict either at inter-state or intra-state level. Literature on the subject indicates that reparations paid out to individuals or communities for violations of their rights are guaranteed by international principles on human rights and international humanitarian law (Schwager 2005; van Boven 2009; Zegveld 2003) although politics ultimately determines the final action (Moffett 2017). In this article we shall only focus on the stolen animal resources. Hence, we shall pursue the right of the citizens whose animals were taken or stolen during the war to claim for reparations. The data obtained from the field indicates that while some of the animals were taken by rebels or government troops with a promise to compensate them after the war, a

significant portion of the livestock was simply stolen by men in uniform or rustled by people who were assumed to be from Karamoja.

Transitional justice refers to the ways countries emerging from periods of conflict and repression address large-scale or systematic human rights violations that the normal justice system will not be able to provide an adequate response to (TRAC FM/ WIPC July 2020). It consists of processes and mechanisms aimed at three types of justice: retributive, restorative, and distributive as a means of reconciliation in the context of post-conflict reconstruction (Kasapas 2020). The five forms of reparations – restitution, compensation, rehabilitation, satisfaction, and guarantees of non-repetition (van Boven 2009; Zegveld 2003) – can all be mapped along the three types of justice.

Within international law, reparations are part of the responsibilities of those who have violated the rights of others in a conflict or war. Both Schwager (2005) and Magarrell (2007) stress that under international human rights law, international humanitarian law, and domestic laws of individual countries, the individual is a bearer of rights (rights holder); hence, if his/her rights are infringed upon during an armed conflict, he/she is entitled to get compensation for the loss resulting from the violation. However, individual countries have been ‘reluctant to entitle, explicitly and in general, victims of violations ... to claim reparations’ (Zegveld 2003: 497). The challenge, Zegveld opines, is that humanitarian law treaties ‘do not expressly envisage causes of action for victims in national or international law, so victims are hardly able to exercise their rights’ (ibid. 497). They use the technicality as an excuse to deny victims their rights; and, as already observed, this is further compounded by the absence of a permanent enforcement mechanism at the international level (Terzieva 2019; Zegveld 2003).

In the case of Uganda, the country did not have a transitional justice policy until 2019 (TRAC FM/ WIPC July 2020). Hence, in spite of the fact that the government had committed itself under the Juba peace agreements in 2007 and 2008 to pay reparations, it had no enabling policy or law to fulfil this. It was only when the Association sued the government that the president finally responded to their letter by instructing the Attorney General to negotiate an out of court settlement.

A few cases where collective demands for reparations have been made similarly include the victims of the massacres in Herzegovina in 2014, and the unfair detentions of Iraqi citizens in 2016. The two cases involved the Netherlands armed forces and Danish soldiers respectively. In both cases, collective justice was demanded of foreign powers. Similarly, they were not asking for restorative justice because that would be impossible in both cases given the foreign elements as perpetrators in the claims. In the rulings in favour of the victims in both the Netherlands and in Denmark, the issues revolved around the armies of the two countries having been involved in violations of the rights of the indigenous people in Bosnia-Herzegovina and in Iraq respectively—countries where they had been deployed as peace keepers (Terzieva 2019).

Whereas the two cases largely highlight claims for retributive justice, the case of Burundi where military coups were experienced almost every two years between 1966 and 2006, is different. The local population did not take the initiative to ask for reparations; but neither did the government take the lead. Hence, the discontent continued and so did the revolutions. According to Nkurunziza (2008), reparations can play a big role in peace-building, especially when they correct economic imbalances that may have contributed to the conflict in the first place. He opines that had the state taken the initiative to address the imbalances using reparations, there would have been less political upheaval. In contrast to these examples, the Acholi reparations case was rather unique as a non-state bottom-up initiative that filled a gap that neither the state nor the international community had planned to act upon.

The implementation of transitional justice in northern Uganda has been rather slow if not lacking (Macdonald 2019). For example, the government was reluctant to implement compensation for lost cattle, just as it was reluctant to put the policy on transitional justice in place. (The policy was only approved by cabinet in June 2019). Instead of working on the policy, the government tended to apply ad-hoc methods by representing transitional justice and war reparations as covered by the projects that development assistance provided. The main project was the Peace, Recovery, and

Development Plan (PRDP), but this would not respond to the individual victims' concerns; and according to Magarrell (2007) such projects cannot be considered as part of reparations programme.

Although 'reparative options' in transitional justice include 'collective, symbolic and other forms such as social services for the affected communities' (Macdonald 2019: 245), symbolic reparations such as erecting memorials or infrastructure projects are not targeted at individual victims whose form of reparation requires lists of names, number of animals lost, and the value attached. Moreover, these material resources can be converted into cash that can in turn be invested in other resources other than the ones lost, to facilitate faster economic recovery. During the negotiations with the Attorney General in 2008, a monetary value was assigned for each animal: a cow at UGX 600,000, and a goat at UGX 150,000. These were later revised to UGX 1 million for a cow and UGX 250,000 for a goat. Thus, throughout, compensation has been paid in the form of money, which is far less visible than the living animals. As a consequence, it easily evoked speculation and suspicion; and as we shall see, conflicts quickly emerged within the Association itself, and between the Association and the government; sometimes culminating in unconstitutional change of leadership.

Research Tools and Data Collection

My initial object was to investigate what appeared to be the acrimonious relationship reported in the media between AWDC and the government regarding reparation claims. I wanted to understand the compensation delays that seemed to drag on endlessly. However, I knew that collecting data on such a sensitive theme would not be an easy task not only because of the political nature of war reparations, but also the complex accusations regarding the disappearance of Acholi livestock in which the army had been named. So, I decided to shift the focus of the study to the role played by Acholi War Debt Claimants Association in claiming for war reparations for victims of the war. I knew that while government officials were likely to be suspicious of the motive for my study, in the eyes of the Acholi community I stood the risk of being mistaken for a state agent trying to spy on the authenticity of people's compensation claims. So, in line with Burawoy (2009), I made it a point to explain to all my potential and actual interlocutors about myself—that I was a lecturer at Gulu University and a PhD student who was only conducting research for the purpose of seeking to understand the challenges in the post war recovery processes in order to guide policy makers. One of the advantages I had was that many of the local government officials (both councillors and civil servants) in Gulu district at the time were my current or former students. This greatly worked in my favour as those who knew me quite often introduced me to those that I had not met.

I collected field data by recording my field notes in my notebooks and took photographs and voice recordings using my smart phone. And in line with the Research Ethics Guidelines issued by Uganda National Council for Science and Technology (UNCST 2014), I assured my respondents that I would treat all the information they gave me with maximum confidentiality. I promised not to divulge their identity unless they gave me permission to do so. However, for officers of government, I decided I would mention their positions, while for the Association chairs, they agreed that I could use their real names.

There was another practical challenge. My initial field visits took place in August 2011 when the war had been officially over for about five years, but many Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) were yet to relocate back to the villages where they lived before the war. It was still risky to traverse the countryside. Hence, I decided to concentrate my data collection efforts in urban and semi-urban areas only. I only went deeper into the villages when I went back for the second phase of data collection from May 2016 and later, from March 2022.

I started collecting additional primary data for this article in March 2022 using qualitative methods which included ten in-depth interviews, four non-structured interviews, one focus group discussion, and non-participant observation. In-depth interviews were mainly with key informants;

except for the previous and current chairpersons of the Association, members of the executive of the Association provided most of their data through a focus group discussion. My observation centred on livestock resources as compensation for war crimes and related activities in selected homesteads. Although sheep are important for some traditional rituals, they remain very rare in Acholi domestic economy.

Primary data was obtained from 21 participants. Eleven key informants were purposively sampled to represent both eastern and western Acholi as follows: the two Association chairpersons, the pioneer secretary, the chairman of the compensation committee, a politician, three Local Government staff, and three elders. Unstructured interviews involved the LC 1 chairperson of Paduny village in Awach sub county and three recent beneficiaries of reparations giving a total of four. Six members of the executive council were involved in a focus group discussion. Politicians were represented by the Gulu Resident District Commissioner; while the Local Government technical team was represented by the District Production Officer (DPO), Gulu district, the Coordinator for National Agricultural Advisory Services (NAADS), Amuru, and the District Veterinary Officer (DVO), Amuru. The three elders included a retired teacher from Awach sub-county who was currently operating a *polota* [small shop] in Gulu town, a university don working at Gulu University, and a *Rwot* (clan chief).

The DPO was chosen because of his long service and wealth of experience in veterinary services in the subregion. He had served in various capacities related to animal husbandry since he graduated from the Faculty of Veterinary Medicine at Makerere University, in Uganda, in the late 1970s. At the time I met him for this study in 2011, he told me he was looking forward to his retirement which was due in two years. Between them, the NAADS coordinator and the DVO of Amuru met many ordinary farmers both in crop and animal husbandry in the course of their day-to-day duties and responsibilities; hence most of the data about agricultural activities in western Acholi could be captured through the two officers. The three elders represented different shades of opinion in the region. All the respondents were men, as resources and wealth are culturally in the male domain in Acholi as is the case in many African cultural systems. Even the Association executives did not include women. So, I did not consider this to be a limitation.

I also used secondary data from newspapers and other records, including online resources. Being a political issue, war reparations have continually been discussed both in the media and through other forums. Although AWDC compensation claims have been perpetually treated with suspicion by state agencies and although the Association is embroiled in internal wrangles over money and leadership, which have greatly weakened its influence, the Association remains the 'official' mouthpiece of Acholi on war related compensations. As I continued to write these pages in 2022, both print and digital media were still carrying occasional reports of the ongoing controversies around the Association and livestock compensation.

'It is the Victims who Asked for Cows'

The prioritisation of livestock (cows) in the demand for compensation put to the government by AWDC may seem surprising given that cattle-rearing was not the primary economic activity of the Acholi. So, why did an area where cattle-keeping was not the primary livelihood activity decide to concretise its reparation claims in terms of livestock? Assets such as vehicles, machinery, and even human lives lost in the war did not feature in the Association's negotiations with the government for compensation. This is one of the questions I put to the executive committee members in the focus group discussion. The members revealed that priority was given to livestock because of its significance in the socio-cultural as well as the economic life of an Acholi family. But one of them put it slightly differently, thus:

It is the victims who asked for cows. They wanted to replace their animals which they lost so painfully at the hands of the Karamojong rustlers. The campaign of stealing our livestock was so swift that

within the first three years of the insurgency all our cows were gone. By 1990 there were no more cows in Acholi. Some people were even injured or killed trying to protect their livestock. That is why many were even prepared to testify in court.

On my first visit to AWDCAs offices in Gulu town in August 2011, as a follow up on interviews I had conducted with the Gulu District Production Officer and the NAADS Coordinator of Amuru district, I put this question to AWDCAs chair. By this time, Norbert Adyera had been replaced by Engineer Noah Opwonya. In his response, Opwonya was a little more elaborate. He explained the multi-purpose nature of the cow in Acholi cultural and socio-economic settings. In his view, the term, *dyang* (cow) was merely used in the negotiations as a generic term to refer to all categories of livestock as well as other resources people lost as a result of the war. Thus, the use of the term did not negate the existence of other types of resources that were lost in the war. Both from the literature and field data, I learned that cows had served and continued to serve multiple functions in the Acholi community. Girling (1960), Gelsdorf et al. (2012) and Gersony (1997), among others, all comment on the significance of the cow as a mark of status and wealth among the Acholi in addition to its social and cultural functions in the performance of rites and rituals.

From my field observations, the cow and livestock in general had a new function in Acholi-land as a means of promoting economic enterprise and private investment – which had expanded the scope of economic activities in the rural setting. Originally, livestock was largely kept for social and cultural functions as explained below, or as a form of banking, a store of wealth. However, the disaggregation of the economy into specialised sectors resulting from semi-urban conditions created in Internally Displaced People's (IDP) camps during the war has seen the introduction and expansion of butcher shops in all small towns and trading centres in Acholi. Households no longer have to own livestock to enjoy meat or milk on their menu on regular basis. Even if an individual or household owns some livestock, they can now purchase meat in small amounts from the nearest meat shop for consumption without having to slaughter a whole animal or go hunting wild game each time they want to enjoy meat. The political independence of South Sudan in 2011 also offered other possibilities. It had opened up new market opportunities for livestock for the people of northern Uganda, and Acholi in particular.

