



**REPORT OF LAUNCH OF THE UKRI-GCRF GENDER JUSTICE AND SECURITY HUB STUDY:
“BEYOND WAR COMPENSATION: GENDER JUSTICE, LIVELIHOODS AND RIGHTS IN
NORTHERN UGANDA”**



HELD AT ACHOLI INN, GULU ON FRIDAY 6TH SEPTEMBER 2019



GLOBAL CHALLENGES RESEARCH FUND

<http://chuss.mak.ac.ug/news/chuss-amani-institute-uganda-launch-collaborative-research-project-land-livelihoods-and-rights>

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Introduction

In his welcome remarks, Mr. Stephen Oola, the Director of Amani Institute welcomed participants and specifically acknowledged the presence of the Principal College of Humanities and Social Sciences, Makerere University. He noted that the research on land and livelihood was a very important milestone and a unique collaboration between Makerere University, College of Humanities and Social Sciences and Amani Institute which is based in Gulu. He thanked the participants for making time to attend the launch of the research project. The aim of the launch workshop was to unveil the research project and begin to engage with key stakeholders and selected target participants for deeper impact.

Background to the GCRF Gender Justice & Security Hub by Mr. Stephen Oola, Director Amani Institute Uganda



Mr. Oola gives the background to GCRF Gender Justice and Security Hub

Mr. Oola went on to note that the Global Challenges Research Fund, Gender Justice and Security Hub was a project that was borne out of discussions as an informal network way back in 2016 hosted by the London School of Economics. Through 2017 and 2018 the researchers had meetings in different parts of the world, including Colombia, Sri Lanka, Lebanon, Turkey and Uganda brain storming on some of the key relationship between issues of conflict, justice and development and what would be the creative responses these challenges that would be applied in some of these context. From these discussions, a joint proposal was developed and submitted to

United Kingdom Research and Innovation in their call under the Global Challenges Research Fund. Currently the research project is part of the 12 different Hubs with a number of universities, academia's, practitioner's civil society and local partners. In total this research is being conducted in 85 countries around the world on different issues within the Hub. In particular the Gender Justice and Security Hub is 5 year project working on what we call the overlap of SDGs and we are looking at goal 5 on gender equality, 16- Peace, Justice and Strong institutions as well as the implementation of the Women, Peace and Security agenda (WPS) of the UN. Our conceptualization of this research in particular is based on the acknowledgement that conflict and gender based violence often have devastating and long term

consequences to individuals, families and communities and severely hampers the successful delivery of humanitarian development goals.

In short, the hub seeks to advance sustainable peace by developing evidence based research around issues of gender, justice and inclusive security in conflict affected societies. The specific interest is on the intersection of gender, justice and security.

Key components within the gender, justice and security hub;

- 1) Transformations and empowerment
- 2) Land ,livelihoods and rights
- 3) Migration and displacement
- 4) Masculinity and sexuality as well as cross cutting elements including law and policy frameworks

Expected Impacts

1. Creation of new knowledge and advocacy networks that amplifies the voices of women and marginalized groups.
2. Local and global policy change in particular to SDG 5,16 and Women, Peace and Security agenda
3. We seek to influence institutional change and reform in the core countries between Uganda and more broadly to ensure inclusive security and justice as well as align to SDGs
4. Through this research there will be capacity building for some of the stakeholders we shall be engaging with in the course of this research and dissemination of the findings
5. Creation of new knowledge on research methods , good practices that will benefit the wider academic community

The ultimate end is to transform situations of gender insecurity and injustice for the groups that are rendered vulnerable by the pre-current practices and we hope that together with all of you we hope to achieve this at the end of the study.

Overview of the Research Project by Prof Josephine Ahikire



Prof Ahikire takes participants through the research process

Prof Ahikire in her remarks pointed out that the research ideas came as a result of the understanding that people from the greater North have tried to overcome some of the war sufferings. The project seeks to unravel new gendered realities of post-war conflicts associated with land acquisition in Northern Uganda.

The study also seeks to examine local justice mechanisms and how these can be harnessed to deal with some of the critical peace building gaps.

Hence, instead of documenting what has already been documented by many scholars, researchers and development practitioners from within and outside Uganda, the thought was the need to making a contribution of what continues to undermine the efforts towards social cohesion and lasting peace.