Other explanations lay in the cultural functions of livestock. In their study on motivations for leaving IDP camps after twenty years of the LRA insurgency, Whyte et al. (2013) found that livestock were generally at the centre of many socio-cultural activities including celebrations, fines, funerals and rituals. For example, a number of youths I interviewed in 2011, and later for my PhD study in 2016, told me they could no longer afford to marry, let alone hold wedding ceremonies because of poverty, which they blamed on the depletion of livestock consequent to the twenty-year insurrection. In an in-depth interview at about the same period, Mzee Otim, one of the elders at Awach trading centre, confirmed the narrative when he disclosed that loss of cows and other forms of livestock resources during the war had made people so poor, they could no longer afford to pay bridewealth. Marriages, he said, had thus become a luxury that many young people in Acholi-land could no longer afford. Mzee Otim further said that instead of going through the traditional customs of marriage, lovers now simply moved in together and started producing children without any regard for the heavy customary fines associated with such behaviour.

I also observed that although actions such as elopement, cohabiting and having children out of wedlock have become widespread in Acholi land, traditionally they are still considered immoral and attract cultural fines. The fines including *poro* or *luk* are paid in form of livestock whose value is largely determined by the elders. When a cohabiting couple produces children before introducing themselves formally to the woman's parents, the man has to pay *luk pa latin*, a fine of a goat for each of the first two children, in addition to any other fines and related cultural rites as may be determined by the elders (Porter 2016).

It should also be noted that in addition to its marriage-related significance, livestock is also required at different stages of the funeral rituals. For example, a goat must be slaughtered for

people who dig the grave regardless of who is to be buried there; one cow or more has to be sacrificed at the last funeral rites, depending on the status of the deceased persons. One of the *Rwodi* (clan chiefs) in Pader district in eastern Acholi told me in an interview that he had to sacrifice a bull and two cows to celebrate the last funeral rites of his late father, which also marked his own accession to the throne. Without such livestock, he said, such a ceremony could not have been held. There was another *Rwot* in Paicho sub county, Gulu district, who was feeling psychologically tormented because he had so far failed to raise a cow, some goats, and a sheep, to be able to exhume the remains of his late wife in order to accord her a befitting burial. He said that she had died during the war and had to be buried in the internally displaced people's camp at the trading centre, but that he had since failed to transfer her remains to his own ancestral land, as many often struggled to do (Meinert & Whyte 2013; Jahn 2016). He lamented that it was not only psychological but also social torture to feel so inadequate among his own subjects.

Then, of course, there are other rituals such as *mat-oput* which is performed to reconcile individuals, families, clans, or communities in the case of violence that ends up in death. Without livestock, such aspects of Acholi culture cannot continue to be respected. The lack of livestock in the aftermath of the war, therefore, has both socio-cultural and economic significance. The implication is that the absence of livestock, especially cows, has the potential to alter the Acholi cultural traditions and practices; hence, the importance attached to cattle in the war reparations claims.

The position of cattle in Acholi culture was so special that villages had a specially designated place called *ulet*, away from the settled areas, where cows were taken for grazing instead of leaving each family to graze on its own land. So, just as they had the communal *kitar*, a large tract of land away from the village for crop production, so did they have the *ulet* for livestock, especially, cows. The principle used in the establishment of *kitar* and *ulet* was the same – that families should be able to graze their animals on lands that were far from the gardens of crops to minimise conflicts that were likely to arise when cows or goats stray into crop gardens of neighbours or relatives.

As already mentioned above, cows were also used as a measure and store of wealth and status; hence, the presence and number of cows in a family indicated its socio-economic status. This was further enhanced by the new economic possibilities that gave cattle a new significance after the war. For example, some development agencies that came to rural Acholi when peace returned promoted the idea of using oxen to encourage peasant farmers to plough larger portions of land in order to produce more, both for sale (income) and for food (food security). In a key informant interview, the resident district commissioner told me the subregion was likely to become the food basket of the whole country if its small-scale farmers could increase their acreage using the new technologies being introduced to them.

Thus, both from the empirical data as well as the literature, the multi-purpose nature of livestock in Acholi is clearly demonstrated. They are not only of economic but of cultural and social value as well, which goes to explain why cows became the Association's rallying call for reparations.

Visible and Invisible Resources

It should be noted that while AWDCA claimed for war reparations in the form of livestock, the compensation made by the government was not made in form of physical animals. Claimants were paid the equivalent in money terms instead, which made the expected cows quite invisible. At the beginning, the money was paid through the Association's bank account, and the Association would then pay it out to individual claimants in cash. So, it was not easy to see any evidence of the compensation payments made; but at least, people would know who had been paid. However, this became even more complex in the most recent payments launched in March 2022, because the money was paid directly into the claimants' individual bank accounts by the government, which made it even more invisible. When I visited the LC I chair for Paromo village, Gweng-diya parish,

Awach Sub County, after the 2022 payments, he told me he had endorsed claim forms (the yellow form) for ten people in his village but he could not tell who of them had been paid unless those who had been paid told him themselves. Even if he knew, he could not tell how much they had received or how they had used their compensation funds.

On further probing, the LC chairperson told me it would have been better if the claimants had been given cows directly to replace their lost animals because in such a case, it would have been easy to see how many people have been compensated and to replace the livestock in the land. The invisibility of the compensation also made it difficult to know how much had been paid out to bona fide claimants and how much of the funds had probably been misappropriated by officials or embezzled. This invisibility, therefore, greatly fertilised the internal suspicions and mistrust between members and executive officers of the Association on matters of fairness, accountability and transparency, which partly fuelled the coups and counter coups within the Association. Such was the case when Eng. Opwonya organised a come-back campaign after being overthrown by John Kiza Nyeko in 2016 (Labeja 2016). Each time the government released some instalment of the cattle compensation funds, the suspicions and mistrust within the Association heightened and sometimes ended in the leadership being replaced.

During the latest phase of my data collection which started in March 2022, my research assistant helped me to uncover some of the invisibility. Having identified some of the people in the area who had received funds from the latest release of 2022, she linked me to three recipients who were willing to participate in my study. Of the three, one who had claimed for 46 cows said he had only been given UGX 4.9 million; another one who had claimed for 30 cows had received only UGX 2.1 million; while the third one who had claimed for 60 cows had been given UGX 5.9 million. From the expected total of UGX 136 million for the 136 cows for the three, only UGX 12.9 million (about 9.5%) had been received. But none of them knew who else had received, what they had received, the criteria used to decide who receives or how much they should be paid. And for those who had not received, no one had any idea when or how much they should expect for the next phase. The invisibility coupled with uncertainty nurtured right from the very first payments, created more suspicion and mistrust, which made it very easy for members to be manipulated and mobilised against the Association leadership.

The economic significance of translating the cows into bank accounts, however, was that as invisible resources the money could now be invested in resources other than cows, particularly so, given the expanded scope of economic activities available in post war Acholi-land. Indeed, when he was officially launching the UGX 150 billion reparation funds in March 2022 (for Acholi, Lango, and Teso sub-regions), the president of Uganda echoed this. He advised thus, ‘Don’t use the money to get cows and marry more women...You must go for agriculture but also for the pocket ...’ (Emwamu & Muron 2022). The advice provides the logic for the government decision to pay war debt claimants in the form of invisible resources given the expanded economic activities available in post war Acholi. The main challenge, however, was that concealing the compensation in invisible bank account deposits not only provided fertile ground for mistrust and suspicion which engendered new forms of conflict, but also the possibility of not utilising the funds resourcefully.

Role of the Association: Analysing State-claimants’ Relations

When I met the then chairperson of the Association in 2011, Eng. Opwonya, he told me about the processes involved in compiling the lists of claimants.

The register contained all the necessary details about a claimant: his physical address, location in terms of village, parish, sub county, county, and district. It also contained the claim(s), the period (year) when he lost the property, the circumstances under which he lost it,

and the monetary value which was attached to the claim(s), among other things.

But he stressed that the above process was not as simple as it may sound. It required human resources prepared to take up the responsibility without expecting monetary compensation; the Association did not have any external source of funding that would enable it to pay. Other logistics required to accomplish the stated tasks included transport for the voluntary enumerators, counter books in which to take and keep the records and secure storage for the recorded material. He stressed that nothing was taken for granted. The data obtained from each claimant had to be authenticated and certified by the Local Council officers in the areas where the claims were made to ensure that those making such claims were telling the truth. Once these claims had been verified, they were taken to the Association's head office in Gulu town where they were entered into the computer by the Association's secretary and thereafter stored both in hard and soft copy.

However, much as those conducting the registration exercise were volunteering, minimal financial resources were required to facilitate them to do the job effectively. When I asked this same question to the pioneer chair, Norbert Adyera who was now out of office, he confirmed the information as correct.

The next question to Eng Opwonya was how he and his colleagues got the money they spent in their operations. To this question, he explained:

Unlike other organisations involved in post war development projects, our Association never received any donor aid. The money we rely on is the small contributions that come from the members themselves in form of membership fees. There are people who have accused us of not being fair to those who lost property but do not have money to pay membership fee. There is nothing we can do about that. To be a member, one must pay.

Although interviewed differently and a few years apart, the two chairmen were also in agreement on the issue of membership.

Regarding accusations that officials of the Association were misusing the funds for their own personal benefit, Eng Opwonya complained:

The government does not even appreciate that we are doing their work for them. We have provided the infrastructure for handling war reparations which has saved them a lot of time and resources, but instead of being grateful to us they are simply treating us as if we are thieves.

He further explained that AWDC was not just a small organisation for Gulu district but rather for the entire Acholi sub-region; and that its reparations infrastructure system had been certified even by state officials who were fighting them.

However, despite the impressive picture of the Association painted by the chair, a section of the members agreed with government officials who accused the leadership of embezzlement and corruption. The production officer, the veterinary officer and the NAADS officer in separate interviews each pointed out how the committee had been accused of misappropriating funds so far paid by the government. The accusations centred on the Association officials distributing less money than what had been released to them by the government and sharing the rest among themselves instead. They were also accused of selective payment whereby they only paid their relatives and friends, leaving the rest of the members in the cold. Thus, whereas the records infrastructure could be praised, the payments system appeared as a point of concern.

When I put these accusations to the focus group discussion that I held with the Association officials under Eng. Opwonya, the executives exonerated themselves of the embezzlement charges pointing out that as an Association they did not benefit from any form of external funding. Yet

they faced many challenges including expenses such as rent for office space for all the years the Association was in existence, allowances to the executives who sacrificed a lot of their time and other resources to serve the members' interests, volunteers who collected data in the field, and transport costs both within the region and outside. I observed that although they tried to justify themselves, they did not want to put a figure on the amount they had paid themselves or what they spent in 'office expenses.' It was also clear that if the allegations were true, then they were committing the very same mistakes for which they had overthrown the pioneer leadership. But there could be no solid proof without audit reports. In fact, Eng. Opwonya's team was being accused of bribing high ranking government officials so that they would not be audited so there would be no proof in case anyone sued the Association.

That aside, the Association officials were also accused of bribing government officials in a bid to influence them to release more funds faster. But on interrogating this claim, I found that the process involved the Ministry of Defence officials who could not be easily accessed by the Association. Hence, even if the bribes were paid, they couldn't have solved the problem of delays given that the delays were largely blamed on the military. The chairman said he was certain that the defence department was only interested in finding fault rather than resolving the problem. He said that each time he went to the defence department at their Bombo military headquarters to check on the progress, they would tell him that his figures were too high and they always insisted on conducting field visits to verify the figures at the grassroots.

But the public also had its own version. There was a strong sentiment expressed by all the three elders I interviewed at different times that linked the delays to public criticism of the army's discipline in the early days of the insurgency. They said that the story circulating in the Acholi communities was that government troops had participated in stealing Acholi cows directly or indirectly and that soldiers had collaborated with Karamojong cattle rustlers by buying the stolen cows from them. Mzee Okello, one of the elders in Awach who lost cattle to thefts in the early days of the insurgency, told me in an interview that it was possible the army was acrimonious to the Association and the Acholi in general because people had come out openly to point out their grievances against them. He said that some elders came out to state that they had seen army trucks moving with cows towards Karuma bridge. The bridge is the main gateway into Acholi from central region; hence, taking the cows towards the bridge means exporting them from Acholi sub-region. This account matches what appears in the research works of Gelsdorf et al. (2012) and of Weeks (2002) ten years earlier.

When Gelsdorf and his research team interviewed the army commander in the area in 2012, he denied that the army was involved, although he acknowledged that some errant soldiers may have got involved at individual level. He promised that punitive measures would be taken. But there is no evidence of any action taken against any military suspects on the matter either before or since.

On the other hand, the mistrust between the state and Acholi war debt claimants appears to have been rekindled when the government introduced new conditions which required all claimants to register afresh through the Local Government structures in readiness for the UGX 150 bn launched in March 2022. The LC I chair of Paduny in Awach told me that the 'yellow form' issued by the district LG was like starting the registration process afresh because those without it were deemed not to have registered even if they appeared in the original Association registers. So, he said, it is like the role of the Association has been tactfully overlooked and taken over by the government. But retired Justice Galdino, who chaired the newly established Compensation Committee, disagreed with this interpretation although he acknowledges that claimants from Omoro district who had not registered on the yellow form had been left out of the official lists forwarded for the March, 2022 payments.

Galdino said that in spite of the financial challenges facing the Association, he had had fruitful engagements with the Attorney General since his appointment on 16 November 2020. One was that the two sides agreed to tour the sub region in 2021 to meet the registered claimants. Although the Attorney General and team never showed up, the tour had gone ahead as planned.

He said they started in Kitgum district in April and finished in Omoro district in October, which enabled them to verify all the claimants registered by the Association in Acholi sub region. However, when the Attorney General's list came out, both Adyera, the pioneer chair, and Justice Galdino alleged that it contained ghosts (Independent 2022) even as it was short of 4, 320 genuine claimants.

He further explained that when the government technical team issued unrealistic conditions that all claimants must indicate their Tax Identification Numbers on the newly introduced yellow form (Okumu 2022), it was his committee that protested on behalf of the Association; and when the new claimants' lists were displayed at the sub counties in March 2022, it was his committee that highlighted the anomalies on those lists such as ghost claimants (Independent 2021). They also contained under-age people who cannot have been born during the time the cows were stolen (1986-1989); many names were also missing as already observed, and the number of cows listed had a shortfall of 192, 546 (out of 436,811). In sum, in spite of the long delay to pay off the reparation claimants, the Association still played its role of defending the victims' rights despite its internal challenges.

Conclusion

It cannot be denied that forming the Association was an innovative idea that played a great role in mobilising war victims in Acholi-land to demand their rights, thereby plugging a vacuum that had been filled neither by the state nor the international community. The creativity is underlined by the grassroots Association model that tapped into the Local Government structures to register and to verify claims yet remained outside the state machinery. This was quite unique as it articulated the community's claims for reparations that could not be easily dismissed in spite of the absence of a policy on the matter. The other uniqueness lies in the nature of the claims being against their own country. Claims for justice made by the Iraqis against Danish forces, for example, were that they had been detained unfairly in their own country by a foreign force on a peace-keeping mission. Acholi claimants on the other hand, targeted the government.

It should also be noted that it was through the Association that the corruption in government was clearly noted, although the bribery claims may not be verified due to absence of the Association's audit reports. On the other hand, the ghost names on the lists of claimants, the military's reluctance to act against suspect errant soldiers, and the lack of coordination between government departments handling the claims all point to challenges in government that delayed the handling of reparation claims. Finally, while claims focused on visible physical resources (cows), the compensation came in invisible forms such as money and bank accounts. Such a mode of payment held the potential to make significant changes in the victims' economic possibilities, but therein also lay the seeds of danger. The invisible form of payment created the possibility of the resources disappearing without a trace, and of breeding conflict through suspicions and mistrust between the members. The conflicts and mistrust within the Association not only weakened it internally, but also affected its effectiveness as the voice of the Acholi war debt claimants. Thus, the Association that started as a unique uniting factor currently stands as a source of mistrust, divisions and conflict, whose sustainability hangs in the balance.

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Resources for Youth Entrepreneurship in Northern Uganda

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Abstract

Youth entrepreneurship and employment depend on the availability and use of resources. This study explored how young people viewed and deployed 'land' 'funds' and 'youth themselves' as resources offering opportunity for youth engagement in income generating activities and self-employment. Qualitative studies were conducted with youth interest groups (YIGs) funded under a government-oriented youth livelihood programme in Gulu district. Overall, the analysis suggests that land and financing have the potential to foster youth entrepreneurship and employment, but can do so only if youth use themselves as resources through active participation. The minimal amount of youth engagement in self-employment and the failure of most YIGs are due to institutional voids, limited commitment, and lack of preparation to utilise the 'resources' productively. The study recommends intensive entrepreneurial training for mindset change, and appreciation of personal resources. Institutional support should go beyond financing to include training and supportive supervision in order to build a competitive and self-sustaining young generation.

Keywords: Youth entrepreneurship, livelihoods, resource, youth interest groups, post-conflict

Introduction

'People become house builders by building houses, harp players by playing the harp. We grow to be just by doing things that are just' (Aristotle in Benard 1990: 6). In the same way, youth become entrepreneurs by practicing entrepreneurship. At least, that is the assumption of many youth-oriented projects. World over, youth entrepreneurship is gaining attention as a force for building youth assets and action, often as a remedy for ever increasing youth unemployment. In these efforts, resources play a necessary role. This article examines the resources used by members of youth schemes such as Youth Livelihood Programme (YLP). The significant resources for them are apparently money and land. We shall argue, however, that another resource is equally necessary. Policymakers and youth themselves perceive personal resources as key to utilising these material resources. In order to make use of material resources, subjective intangible assets are necessary such as determination, self-discipline, competence, and persistence. This distinction is recognised by Hobfoll (2002:6), who suggests that resources are entities that are either centrally valued in their own right (e.g. self-esteem, close attachment, health, and inner peace) or act as means to obtain centrally valued ends (e.g. money, social support, and credit). We take personal resources as means to ends just like the concrete resources of funds and land. Most studies associate African youth entrepreneurship with access to capital and land; youth character has yet to be robustly researched. It remains a puzzle if youth have the motivations and competence to leverage these two resources to create jobs for themselves. This article aims to fill the gap by exploring how youth in a livelihood promotion programme utilise available resources.

We begin by describing the context and the problem of youth unemployment in northern Uganda, with further reference to selected studies of this problem elsewhere in the world. After explaining our methods, we present our findings from youth engaged in agribusiness, trading, manufacturing, and service enterprises. The hindrances to success are several; we will concentrate mainly on the problems of personal resources as described by the youth themselves and other stakeholders.

The Context: Conflict and Youth Unemployment in Northern Uganda

Worldwide, youth unemployment is a serious challenge especially for youth born and/or raised during conflict. Prolonged wars and violence embedded in political, economic and social structures affect livelihoods in most developing countries (Vindevogel et al. 2014:2). The civil conflict between the National Resistance Movement' (NRM) government and leaders of the ousted past regimes began in the 1980s (Omona 2008:131). For almost two decades, the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) war ruined northern Uganda's social, political, and economic organization. Gulu district was the epicentre of conflict with over 48 camps for Internally Displaced People (Omona 2008:132). The conflict claimed lives of people, and paralysed cultural, economic and social fabrics of life; its effects manifest on young people's lives even up to the present (Oosterom et al. 2021:571). The breakdown in family structure affected dynamics of resource acquisition, utilisation, and allocation, in addition to increasing the social obligations and responsibilities of youth (Oosterom et al. 2021:574). Children experienced lack of quality education, little participation in economic activities both during and after conflict and poor quality of life, (Betancourt et al. 2012:545). Furthermore, war broke marriages; both children and their mothers were denied land access, ownership, employment, and utilisation (Whyte and Acio 2017; Vindevogel et al. 2014). Now, it is social healing and economic progress which determine the contribution of young people (Dixon 2021: 32). A study conducted in 24 countries showed youth unemployment as a major factor for political instability (Azeng and Yogo 2013:2). The situation, therefore, calls for approaches focusing on proper functioning of youth and eradicating extreme poverty whilst fostering socio-economic transformation. Funding, land, structure, and youth themselves as resources provide an opportunity for socio-economic transformation.

In Africa, the youth bulge is one of the highest in the world with 70% below 25 years (Ackah-Baidoo 2015:255). Youth dominate Uganda's population; 56.7% is below the age of 18 years, with 70% below 30 years resulting in high rates of unemployment and poverty; this seems to call for youth entrepreneurship (Bukonya et al. 2019:1). Government and other actors participating in youth empowerment drives recognise youth entrepreneurship as an approach to job creation (Gough and Langevang 2016:1). Government provides resources such as funding and training for entrepreneurship; however, youth continue to be perceived as problems, not as resources.

Youth Schemes in Uganda

Government youth schemes are crucial for youth entrepreneurship and development. They provide material, financial, and training assistance to the youth to utilise resources (Kristensen and Birch-Thomsen 2013:176). In addition to YLP, the notable schemes in Uganda include Youth Opportunities Programme (YOP) under NUSAF 2006, Youth Venture Capital Fund (YVCF) (Ahaibwe et al. 2015), Emyooga, Uganda Women Entrepreneurship Programme (UWEP), and Parish Development Model (PDM). Those specific to youth were YLP, YVCF, and YOP among others. The schemes target youth aged 16-35 and 18-30 years. The age definitions depend on the local terms, project rationale and government intentions. In 2006, Government of Uganda introduced a new component under NUSAF called YOP (Blattman, Fiala, & Martinez 2012:6). The schemes provided cash transfers to the youth groups as startups, for vocational training and

tools for craft. The programme aimed to increase youth incomes, improve community reconciliation and reduce conflict in northern Uganda. The unconditional cash investments increased return on investment and social cohesion in post-conflict northern Uganda. Blattman et al. (2012:3) argue that inexperience, lack of education, and access to market information limited the success of scheme. Yet this programme was successful enough that it provided lessons for the implementation of other schemes (Bukonya et al. 2019:8). The lessons were incorporated in formulating specific youth entrepreneurship programmes.

Furthermore, YVCF worth UGX 25 bn (about US \$ 10 million) was introduced in 2011 as one of the solutions to youth employment. Individual youth acquired credit for start-up channelled through commercial banks and then refunded the money. However, the collateral security as a requirement and lack of information hindered most poor and rural youth from accessing the funds. Educated and urban youth took advantage of the scheme at the expense of rural and illiterate ones (Ahaibwe et al., 2013:13). This necessitated introduction of another youth scheme which focused on interested groups, that is YLP. In 2013, the GoU boosted youth schemes by allocating UGX 25bn (about US \$ 100 million) to YLP over a period of five years. The major pillars of the initiatives included enterprise development, job creation, and business training and development. The main objective was to empower the targeted youth to harness their business ideas, thus realising social and economic potential, and increasing self-employment and income. These active labour market programmes targeted mainly the poor, unemployed and unskilled and semi-skilled youth. Most of the schemes encourage youth participation in agriculture-related income generating activities. In most of the initiatives, educated youth take the lead in organising, guidance and holding positions in finance, chairing, and decision making. Most uneducated youth wish to identify with educated ones; thus being educated is key to income generating activities (Jones 2020:4). However, the youth portray agriculture as a side hustle and continue to ‘tarmac’, that is walk the streets of town looking for other jobs (Maura 2017:58). This attitude towards agriculture-related activities affected the productivity and success of most youth funded enterprises.

Studies postulate these schemes as channels of patronage and co-optation by the state. Macdonald et al. (2023:288) view youth livelihood programmes as targeted economic incentives that purport to promote a ‘culture of self-employment’ through microfinance, while serving as a vehicle for party-based handouts during election periods and as ‘gifts’. They are offered before, during, or after election cycles as a way of luring and attracting the constituencies to the regime (see Chemutai, this issue). Trying to become a beneficiary in youth schemes involves politics, connections and paying allegiance to the ruling party.

Linking Youth to Entrepreneurship and Resources

Youth entrepreneurship is very attractive to policy makers because of its mandate in promoting self-employment, self-reliance, and youth independence. An entrepreneur is a person who produces for the market through organising, operating and assuming the risk of starting a new business venture (Kahan 2012). Entrepreneurship is narrowly defined as the act of creating new business firms and is taken to be a key factor in creating social and economic mobility (Castellani and Lora 2014:3; Ellis and Williams 2011:9). Moreover, entrepreneurship is presented as a key process through which economy is advanced, by organising resources (Stevenson 1983:2) and production of goods and services (to those who can pay for it) and rewarding participants (Schumpeter 2012 [1934]). Young entrepreneurs identify available opportunities and exploit them to produce goods and services. Youth entrepreneurship creates self-employment and employment, through new ventures, expansion of existing ones and increase in social wealth (Ogbueghu et al. 2020:73). Many studies have emphasised promotion of entrepreneurship as an engine for youth innovation, job creation, socio-economic change and solution to youth poverty (Awasthi et al. 2006; Gupta et al. 2009; Chaudhary 2017; Setti 2017). The perceived role of entrepreneurship for economic growth and development in developed economies such as Britain, USA, Japan, and Canada has encouraged most developing countries to adopt a concept of enterprise development

to deal with youth economic problems (Moa-Liberty et al. 2016:65), evidenced in Youth Enterprise Development and Youth Venture Capital Funding in Kenya and Uganda respectively. Youth entrepreneurship has become a catch word and a policy discourse for most Sub-Saharan African governments (Macdonald et al. 2023:287). Whether for economic prosperity or political gains, youth entrepreneurship continues to be seen as a suitable solution for unemployment. Leveraging on available resources for entrepreneurial success is a fundamental consideration in most entrepreneurship training and skills development aimed at ensuring constant innovation and improvement (Ogbueghu et al. 2020:73).

Factors facilitating youth engagement in entrepreneurship include psycho-social elements such as status and self-efficacy, demographics, cultural factors, and resources (Moa-Liberty 2016:66; Soomro et al. 2019. Setti (2017) specifies personal attributes mattering for entrepreneurial aspiration and intention including age, education, gender, competences, and motivation. Such attributes form the resource base that is conceptualised in this study as ‘personal resources’.

Resource availability can trigger socio-economic development; however, existence of resources in Sub-Saharan Africa has not transformed into youth employment (Ackah-Baido 2016). The presence of land as a resource has failed to create jobs for swelling numbers of unskilled and skilled youth. In northern Uganda, fertile and unopened land is a potential for agriculture and youth agro-entrepreneurship (Mugonola and Baliddawa 2014:123). Although land is available, it is not always accessible. Studies indicate that limited access to land constrains youth participation in investment on land (Gichimu and Njeru 2014:3; Ayai 2013:9). Issues of family/clan land associated with land wrangles affect youth decisions on utilisation. Fletschner and Kenney, cited in Gichimu and Njeru (2014:4), found that in Kenya most female youth lack land titles and control over land, and inherit small plots, which cannot stir huge investments.

In contrast, Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (GEM) presents lack of capital, skills, and support and market opportunities as major challenges to youth entrepreneurship. Most young entrepreneurs in Benin, Liberia, Malawi and Togo consider lack of access to finance as a principal challenge to start-ups and entrepreneurial progress (De Gobbi 2014:310). Poor access to credit affects youth attitudes towards start-ups and entrepreneurship. Youth cannot adopt the technology required to exploit available opportunities. Many youths do not possess collateral to access microcredit and commercial loans, hence are not able to establish enterprises. Therefore, even if resources are present, youth are not in position to adopt modern technology, and expand enterprises. Lack of land ownership and access is challenging most youth enterprises. Youth cannot pledge land as collateral security to acquire loans from microfinance institutions. Youth continuously lack credit and capital (Dixon 2021:34), and this challenges ability to utilise available resources such as land, and personal energy. This means that provision of capital would facilitate exploitation of other resources for self-employment.

Other than finance, knowledge is important when it comes to conducting entrepreneurial activities. Most youth lack information about business management, such as quality assurance, customer care, customer laws, and competence to read, write, and conduct smooth transactions (Ahaibwe et al. 2013:23). There are limited business networks that support youth to learn, access market for their products, and obtain quality raw materials (Cramer and Richards 2011:291; Ayai 2013:6). The violence in sub-Saharan Africa truncated market systems and infrastructure that would have provided valuable information. Thus, there are no proper linkages in value chains, limiting access to inputs, supplies, and free flow of outputs. Additionally, social differences such as ethnicity, language, caste, and education pose an entry barrier to business networks (Fafchamps 2004:118). Furthermore, weak enforced market institutions segment business opportunities for entrepreneurship success (Wood and Frynas 2006:260). Consequently, youth develop fear of failure and negative attitudes to start businesses (Namatovu et al. 2016:110; Dixon 2021:34). These factors inhibited the flourishing of personal resources in youth entrepreneurial orientations.

The aspect of rural-urban migration drains productive labour that could be applied in agriculture. Youth prefer to migrate to urban settings for better social amenities such as

entertainment, electricity, employment, business opportunities, health, and education (Olanya 2019:149). While many agricultural promotion strategies have been implemented in Uganda, no special attention is given to youth in agriculture. The Northern Uganda Social Action Fund (NUSAF) was meant to foster post-conflict productivity and economic revitalisation, but self-employment did not attract youth engagement in agriculture in northern Uganda (ibid). In Kenya, youth unemployment stood at 64 per cent, yet 80 per cent of all employment opportunities were in agriculture (Gichimu and Njeru 2014:2). As in Uganda, youth find agriculture unattractive, preferring to move to towns and cities for better standards of living. Even the few youths who have access to land as a resource lack necessary motivation for investment. Thus, the existence of resources may not facilitate youth productivity if youth do not recognise themselves as a resource. The Positive Youth Development (PYD) framework emphasises character, cohesion, compassion, and care plus contribution as important for success (Lerner, Fisher, & Weinberg 2000:15). This study focuses on how funds, land, and youth themselves contribute to youth entrepreneurship. This demands a methodology investigating insights from the key players—the youth.

Methodology

The empirical findings were obtained from a study conducted in Gulu district, northern Uganda, from June 2019 to August 2021. Gulu district is one of eight districts in the Acholi subregion. As elsewhere in Uganda, the population in Gulu is dominated by young people with 25.2% aged 18-30 years (UBOS 2017:151). The study employed exploratory and case study approaches to youth beneficiaries from a government-oriented entrepreneurship programme: the Youth Livelihood Programme. Youth Interest Groups (YIGs) under this programme comprised members aged 18-30 years, corresponding to the definition of youth utilised by Uganda National Youth Council (MoGLSD 2013:3).

The participants were purposively selected, due to their prior organisation, and only those who were members of the YIGs at the time were considered for the study. Youth engagements were divided into agriculture-related ventures, manufacturing and extractive enterprises, and trading. All youth worked in groups since government supported only youth associations. Youth businesses had prior organisation or started immediately after funding. All businesses needed additional resources and youth energies to flourish and operate on a very small scale.

The data was gathered through six in-depth interviews with YIG leaders, 10 Focus Group Discussions with YIG members, and 11 key informant interviews with district and NGO management and youth political leaders involved in YLP. To ensure an in-depth inquiry, data collection involved field observations as well as interviews. Because of language differences, it was necessary to hire competent research assistants. They were trained to translate conscientiously. Tools were translated and back translated as a check. Data was organised verbatim, transcribed, sorted, cleaned, and coded. The emerging codes led to creation of categories and finally themes developed. Quotations represent voices of participants. Ethically, voluntary participation, confidentiality and anonymity were honoured throughout the study⁸.

Entrepreneurial Engagements

Agri-enterprises

In both rural and urban areas, participants reported agri-enterprises as dominant ventures, congruent with agriculture's significance as the backbone of Uganda (UBOS 2016). The frequently mentioned enterprises were in livestock (piggery and poultry projects), floriculture, horticulture, and crop production. Some youth groups had a combination of agroforestry, floriculture, and

⁸ The study obtained clearance from Makerere University School of Sciences research ethics committee and Uganda National Council for Science and Technology granted final approval under protocol number SS5112.

aquaculture, termed as ‘mixed farming’. The scheme had more options in agribusiness than other sectors. The enterprises required zeal, concentration, and patience as characteristics for resourceful youth. For some youth, the enterprise was a personal choice while the majority were encouraged and/or directed by government offices to engage in particular agriculture enterprises.

In 2016, almost all groups were directed by district officials to engage in either piggery or poultry or animal traction despite lacking technical skills in modern agriculture practices. Furthermore, district business lists included mostly agricultural ventures, though some youth had other business ideas. (Youth Councillor, Gulu Municipality).

The above suggests government had a role in directing the entrepreneurship ventures.

Access to land was crucial for these enterprises. Most youth attested that they were not owning but utilising small land provided by a member’s family.

My family gave us two hectares of land where we established our piggery project. Part of it was used to heap and plant sweet potatoes to feed our animals. Remember, as youth we do not own land since we are still young. The land remained a property of family. (YIG Leader, Unyama Subcounty)

Rural youth engaged in growing of crops such as beans, sesame, soya beans, maize, and vegetables on members’ family land. However, crop production was reported to be affected by drought and price changes thus affecting returns on investment. In urban settings, one group operated a mixed farm with horticulture, floriculture, and fish farming. The youth operated home gardens and yard farming near houses and in compounds. We observed fishponds, a variety of fruits (guava, avocado, mangoes, and papayas), flowers, and nursery beds on one or two acres of family land in Layibi division, Gulu Municipality. The participants in that youth group revealed that they had operated the business since 2007 and applied for youth livelihood funds to expand the business to sizeable margins and introduced innovations.

Produce business

Although produce business is mainly concerned with trading, this study categorised it under agriculture-related enterprises because youth were dealing in agricultural produce. Participants often reported cereal buying and selling as one of the profitable ventures. Only two groups carried out this economic activity. Youth reported that the business venture had potential market and quick gains compared to crop production and livestock. The business was common in rural areas due to proximity to stock at cheaper cost during harvesting season. Youth purchased agricultural products such as beans, maize, soybeans, sesame, groundnuts, sorghum, and millet. One enterprise had over 25 sacks of produce each of 102 kilogrammes in stores. The products had shorter lead-time in business, and enterprise was more rewarding to the owners. The business was valued and flourishing as observed in store and records provided. One project member owned a retail shop near the store making it easy for suppliers/ farmers to deliver products at any time of the day. With self-confidence, a member explained:

We are dealing in produce buying and selling as you can see. We deal in maize, beans, soya, and sesame. As an individual, I also have my retail shop near our store to target suppliers every time. We are also cultivating for members, we used to cultivate for money before livelihood programme (Income Generating Activity Member, Awach Subcounty, 2019).

This type of business directly depends on land for supplies and stock. Furthermore, discussions suggested that youth dealing in produce business were prosperous. To supplement their earnings, youth practiced joint/group cultivation for members to contribute part of the harvest to increase stock. An increase in price of stock motivates youth to sell and buy more from farmers. However, the business requires a strong network with farmers, large-scale produce dealers and regular working capital to meet the market demands. Therefore, the value chain is fundamental in fostering entrepreneurial success.

Animal traction

Ox-plough cultivation is directly attached to land as a resource. Youth kept cattle that were used to plough land for other community members for a fee, in addition to their own gardens. Indeed, animal traction was listed among livelihood support components in the YLP document (MoGLSD 2013:22). This enterprise was only operated by rural youth, where land for grazing and tilling was available and abundant.

Our group deals in ox-plough cultivation, where we are hired to plant seeds. We use them in our own gardens, and we cultivate an acre at UGX 70,000. We share the ox-plough among the members, we cultivate gardens, we have four bulls (and four ox-ploughs). Each bull was bought at UGX 900,000 and ox-ploughs at UGX 260,000 (YIG chairperson, Unyama Subcounty).

The youth took advantage of available land to graze their animals on free-range system. The bulls moved freely from one corner of the community to the other while grazing. Free-range system of cattle keeping was necessary because youth do not own grazing space for their animals. The challenge reported here was loss of animals as they crossed to Omoro or Pader districts and mixed with other animals, bush fires, enemies killing them and contracting animal diseases. It was most likely that these cattle would destroy crops thus evoking reaction from community members.

Manufacturing and extractive undertakings

Manufacturing played an important role for urban and peri-urban youth where access to land was not guaranteed. Youth engaged in processing raw materials to finished products ready for consumption. Activities included small bread and cake making, weaving, carpentry and joinery, and tailoring. The manufacturing enterprises were found to be on a very small scale and informal in nature, particularly making cakes on order and small bread and pancakes (locally known as *Lagalagala*) for sale in trading centres and market centres during market days. Youth did not own premises such as workplaces but baked from their homes to save direct costs on rent and electricity. One participant explained:

We deal in bakery through making cakes at members' homes and selling in trading centres and Gulu town. At times, we receive orders from customers and make cakes for them... (Group Chairperson, Bungatira Subcounty).

The activity was not a stand-alone business, but part of activities performed by the group to generate more income and sustain the enterprise.

Some participants engaged in extractive activities such as brick making, carpentry and joinery, and mould⁹ and concrete making. Those involved in carpentry and joinery were observed making wooden doors, windows, different sizes and designs of beds, tables, chairs, and art on order and for the open market. Knowledge and skills fundamentally contributed to the success for these enterprises. The educated, skilled leaders influenced and attracted the commitment and

⁹ These are concrete designs used on verandas and walls for house beautification.

development of youth personal resources. In one IGA, the leader who was an ICT graduate commanded respect and zeal from other members. The educated gained identity and had comparative advantage to chair meetings, attend training sessions and committees (Jones, 2022). Being educated makes one powerful and ascend to prominence e.g., a case of leadership-chairperson, association secretaries, treasurers, in Awach and Bungatira. Such subjectives made them take advantage of uneducated. The whole youth resourcefulness depends on ones perceived education.

These businesses relied on extracting timber and sand supplies from the villages. Those in brickmaking used a portion of a parent's land. In addition to generating income, youth gained life skills for peer training and learning, employment and improved social welfare. Educated youth recruited and trained fellow youth to work in same IGA, as one participant noted:

I do train new boys and girls who join our group; they come here voluntarily, acquire skills, and when they feel they are equipped with skills and knowledge, some decide to remain here, while others go to take up private work. The biggest challenge we have is timber supply. We get it from the community. Sometimes during wet season or restrictions on tree cutting, the supply goes down and youth here may remain redundant (Youth project manager, Pece division, Gulu City).

As the above statement shows, skills' training is not enough. Projects depended on local resources for entrepreneurial survival. Very few groups dealt in carpentry and joinery, due to the huge start-up capital required, skills needed and nature of the market. The few engaged in brickmaking utilised family land or had to rent space for operation. Some family members never allowed youth from other families to utilise their clan's land, thus affecting group cohesion, commitment, and achievement of set targets.

Retailing enterprises

This kind of trading business indirectly depended on land as a resource but mostly exploited youth themselves as 'resources'. Our findings indicate that small-scale retailing enterprises were also prevalent among youth. Surprisingly, trading was reported more in rural than urban settings. The business venture involved purchasing manufactured/industrial goods such as soap, sugar, stationery, maize flour and general merchandise for resale. Other than manufactured goods, some youth in the municipality stocked charcoal near kiosks as 'side businesses', what is commonly regarded as 'side hustling' (Mwaura 2017). The venture necessitated energy, synergy and skills in accounting, record keeping, customer care, resilience, and character. Youth used part of the proceeds from the retail activities to buy produce during harvesting season. They expressed that retailing ventures generated quick and daily revenue compared to agriculture and manufacturing. The participants further contended that prices of merchandise were more stable than agricultural products' prices.

We started this shop because our cash was idle for some time as we wait for harvest, so we decided to operate a retail shop, so we keep the money in use, and we are able to get what to pay back. Then, during harvest, we pick money from the shop to buy produce (Enterprise Chairperson Palaro Subcounty).

These youth found produce trading to be intermittent since it is seasonal. So, they took the initiative to start a shop that could generate income more continuously.

Factors Limiting Youth Entrepreneurship

Social limitations hindered youth ability to access and utilise resources necessary for successful entrepreneurship. Studies by ILO on youth and entrepreneurship corroborate this finding suggesting social and cultural barriers to youth start-ups (Schoof, 2006). In Gulu, these barriers were pronounced in connection with access to land. As previous studies have shown, elders control over land limits youth choices on utilisation (Gichimu and Njeru 2014:3; Whyte and Acio 2017:23).

Socio-cultural patterns of land access affected rural male and female youth differently. The ability to operate a profitable business was inhibited by market factors and limited supportive infrastructure and training. Finally, and perhaps most striking, was the emphasis interlocutors placed on personal resources or 'mindset' as a limitation.

Gender and access to land

Several participants reported on cultural issues as hindering youth entrepreneurship mostly in rural areas. These cultural factors limited access to resources and decision-making arenas. They mostly mentioned early marriages, single motherhood, restricted land ownership and social exclusion from opportunities. Female youth were affected by these challenges since they were prone to divorce, separation, single motherhood, and marginalisation. The female participants were not permitted to own land and undertake investments on land. Those who were married mostly relied on their husbands for decision-making. Their husbands had powers of how to utilise even the funds provided by government. Female participants indicated that children they produced while at parents' home were discriminated and denied rights to land ownership; such children were regarded as 'foreigners'¹⁰. Some divorced women were denied land for farming since they belonged to another family (husband's home), yet these homes disregarded them. Land access and utilisation were not an entitlement for them but a prerogative of clan members:

Once we leave our homes for marriage, we are not supposed to own land. The culture proposes that we should only own at our husbands' homes. In case of divorce, the children we produce are also denied land that they are 'bastards', we are just like this...uncles and brothers tell us that we take them where they belong (FGD Female Participant, Bungatira Subcounty).

Culturally, the children born after divorce are denied land, thus remaining landless and poor. They are treated as foreigners (locally referred to as '*lutino luk*'), however hardworking one is, no land for productive agriculture, so they remain miserable and take refuge in towns, and you know the life there (Female, Unyama Subcounty).

Communal land ownership was reported a major obstacle to investment in agriculture; one male participant emphasised that family members inhibit individual youth from utilising available land. However, some male youth disagreed, revealing that in their families they can utilise the land. Access to land was a greater challenge for young women, who were expected to marry and gain land through a man. For those who did marry, their husbands often tried to exert control over funds, thus demotivating them. Children who were not recognized by their fathers faced difficulties in accessing land. The prohibitions, discrimination, and cultural rigidities around land made this resource uncertain for young people (Whyte and Acio 2017:23).

Structures affecting business operations

¹⁰ Stereotyping on children who are born while women are not officially married or divorced.

Market has both formal and informal functions in entrepreneurial decisions and success of enterprises. A major reason for youth reluctance to invest in some of the economic activities mentioned was market instability. This challenge threatened entrepreneurial progress most especially in agriculture, and other primary production activities. While some youth struggled to engage in agri-enterprises and carpentry, market for their products was very low amidst high input costs. Youth dealing in crop production, horticulture, and produce business felt the pain from price fluctuations, very low prices at harvest leading to losses. The youth dealing in extractive and manufacturing activities decried competition from imported products, and products (such as bread) from Central Uganda. They operated at a very small scale, and were thus unable to access orders from big market customers such as institutions and supermarkets. Such market problems impeded the efforts of youth, hence discouraging them from investment.

We suffer from price fluctuation after harvesting; there is no available market for our maize, sesame, soya beans and beans, we give it away anyhow—at a very low price locally known as *lap lap* (Female Participant, Paicho subcounty).

The key informants reiterated that market constraints retarded activities of most youth ventures. Furthermore, participants explained that at times, young agri-entrepreneurs face competition from other large-scale producers and produce from neighbouring countries.

Then the other final thing is marketing. Markets are very challenging these days with the influx of produce from neighbouring countries such as Kenya and Tanzania. Youth can grow a lot of maize then prices fall. Last year maize prices dropped during second season as low as UGX 300 (USD 0.085) per kilogramme from average of UGX700 (USD 0.20). Really, you do not see anyone making money from those crops. When there is a lot of influx of maize from Kenya and Tanzania, maize here loses value. When Kenya goes out of production our prices shoot high (NGO Programme Manager).

Youth lacked access to marketing and value addition opportunities to fetch higher prices from agricultural products. These findings corroborate other studies postulating limited business networks and market linkages as challenges to youth entrepreneurship (Namatovu et al. 2012:16; Shittu 2017:96; Cramer and Richards 2011:281; Wood and Frynas 2006:260).

Dealing with these problems might have been easier with commercial and institutional infrastructures to support their entrepreneurship ambitions. However, interlocutors reported lack of extension services, information, and business incubation centres. Some areas (such as Palaro subcounty) were quite remote with poor telephone network and feeder roads, as well as limited health, education, and business facilities. Furthermore, there were very few technical and professional personnel within communities to offer technical support, guidance, mentorship, and assistance to youth in best agricultural practices and business management. Technical teams from local government failed to ascertain youth needs. Expressions like “*Wa pee ki ngat moo ma tiro wadok miniwa kony*” (*we lack guidance and support*) stemmed from all youth enterprises visited. Most of the youth rarely saw any extension worker, government or district/subcounty official visiting youth ventures. Several rural youth enterprises in Palaro, Patiko and Paicho Sub-counties had never been visited, advised, or supported during their operation; even urban enterprises were not monitored. The youth declared that they only received phone calls from officials demanding repayment or progress reports on projects.

We report cases of animal diseases, fights, conflicts, mismanagement of funds to the subcounty, district, but officials keep a deaf ear. When you call the veterinary officer, he asks for

transport allowance. We were not helped at all until our group dissolved (FGD male participant, Paicho Subcounty).

We were given a telephone number to call in case of any problem; when we call the subcounty Community Development Officer or Agricultural Officer either promises to come or sends inexperienced interns. Sometimes we asked these interns questions, and they fail completely; the interns were even working under NGO arrangement (FGD male participant, Patiko Subcounty).

This implied that government had limited extension officers to build youth resources. A municipal councillor reiterated:

People get money to go and monitor, instead they move in two or three groups, just go, and relax. The youth councillors are being facilitated but the facilitation is not doing the right thing; you find youth leaders within municipality get money for monitoring but divide it within a few minutes. He/she does not go to the field for monitoring, they are not even informed, when you ask about something, they just go to the Community Development Officer and inquire.

District officials acknowledged this finding explaining that they rarely conduct quarterly monitoring due to limited facilitation such as fuel, motorcycles for field movements, and safari day allowance for the exercise. They claimed that some places were so remote that one required more than one week visiting all YIGs in the subcounty. Officers were overloaded with multiple roles; one works both as a probation officer and YLP focal point officer. Youth were left to struggle on their own and ended up with production and market deficiencies. Thus, even if resources existed, youth had no guidance, information, and technical rectification of business failures. Many agricultural projects such as piggery, poultry, crop production, and animal traction necessitate constant monitoring by a team of animal and agronomic specialists to assess performance and offer necessary support.

Most participants felt youth were not fully prepared to use available resources. Youth hastily formed groups whenever they heard about funding opportunities without entrepreneurial orientation, awareness of technical aspects and consideration of local resources. A case in point is Gumperon Youth Livelihood Produce business and Waryemo Village Savings and Loan Associations (VSLA) in Awach Subcounty, which failed immediately after receiving funding, yet the area is gifted with fertile land. YIG leaders took advantage of members' ignorance and unpreparedness and mismanaged finance. Youth lacked self-awareness and information about opportunities. Youth claimed they were not trained and motivated to utilise available resources.

The 30-minute training we received at Sub County was limited, insufficient, very brief, and we were not able to acquire enough skills, knowledge, and inspiration about business processes (YIG Chairperson, Bungatira subcounty, Gulu District).

The above quotation suggests the training was insufficient. Most youth projects were started without clear strategic plans, vision, and purpose. Many youths were unaware of their responsibilities, basic entrepreneurship principles, and market needs. Thus, they were unable to utilise their own potentials in bringing about socio-economic transformation.

Mindset

The importance of mindset surfaced in all the interviews. Attitude, character and motivation were personal resources captured by the term 'mindset'. The success of youth enterprises was attributed

to hard work, determination, availability, readiness, resilience and passion. In 2018 ‘Openyu’ and his group received funding from YLP, determined members worked hard, and they were able to pay back credit and obtain additional funding. ‘We are now few members’, ‘who know what to do’, ‘willing to work’, and ‘happy’, were expressions of the successful youth enterprises. This positive example was overshadowed by many negative ones:

Our youth have bad attitude, they are not committed to work, and want to enjoy free things. We started our group in 2016 when we were 15 members; many lazy ones have run away, we are now only six (Male Participant, Awach Subcounty).

Indeed, it was observed that some youth projects were neglected. For example, we found unattended piggery enterprises in Bungatira and Unyama Sub counties, and a retail shop in Palaro County which was closed all day, yet owners were idle in trading centres, while others were relaxing at home.

This study aligns with one in Nigeria, which stressed appropriate entrepreneurial attitudes to participate and successfully exploit entrepreneurial opportunities (Aja-Okorie and Adali 2013:119). Participants emphasised weak entrepreneurial spirit among youth. They repeatedly mentioned lack of commitment, patience, passion, determination, and dedication to economic activities. The interlocutors reported that youth behaviours were detrimental to personal growth and development. The youth leaders, youth themselves, and government officials attributed some youth woes to personal responsibility. Youth themselves were to blame. The interlocutors claimed that most youth were arrogant, lazy, and averse, had ‘poverty of the mind’, and lacked positive values. Participants from active youth projects/IGAs and key district stakeholders reported that youth were disrespectful, immoral, negative towards some agricultural work, and preferred freedom to work. They pointed out that youth spend most time on gambling and prostitution, sitting in trading centres, spending what they earn on alcohol and drug abuse, and sports betting. The greed for quick cash characterised most youth in the area, they said.

The youth are not very patient; they want quick returns; they do not want to wait. If the project is taking long to yield productivity, they find it a problem, so they prefer something with quick results like sports betting (District YLP Focal Office).

The youth political leaders agreed, positing that youth are negligent, and waste time and energy meant for productive work.

We have uncommitted youth, some youth in *Bardege, Layibi, Laroo* divisions did not dedicate their time, energy, and power towards work. Even if opportunities are available, they prefer betting, watching football until late, more than going for work (Female Municipal Youth Leader).

... youth down in our communities are very lazy. Even if there is an activity or programme, they cannot participate. They prefer watching movies, dancing at marketplaces, sitting at shop verandas, bars, betting houses and frequenting trading centres and towns for leisure (Municipal Female Youth Councillor).

Programme implementers thought that youth did not accept the basic premises of youth livelihood programmes. Whereas government emphasises socio-economic transformation and wealth creation, youth take project funding as free government money, a way of making quick cash and meeting their daily needs. They asserted that youth did not commit their total effort

towards self-employment as entrepreneurs. Educated youth considered agriculture as a ‘side hustle’ and continued seeking for paid jobs.

One of the biggest challenges with our youth is attitude. Youth do not look at agribusiness and agriculture as very critical activity in getting them out of poverty and getting them employment. Therefore, it takes time to convince the youth to take farming as a business, as something that can get them out of poverty. Therefore, that attitude thing needs a lot of mindsets changing. Of course, it is linked to laziness and how they look at certain enterprises. They have access to productive resources such as land but look at farming as a village dirty job (Key Informant Technoserve¹¹).

While many interlocutors, including young people themselves, pointed to mindset as the reason for the failure of so many youth livelihood projects, they were not concerned about why the uncommitted mindset existed and what could change it.

Conclusion

Under the Youth Livelihood Programme, young people in Gulu District engaged in different enterprises based on personal choice, skills, competences, and district guidance. Produce businesses were most successful due to less labour and operational costs involved; most youth could not afford the capital requirements of agriculture and manufacturing. All enterprises operated on a micro level, and on rented premises or family land. Agriculture-related ventures dominated in the YLP; however, these were small scale since most youth lack rights to use large amounts of land (Ayai 2013:9; Gichimu and Njeru 2014:3). No youth venture owned land; they either got land access from parents and clan members or used community land (for cattle grazing). Youth mostly engaged in piggery, poultry, and horticulture, which do not require much land space. Some youth engaged in buying and selling of agricultural produce such as cereals, beans, sesame, and maize. The youth believed that crops were available, accessible, and cheap, and had ready market from intermediaries. Retailing utilised mostly government funding and youth as ‘resources’ since commitment, synergy and personal contribution play an important role towards success. However, only one group had a retail shop supplementing their produce business.

In terms of resources, the YLP participants all had access to financing for their entrepreneurial endeavours. Access to land, a critical resource for agricultural projects, was more problematic, especially for female youth. Still, many groups were able to use family land of their members. The resources that were least available, according to many study participants, were the personal resources of character, commitment and competence. It was very striking that so many blamed the youth themselves for the weak performance of enterprises. This detracts attention from another resource that was also lacking in the situation: technical infrastructure.

People become entrepreneurs by practicing, as stated in the beginning of this article. They become competent by hands-on training. But support for learning by doing was not forthcoming for most groups. The study established lack of supportive infrastructure and inefficiencies in monitoring and extension services to youth projects. Youth were left on their own; even if animals developed sickness, no veterinary officer attended to them, leading to the collapse of most piggery and poultry enterprises. The extension workers resorted to telephone communication, at the expense of physical field visits. Although mobile telephone technologies are emphasised to be ideal for agriculture extension service for rural farmers (Mugabi et al. 2018:969), some areas are so remote that mobile networks are inaccessible. The importance of managerial skills and knowledge for successful operation of new ventures has been considered in other studies (Ejiogu

¹¹ NGO dealing in training youth in Agriculture-related enterprises in northern Uganda.

and Nwajiuba 2012:10). Skills and knowledge are acquired through supervision and mentorship. It could be said that institutions for training, support supervision and problem-solving are also a resource for young entrepreneurs. If that resource had been more available, youth competence and commitment could have developed more robustly. In the absence of that resource, youth who are inclined to self-employment feel discouraged.

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Cultivating Voters' Perceptions and Women's Political Representation in Uganda

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Abstract

This study considers voter perceptions as resources women politicians cultivate. How women cultivate this resource is relatively understudied in Uganda. The study addresses the gap in the literature through a qualitative approach. Women Members of Parliament (MPs) representing the Northern Uganda districts of Kitgum, Pader, Oyam, Agago, and Gulu selected purposively completed individual in-depth interviews. Additionally, constituents in Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) provided input with the help of a discussion guide. Findings reveal that voters' perceptions of women MPs are contextual; voter characteristics and expectations influence voters' impression of an individual. Irrespective of the seat type, women MPs cultivate votes through constituency service. However, women in reserved seats use humility, honesty, and motherliness to influence voters' perceptions. Compared to women in open seats, women in reserved seats are better at nurturing voter perceptions. A further revelation is that a reciprocal relationship exists between voters' perceptions of MPs and performance outcomes. The study suggests that voters' perceptions are an essential political resource as they provide a feedback loop for improved performance, better policies and the election of good leaders.

Keywords: Women MPs, affirmative action, voters' perceptions, electoral politics, northern Uganda

Introduction

Parliamentary representation is primarily descriptive, meaning replicating constituency demands in Parliament, and substantive, denoting acting on behalf of constituencies in legislation (Pitkin 1967:8-12). The extent of representatives' responsiveness to constituency interests affects and is affected by constituency perceptions (Clayton, Josefsson and Wang 2017:281). Performance affects perceptions, and voters elect representatives who meet their expectations. In turn MPs' desire to get elected influences them to meet voter expectations. The viability of a representative starts with constituents' perceptions of the representative's legislative behaviour (Helfer, Wäsipi and Varone 2021: 167). A clear demonstration of the relationship between performance and perceptions is what Eisenhardt (1989:58), calls a principal-agent relationship. Representatives account to their voters through performance, and voters respond by punishing or rewarding the MP on the ballot.

Moreover, perceptions have an interdependent character where voters have the power to affect an election, while MPs shape voter perceptions. Voter perceptions are critical in shaping MPs' electability (NGO Forum 2017). Perceptions are an essential political resource for electoral success. Political resources are anything that influences a political decision, ranging from social or psychological factors, material, personal or group attributes, authority position, network connection or an action such as political participation (Wängnerud 2009:54; Yamokoski and

Dubrow cited in Dubrow 2015:478). Perceptions, like other political resources, are described by their distributional nature, meaning that different individuals or groups acquire resources to varying degrees and are shaped by contextual factors (Dubrow 2015: 179). For example, perceptions about women MPs are fragile; women are more likely than men to be perceived negatively because politics is considered a domain for men. Also, women in reserved (affirmative action) seats are considered noncompetitive in the electoral process through the ranks (Goetz 2002:573; Muriaas and Wang 2012:317). Women, therefore, must devise strategies to cultivate positive perceptions. Women must be entrepreneurs by building their following.

This article explores how women in reserved and open seats cultivate perceptions and their significance for women's electability or re-electability. It begins with a brief background of women and parliamentary representation in Uganda since adopting affirmative action for political representation, followed by the methodology, findings and conclusions.

Background

Uganda is a liberal democracy, with elections occurring every five years. Uganda's electoral system has varied since its independence in 1962. The country had a multiparty system in the 1962 and 1980 elections, the only two democratic elections held after independence before the NRM era. Idi Amin ruled Uganda by decree from 1971 to 1979 and suspended Parliament. Later, from 1986 to 2005, Uganda had a one-party National Resistance Movement (NRM) system but returned to multiparty politics in 2006.

The dynamics in the electoral system have had consequences for women's political representation. The colonial period relegated women to the private sphere, forcing them out of the public life of which politics is a part (Ssewakiryanga 2014). Idi Amin's era threatened women's movements, and many collapsed (Kwesiga 2017:204). Women were limited to associations such as the Association of Married Women, reinforcing stereotypical feminine roles like home keeping and maintenance. In contrast, the NRM era brought women to decision-making by adopting the affirmative action policy for political representation. Women have been able to use the decision-making spaces to pass gender-friendly legislation.

Additionally, women's constitutional recognition and acceptance in decision-making gave them confidence in the government's goodwill, prompting them to rally behind the government in return (Tamale 1999:104). As a result, women's relationship with the NRM government has been transactional. The NRM government has been criticised for exploiting affirmative action to achieve political ends and not promoting the genuine emancipation of women, for instance, by using women as a vote bank to achieve political victory (Ottemoeller 1999:98; Goetz 2002:560).

The lessons from Uganda's history have shaped the country's political and electoral terrain. As a result, Uganda's democracy has improved compared to the previous regimes. First, the NRM government introduced an independent electoral commission to manage elections as part of its commitment to ensuring democracy. Further, the NRM government legalised the electoral commission under Article 60 of the 1995 constitution of the Republic of Uganda. The electoral commission is mandated to provide free and fair elections, organise elections and referenda according to the principles of democracy, demarcate constituencies, declare results, handle election complaints and conduct civic education. In addition, the Electoral Commission defines eligibility for electoral office, voting, and the geographical area of representation. In practice, however, democratic principles fall short. The political environment remains unfriendly to women (UWONET 2016:65). Candidates in opposition continue to suffer the effects of party dominance (Gibb, 2016:93). Also, the militarisation of politics continues to threaten women's political ambitions (Goetz 2002: 156). Hence, there is criticism that Uganda's democracy under the NRM is pseudo.

There are three categories of contenders for parliamentary office: candidates vying for the open seats, the reserved seats and special interest seats (the Youth, Elderly, Persons with Disabilities, Workers, and Uganda Peoples Defence Forces). The interest groups represent specific constituencies different from those of the other MPs as provided for by Article 78 (1a) and (1b)

and Article 32 (1) of the 1995 constitution of the Republic of Uganda—an electoral college of members in the same group votes for the special interest seats. Candidates vying for the open seats are either male or female from diverse political backgrounds; they represent single constituencies and are voted by universal suffrage. Women contenders in reserved seats compete in an all-female contest, represent the whole district and are voted by women and men. MPs in Uganda are voted through a past-the-post system or majoritarian vote, in which the winner takes all in separate elections.

The electoral process in Uganda follows a sequence of pre-nomination, nomination, campaign and voting and has consequences for women's electoral outcomes. Conducting women-only contests under the reserved seats and women versus men contests under the open seats creates a two-tier system for legislators (Bauer 2012:375; Goetz cited in Muriaas & Wang 2012:317). Consequently, there is a perception that women in reserved seats are inferior to members in non-reserved seats (Bauer 2012:381). There is a perception that elections for women in the reserved seats are less competitive than those in the open seat, based on the assumption that competing against men requires extra muscle on women's side. Yet, studies have disputed the simplification of women's elections, noting that, like other MPs, women parliamentarians gain their seats through competition; the only difference is that they compete with women and prioritise women's concerns in electoral campaigns (Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) 2009:24; O'Brien 2012:58).

The constituencies of women on reserved seats are the entire districts, while MPs in open seats represent smaller counties. Even with the sub-division of formerly large counties and districts to create new districts, the constituencies of women on reserved seats have remained larger (MP Gulu & Kitgum 2021). Although some constituents consider these dynamics when evaluating women in reserved seats, many ignore these complexities, resulting in a negative perception of the performance levels of women MPs in reserved seats relative to MPs in open seats. The MPs in open seats are the primary representatives by the electoral and constitutional design, making women MPs in affirmative seats secondary representatives. Tamale (1999:178) points out the subordinate position of women in the reserved seats; for instance, they must consult open-seat MPs to implement activities in the constituencies to avoid a collision. The definition of constituency representation demeans women on reserved seats by affecting their independence, performance, and perceptions of them. Revising the implementation of reserved seats could address the reserved seat type ambiguities. Article 78 (2) of the constitution calls for reviewing the representation of special interest groups every five years, but this is not done, thereby sustaining the negativity towards affirmative action seats.

There are debates on the efficacy of women in reserved seats and whether these seats empower women. Theoretically, reserved seats, in the long run, would enable women to take on the open seats (Interparliamentary Union 2015). However, reserved seats in Uganda present a glass ceiling; from 1989 to the currently concluded 2021 elections, there has been stagnation and fluctuation in the number of women in open seats. Table 1 shows the trends of women in Parliament over the years.

Table 1: Women Elected Representatives in the Ugandan Parliament, 1989-2021

| Year | Districts | Forum | AA | Open seat | Others | Women | Men | Total MP s | % Women | % Men |
|------|-----------|------------|-----|-----------|--------|-------|-----|------------|---------|-------|
| 1989 | 39 | NRC | 39 | 2 | 9 | 50 | 230 | 280 | 18 | 82 |
| 1994 | 39 | CA | 39 | 8 | 3 | 50 | 236 | 286 | 17 | 83 |
| 1996 | 39 | Parliament | 39 | 8 | 4 | 51 | 225 | 276 | 19 | 81 |
| 2001 | 56 | Parliament | 56 | 3 | 6 | 75 | 230 | 304 | 24 | 76 |
| 2006 | 79 | Parliament | 79 | 14 | 1 | 100 | 219 | 319 | 31 | 69 |
| 2011 | 112 | Parliament | 112 | 11 | 8 | 131 | 244 | 375 | 35 | 65 |
| 2016 | 112 | Parliament | 112 | 18 | 9 | 139 | 289 | 428 | 33 | 67 |
| 2019 | 122 | Parliament | 122 | 20 | 9 | 148 | 295 | 452 | 34 | 66 |

| | | | | | | | | | | |
|------|-----|------------|-----|----|----|-----|-----|-----|----|----|
| 2021 | 146 | Parliament | 146 | 16 | 13 | 175 | 354 | 529 | 33 | 67 |
|------|-----|------------|-----|----|----|-----|-----|-----|----|----|

Sources: Electoral Commission of the Republic of Uganda (2016); Inter-Parliamentary Union (2018); Madanda (2017); Muriaas & Wang (2012); Parliament of the Republic of Uganda (2018); Electoral Commission (2021)

Table 1 above shows women representatives elected to Parliament in reserved (AA), open, and special interest seats, excluding ex-officials from 1989 to 2021. The 2021 elections produced only 16 females in the open seats in the 11th Parliament, a reduction from 20 in the 10th Parliament. There has been a reduction rather than an increase, given that constituencies keep increasing as more districts emerge while MPs on open seats are not growing by the same number. The findings indicate that the introduction of reserved seats for women over the past 30 years increased women's participation in politics but has not brought dividends to celebrate the emancipation of women. The women MPs we have are a result of affirmative action; without it, the number of women would be much smaller. An explanation for the fewer women in the open seats is the stereotype and gendered perception that open seats are for men, as are opportunities presented for winning the seat, like the creation of new constituencies. The other reason is that parties discriminate against women in the open seats in the nomination stages of the political process (Individual Interviewee Oyam 2021). Although Uganda has been under a multiparty dispensation since 2006, political parties reinforce patriarchy because men continue to dominate party leadership positions, marginalise women in politics and government and suffocate women's ambition for political office (Ahikire 2009:2). Despite the challenges of political parties to women's political engagement, women must cultivate strategies of successfully transforming and working with parties to access political spaces and acquire political influence.

Methods of Data Collection

This study used a qualitative approach and a case study design. Data were analysed inductively using the thematic analysis method. The study compared women MPs' pathways, perceptions and performance on the reserved seats vs open seats in Uganda. Data collection took place between September 2020 and March 2021. In-depth Individual Interviews (IDI) were held with women MPs about their motives and experiences to parliamentary representation in the 10th Parliament. In addition, Focus Group Discussions with male and female voters focused on perceptions of women MPs and their performance. There were two types of FGDs: rural, characterised by a non-elite status and urban, with elite characteristics. Each comprised eight to ten members over 18 years, considered the legal voting age. They were selected purposively from each of the districts of Agago, Gulu, Kitgum, Pader and Oyam for discussion, which lasted for two hours.

Similarly, eight women MPs representing the same districts in the 10th Parliament were interviewed. Although the study was a case of the 10th Parliament, to trace the implication of perceptions for women's electability to the 11th Parliament, the study followed the same MPs to the 11th Parliament. Therefore, interviews were conducted before and after the elections to relate the voters' perceptions to electoral outcomes.

Voter Perceptions of Women Members of Parliament

Voters place high role expectations and moral demands on women parliamentarians, who must fulfil those expectations by working harder. For women MPs to gain acceptability and respect in political participation, they must shape voter perceptions. Perceptions of women members of the Parliament of Uganda vary because voters are not homogenous. Findings from in-depth interviews and focus groups established two classes of voters: rural non-elite and urban elite voter characteristics influence perceptions. To the rural voters, an MP who distributes financial and material items (like farming supplies) is a performer. This perception follows voter statements like how do we benefit materially or financially? Findings also show that constituents vote for MPs more engaged in popular emblematic roles in most circumstances. For example, voters noted, 'Our MPs are good; they sit with us. We share stories, attend burials, contribute to burial arrangements, and sort cereal together' (FGD, Gulu 2021).

In contrast, for many urban voters, a performing MP has moved motions, represented the people's interests, and overseen the implementation of government programs. 'Members are rated by the motions and bills they have moved and the number of times they have contributed in the plenary' (FGD, Kitgum 2021). Although some urban elite voters, in rare circumstances, uphold women for moving motions and paying attention to issues of national concern in the plenary, they criticise them for not going the extra mile to persuade the government to the implementation stages. Urban constituencies also say that parliamentarians prioritise party and community interests but fall below expectations in legislation. For example, a voter asserted: 'The 10th Parliament has been the worst, with less achievement than the previous parliaments. Its response to the COVID-19 pandemic was mediocre, and there was no national plan, and borrowing escalated' (FGD, Pader 2021). In the voters' views, the 10th Parliament has been primarily symbolic compared to other parliaments. 'Many rats cannot build a home', said one voter, noting the Parliament has many MPs who are not performing (FGD, Pader 2021).

Cultivating voters' perceptions is challenging due to the diversity of political views, individual experiences and differing voters' expectations. Therefore, women MPs need to clearly understand voters' characteristics and unique needs to cultivate positive perceptions. The following discussion analyses how women cultivate perceptions of their political constituents.

Cultivating Perceptions: Similar or Different for Women MPs on Reserved and Open Seats

There are primary expectations of MPs' representative role, including legislating significant concerns and policy, focusing on constituency service and advocacy, representing their constituencies through showing interest in policy that affects constituents, and raising questions about concerns that pertain to particular constituents. Another expectation is attending local council meetings to get the public's views to channel to the executive for attention and redress (Kaduuli 2018:5). To meet the constituency presence condition, MPs must have a local functional office at the constituency for liaison purposes. The local office enables constituents to present grievances and concerns to the MP and executive without the MP's presence. Although most MPs have such an office, some MPs do not have a local office.

Even though voters value the presence of a local office, MPs' presence in the constituencies is appreciated the most; unfortunately, it is uncommon for MPs to spend time in the constituencies due to their many political engagements. According to field reports, most MPs do not attend local council meetings or participate in community activities. 'Both our MPs do not attend council meetings; they only do when it is beneficial to them and when they need the community's support' (FGDs, Oyam 2021). Most members of Parliament who return only to be voted back are ridiculed and are likely to be denied votes.

The visibility of a member of Parliament in the constituency is an essential aspect of effective representation. 'People will most probably vote for a leader who is always available and able to address their concerns' (UWONET 2016 P:19). In Gulu, Pader, and Kitgum, all representatives perceived as unavailable lost their seats in the 2021 elections. Although most women who kept in touch with constituencies were reelected, some, despite their excellent record, lost the 2021 elections. They attributed their failure to propaganda and blackmail in campaigns by opponents and male MPs they outshined in constituencies. What women MPs choose to do or not to do based on their mandate as representatives has consequences on voters' perceptions of them, either negatively or positively. It all depends on the characteristics and expectations of voters. Perceptions fundamentally influence electoral outcomes; MPs want to exploit their advantage for electoral success. Elections are unlikely to be successful if there is a disagreement between the opinions of voters and representatives (Shabad and Slomczynski 2011). Voters' perceptions usually correspond with the actions of the MP in question. As analysed subsequently, women's strategies of nurturing perceptions differ due to women's interests and contextual factors rather than seat type.

Presence in the Constituency

MPs' presence in the constituency is an avenue for cultivating and maintaining positive voter perceptions. The voters see women in the reserved seats as more available and approachable than women in the open seats despite representing large constituencies (FGD Oyam 2020; FGD Gulu, 2020; FGD Pader 2020). The women in reserved seats do a double representation of the district and individual constituencies—illustrating the ambiguous nature of the representation of constituencies by women MPs in reserved seats. Although dual representation poses a disadvantage of duplication of roles and overwhelming responsibility, it ensures more popularity of women MPs in reserved seats within the districts relative to MPs representing single county constituencies.

In addition to presence in the constituency, women in reserved seats tend to show humility, honesty and patience and listen more to voters, which has earned them a reputation for being more motherly and closer to the voters. Furthermore, compared to women in the open seats, responses from FGDs show that women in reserved seats adopt a more consultative style with the voters.

The study established that constituency performance impacted voter perceptions and elections more than legislative performance. The negative perceptions of poor performance against one of the best legislators in the 10th Parliament explain the value attached to constituency

availability. Similarly, in a different setting, voter preference and trust for MPs who focus more on the constituency, regardless of their effort to speak on the floor of Parliament, was established in Britain (McKay 2020:1). A legislator who does well at the plenary and poorly in the constituency hardly gets reelected. An evaluation of voter perception established a striking paradox: representatives doing the legislation are perceived as lesser performers and less popular with non-elite voters (FDGs Gulu 2021). One reason for this inclination is the limited civic awareness of the normative roles of MPs; voters receive little information about the proper roles of MPs, and the would-be information in the media is mostly inaccessible to the masses in rural communities. Overall, voters rate constituency performance highly because voters know what, how and where their MPs have performed contrary to the legislative roles played out in a distant place.

Implementation of Constituency Development Projects

Members of Parliament on both the reserved and open seats have development projects in their constituencies. Constituency expectations are one reason women concentrate on providing material and empowerment opportunities through their development projects. Even though MPs do this in the name of development, they are aware that these incentives have far-reaching effects on the perceptions of the majority of voters who live in poverty.

Voters perceive their individual economic needs as the primary obligation of MPs. Bearing in mind the needs of constituencies, women MPs distribute material items like saucepans, farm inputs, and African fabrics (*kitenge*); they provide financial assistance to savings groups, contribute to burial arrangements and provide educational materials to constituents. The inability or unwillingness to give these material items creates a worthless impression, affecting ballot choices. For example, a dissatisfied voter stated, 'I voted for my MP but never received anything back. Therefore, I will not vote for her' (FGD, Kitgum 2021). Poor socio-economic conditions and the failure of the government to implement existing legislation force voters to pursue short-term material gains.

Research has established that constituents care more about bread and butter issues than political ones (Tamale 1999:170). Consequently, irrespective of the seat, MPs recognise this need and focus on constituencies, not for the desire to perform their role but to build personal voting blocs (Tamale 1999; McKay 2020:2). MPs take advantage of voters' short-term and sometimes selfish interests at the expense of long-term goals. However, the urban elite ridicule political manipulation and material politics in the form of the distribution of money whenever MPs are in the constituency in exchange for votes of the largely uneducated and impoverished electorate.

Representation of women's concerns

Women MPs cultivate perceptions through the representation of women's concerns. However, women MPs in reserved seats are more devoted to women's issues than women in open seats. This is why women MPs, although not legally representatives of women, are considered MPs for women in practice. Women focus on women's issues because women form the most significant proportion of the population and, consequently, the main section of the grassroots voters' who, compared to middle-class women, turn up more to vote. The vote advantage is why MPs devote their energy and time to women's concerns to influence their perception of performance.

Voters perceive their individual economic needs as the primary obligation of MPs. Women MPs try to understand the constituents' needs; one respondent, a subsequent electoral winner, attributes her success to reading the minds and understanding the interests of her constituency, which is where her focus is (interview, Oyam South 2021). Due to the impact of the war, the Acholi sub-region faces land conflict challenges and has some of the highest levels of teenage pregnancy, an increased number of girls dropping out of school, gender-based violence, human rights abuses, and other issues. Women MPs whose political ideologies touch on these issues are perceived positively. In all the ten FGDs, two in each of the districts of Agago, Gulu, Kitgum, Pader and Oyam 2021, women MPs received recognition for bringing out important issues such as health, poverty, girl child education, gender-based violence, environmental concerns, and support for community rehabilitation, among others, in Parliament.

Reserved seats generate mandates for women to represent women, based on the justification of representation theory. Representation theory assumes that women are a constituent collective aiming to push as many women as possible to decision-making positions to represent women's concerns (Human Rights and Peace Centre and Kituo Cha Katiba 2016). Other studies also show that women's presence in parliament guarantees representing women's interests collectively, including shared values and experiences (Clayton, Josefsson, & Wang 2017:296). Therefore, women's numbers and presence in decision-making positions carry high constituent expectations of women as representatives.

However, women's constituency is sometimes challenged because women have different identities and experiences that are not shared (Celis et al. 2008:5). Aligned with these findings is the assertion that descriptive representation, the mirror representation of women's interests, is not straightforward. There is evidence that some women do not focus on women's interests or gender equality (Wängnerud 2009:65). The reason is that women have differing interests, women are not homogenous, meaning they do not have unified interests (Ahikire, Musiimenta and Mwiine 2015:27).

Also, everyone votes for women MPs, which means they are not MPs of only women. This assertion was deep-rooted in individual interviews in which women MPs on reserved seats, on the one hand, affirmed that they were representatives of the whole district and not only women. On the other hand, they claim to be representatives of women, creating a paradox in representation. As a result, reserved seats have resulted in ambiguities about women's representation and lack of clarity about whom the women on the reserved seats should represent (Goetz 2002:558; Tamale 1999:78). The lack of precision concerning whom women represent affects voters' perceptions; in the interviews, women in reserved seats were said to be MPs for the women. Therefore, their response to women's concerns is impactful based on the label attached to women on reserved seats.

In contrast, women in open seats tend to align themselves with masculinity-related developments, such as fundraising for infrastructural development. This they do because they consider themselves directly involved with their constituencies' development. Comparatively, women's concerns have a faster influence on voter perceptions than long-term public goods because women form the majority of voters. Interviews with women MPs revealed women's active involvement in the gender equality legislation passed on the floor of Parliament. Literature establishes that irrespective of the seat, most women MPs legislate women's issues by pursuing pro-women legislation (Clayton, Josefsson, & Wang 2016:284; Ahikire & Mwiine 2015:30). Women have achieved positive legislative outcomes, especially for gender-sensitive legislation

through their caucus, under the Uganda Women's Parliamentary Association (UWOPA) (Johnson and Josefsson 2021:845). Women MPs unified their voices as members of UWOPA in legislation for gender-sensitive legislation, thus making it difficult to determine how specific categories of women parliamentarians perform in legislation.

However, voter ignorance limits the legislative function in shaping perceptions because most legislative processes and parliamentary work occur in committees, and voters do not access this information. Constituents' inability to follow the legislative procedures partly explains their lesser focus on the legislative roles of MPs. The analysis of legislative performance might explain why constituency performance is more effective in shaping voter perceptions.

Political party affiliation

Given the multiparty dispensation in Uganda since 2006, political party affiliation is a force to reckon with in electoral success. Political parties play an essential role in structuring national political processes, contestations, competitive electoral politics and the nomination of political leaders (Ahikire 2009:1). As such, women MPs cultivate perceptions through strategic affiliation to a party. Women MPs affiliate with a party because of the party's ideology or popularity in the region or for both reasons. Some women had to strategically belong to a party accepted in the constituency even when they did not necessarily agree with the party's ideology. Belonging to a party cherished in a given constituency is an assurance of getting elected.

The popularity of a party in a given location termed the 'political wave', shapes voters' perceptions and consequently determines how they vote. This study found a positive relationship between party affiliation and women's success in elections; for example, Oyam district, part of Lango, where the Uganda Peoples' Congress (UPC) is popular, elected two women MPs on the UPC ticket. The UPC is a strong party in Lango because the party founder, the late Milton Obote, a two-time president of the Republic of Uganda, hails from the same region. Similarly, the Forum for Democratic Change (FDC) also enjoys considerable popularity in the selected districts, and at least three women MPs were members of the FDC.

The feeling of deprivation and the need to improve service delivery and livelihoods became critical motivations for the people of the North to support the opposition parties. The Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) resulted in social, economic, and political development discrimination in post-conflict Northern Uganda (Dixon 2021:35). After the post-conflict reconstruction, the North has remained among the poorest regions in Uganda, with high average poverty rates (32.5%), second only to 35.7 % in Eastern Uganda (UBOS 2019:3). Other social problems, such as high levels of teenage pregnancy, girl-child school dropout rates, and gender-based violence, also characterise the North region.

However, many candidates who belong to the opposition are presumed to have no agenda. Their opponents in the ruling party continue to perceive their success as resulting from luck, usually attributed to the political wave in a given region. For example, in the 2016 elections, the FDC party was popular in the Northern region, while in the 2021 elections, the People Power Party was famous in the country's central region. It is widely thought that party affiliation rather than candidates' merit drives electoral success. Nonetheless, an MP's electoral success in opposition signifies democracy since it reflects the electorate's choices, given that compared to the ruling party, they usually do not have the resources and the power to manipulate or even buy votes.

However, it is indisputable that some women and voters are driven by party ideology. The NRM's ideology of promoting peace and support for women's social, economic and political advancement is one reason for support by women, who constitute the majority of voters. Studies in Uganda established that MPs' loyalty to the ruling party and government influences voter perceptions of MPs (Goetz 2000:567; Clayton, Josefsson, & Wang 2016:281). The NRMs' introduction of affirmative action for women's political representation and the appointment of women as prime minister, vice president and speaker of Uganda's Parliament attests to the government's support for women. Women's inclusion is a landmark for women's political representation. NRMs' support of women's issues has earned the party women's support at the

grassroots. Therefore, women MPs who affiliate to the NRM party for its ideology on women's concerns are likely to get the votes of the believers of the NRM ideology. Majority of women politicians are noted to affiliate with the NRM party for its supposed commitment to women's rights and political inclusion (Ahikire 2009:4).

Women's interest in the NRM is explained, as well, by factors other than ideology; compared to other parties, the NRM has more political power and institutional capacity to implement policies such as those aimed at addressing women's concerns (Ahikire 2009:4). Women MPs' narratives revealed that under the NRM, it is easier to lobby the government for community development projects more effectively than MPs in the opposition. Projects such as the Functional Adult Learning (FAL) program for Pader, a seed school, rehabilitation of hospitals and construction of roads and markets result from MPs affiliating with the NRM party. Additionally, compared to other parties, the ruling party has well-established institutional structures and resources that can spread to its members' constituencies (FGD, Pader 2021). The benefits of affiliating to the ruling party are one way MPs in the NRM nurture positive perceptions relative to those in opposition. Voters believe that NRM MPs are closer to the government and, therefore, are at an advantage regarding service delivery and resource allocation.

However, the downside of MPs in the ruling party is their loyalty to the party over constituency interests. Where there is a conflict between constituency and party interests, women MPs choose party interests (O'Brien, Franceschet, Krook, & Piscopo 2012:62). For example, the majority of women MPs in the ruling party acted contrary to the position of their constituents by voting for the constitutional amendment bill 102(b) to lift the president's age limit to the presidency for perpetuity. Voter responses exposed that female MPs who crossed to the ruling NRM party and those holding ministerial positions voted yes for the bill against constituents' positions. 'One MP who joined the NRM party from the opposition became less assertive and representative of the people, voters argue that MPs must follow their father' (FGD, Oyam 2021). The findings exemplify party versus constituency loyalty, given the history of women's political recruitment and the patronage system of government. The MPs in the NRM party maintain loyalty to their party because of the benefits, such as political appointments. Women MPs try to avoid scrutiny by the government, especially if constituency issues do not align with their party priorities.

The loss of MPs' loyalty to constituencies associated with MPs in the ruling party is partly why some voters prefer MPs in the opposition. The opposition MPs tend to be more vocal in the legislature and represent constituency views and preferences. Furthermore, constituents support the opposition to portray their dissatisfaction with the ruling party's leadership and ideology and the hope that opposition leaders will change the status quo. Voters interested in seeing a change in the status quo tend to perceive MP contestants on an opposition party ticket positively.

On the contrary, some voters attribute the marginalisation of their constituencies to representatives in opposition parties. Voters argue that MPs in opposition do not have much privilege like the MPs in the ruling party to lobby the government for development. The other reason voters expose is attached to sabotage by MPs in opposition to the implementation of government programs. Every party wants to be seen as relevant, which sometimes results in positive or negative criticism of the ruling party. Usually, the criticism against the government and its programs results in tension between the government and the opposition. Some voters perceive criticism by the opposition as antagonistic and assume that their MPs going against government ideology and programs jeopardises the government's responsiveness to the needs of their community.

Women MPs campaign strategies

MPs use creative, impressive, persuasive campaign strategies to influence voter perceptions. They usually make promises to voters during campaigns that touch on the people's well-being. When promises align with voter expectations, they positively influence perceptions and the likelihood for the MP to be voted. One of the FGD participants declared that a woman MP who was serving her fourth term and on the open seat gave convincing speeches. It is vital to make voters believe

and accept that what the MP says is credible and will positively change their lives. A good campaign is what voters usually refer to when deciding who is a good representative; most of the time, they support convincing women who eloquently articulate their ideologies. Women MPs attest to the importance of effective campaigns in their electoral success. However, it has also turned out that MPs, not just women, make beautiful promises during their campaigns and never fulfil them. MPs' failure to fulfil promises in the previous elections influences perceptions about the MP in the forthcoming elections. Elections are a process of mandate giving that should be reciprocated by fulfilling an assignment once in office through policy programs and legislation that meet the electorate's needs (Dahlberg 2009:15).

To give good speeches, MPs do much consultation at the constituency level; this has an additional advantage in affecting voter perceptions. Voters feel that they matter and their opinions matter if they are consulted. Women MPs have highlighted their keen attention to their constituencies' needs and talked about them in campaigns and Parliament. Many women have gone ahead to lobby the government to address those issues, for example, wildlife concerns, water challenges, girl child education and sanitary pads.

Finally, women's dress code is an avenue that women use to affect perceptions about them among voters; how women dress and present themselves accords with assumptions about their credibility for political office. Women's sexualised appearance affects perceptions about women as representatives. Voters are likely to depict female candidates wearing revealing attire as incompetent, less honest and trustworthy, and less electable (Smith *et al.* 2018:1). Women have tried to affect perceptions by going to campaigns wearing the traditional long gown 'gomesi', thought to be a decent dress that denotes respect. One woman MP noted that when she first campaigned, she had to borrow a gomesi from her sister-in-law (Individual Interview, Oyam 2021). Also, Tamale (1999:95) found women to wear traditional attire to appeal to the electorate. It is common for women to assume a feminine appearance to appeal to voters on essential occasions.

Cultivating Perceptions through Community Networks

Women MPs cultivate perceptions through community networks by mobilising leaders and people at all administrative levels, from the parish to village, sub-county and district. Mobilisers are the voice of the MPs in the lower levels, connecting MPs and the voters; they share the political agendas of the women MPs and inform the MPs about the constituents' needs. Community networks keep the MPs present in the minds of the voters. In addition, FGDs revealed that women in reserved seats are likelier to engage the youth than women MPs in open seats; this style builds synergy among the voters and directly affects elections. Women use the youth because the youth appeal to fellow youth who are the majority of voters. The youth also happen to be very influential mobilisers known to the people who could speak well of the candidate.

Mobilisers are enthusiastic about their role because they hope that when their candidates make it, they will equally support them in seeking leadership opportunities. Tamale (1999:165) noted it as a two-way advantage; the mobilisers can use their political capital as a platform to win their seats at the local levels.

Conclusion

This study concluded that although all women MPs cultivate perceptions, women in reserved seats are better cultivators. Furthermore, women cultivate perceptions based on voter characteristics and the location of the voters; rural constituencies perceive good performance as the ability of the MP to meet their immediate needs and availability in the community. While for elite/urban voters, the legislative performance of MPs matters more. One reason for rural voters to be persuaded by MPs who meet their needs is the deprived conditions they find themselves in and the fact they are not well informed about the legislative roles of MPs. Women MPs, irrespective of their seats, capitalise

on community projects and the distribution of material items due to high levels of poverty afflicting communities, most of whom live in rural areas. Women MPs, hence, have cultivated perceptions based on what is essential for particular voters by meeting voter expectations. Thus, voter expectations condition the fundamental roles of representation, legislation and oversight. Meeting those expectations is the primary mode of cultivating the resource of positive voter perception.

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