Prof Ahikire went on to note that that issues of land in a post war northern Uganda seem to create a continued different kind of war situation that puts several people at risk. She mentioned that though guns seem to have gone silent since 2007/8 another kind of war has commenced and that is around Land. While many of the people who had been displaced started to resettle with so many programs on reconstruction and compensation, social cohesion seems to continue to elude the region. Hence the research focuses on the fact that beyond compensation, the larger question should be about how a society returns to social cohesion? One of our concerns was about gender and social economic rights because most times when we talk about rights we think of rights to belong to a political party (civil and political rights which are easy to think about) but we said beyond that we need to think about social economic rights which constitutes social citizenship and how are women located in the trajectory of land in the post conflict setting?. Accordingly, the research seeks to document factors that underlie and continue to undermine social cohesion? Posed positively too, relates to “what local mechanisms of justice exist and what can be scaled up to address the apparent anxiety around land? How are women located in this situation? Much more importantly how are the local justice mechanisms able to help us answer these questions. The research will be asking questions such as what is it that can resolve some these

what we call retractable(Intractable) challenges, challenges that seem not to want to go away even when we have all these efforts by government, NGOs, cultural institutions, Local governments and everyday forms of organizing by people.

In addition, the research intends to look at the issues of how people relate the gender question. How people relate in regard to access to resources; how people relate in regard to how their land and livelihood entitlements are defined at the household level, community level and local government level. The research team is looking to a process where we are immersed to get conversations that have a collective understanding of what the challenges are but most importantly what alternatives exist what kind of bottom up mechanisms of dispute resolution/dispute prevention exist in the community and how the region (greater North) can set itself on to the path of substantive peace (Kuc).

On the research methodology, Ahikire informed the participants that the specific focus of the research was to make more engaging conversations with the communities, the spirit of it is that we didn't want to just go to one district, talk to a few people and then write a report which is also possible but we chose to cover a broad length we shall go to at least more than 3 districts in the region and thanked Amani Institute for the way in which it is connected, networked and able to connect and in this conversation through dialogues/conversations with cultural leaders we hope to get a collective analysis of what it is that can actually set us on the path of substantive peace. She further said that the study intends to document what ought to be done in a given tradition by talking to the different institutions and all that will be documented, used to catalyze another larger conversation that now we know what needs to be done and how do we move forward and it will be inform of manuals in at least two languages (English and Luo)

Another output of the research is to document women's agency in land rights claiming processes in this era. She hinted that already there are a few examples of how women have participated in community struggles for land rights. But the research intends to take the conversation forward in terms of how are women located in this land question in this period. Of course we acknowledge that at the moment the word land brings a lot of unanswered questions to the people and mere mentioning causes some people to develop goose pimples; some few think that guns will rise again; some fear their land will be taken and we want to ask- (this is not something for this region alone but across the country there are evictions, violent clashes on land) somebody is asking what is it that has changed?? The square miles of Uganda

has remained the same but we have increased in number but still it doesn't warrant war on land so we need to ask ourselves what is it that has changed and how do we get out of it. But for Northern region there is a much more consistent conflict that is simmering around land and that affects the livelihoods of the people (men/women) as Stephen mentioned. We want to see how those play out.

Another output after the research is to conduct training on transitional justice for stakeholders but that will be after we got all these ideas together across the districts, we shall not say this district should do ABC, we are going to see how does these questions help us to provide solutions that people can take and use in this situations.

In the process of the research we shall also have the opportunities to develop case studies of the good things happening that we are not documenting. In most cases we try to look at problems and sometimes we get blocked into problems and so we want to ask what is it that is working? Why? Who are the agents? Who are the critical agents of change in that which is working? And we would like to have a very interactive process over the next 3years and then the final 2 years will be in terms of training and crafting some outputs in terms of how we take these ideas forward.

Within the Global Research Fund initiative the idea is that if you do a comparative investigation, you look at what is happening in Northern Uganda, see what is happening in Columbia, Sierra Leone, Myanmar Lebanon, Sri Lanka. You are able to create some general observations that can also fit in the global conversation and is able to influence not just feed, put knowledge there but also influence how things are done and understood because sometimes we generalize issues about our situations especially for us Africans we generalize the fact that we are suffering, women are suffering but some of the things that work and we are doing that are addressing the livelihood challenges needs to inform the global conversation.

Ethical Considerations

As part of the research project, Prof Ahikire informed the participants that approval processes as required by legislation has already been completed. In addition, the research is guided by certain principles such as freedom to express oneself, freedom to withdraw consent and voluntary participation). And further emphasized that the research team ought to take good care to avoid re-traumatizing people; we are

guided by ethics that we have to be sensitive to peoples situations /pain (empathy that goes beyond is avoided) we are looking at engaging communities across these districts that is self-empowering and not empowerment from outside. We are also guided by the fact that we have to respect the rights to privacy of the people whether poor, rich, big or small respect for people's right to privacy across these districts is paramount. We would like you to take this message across for us. In summary, "we have invited you as our flag bearers in this process that we are beginning today on the community conversation around rights, gender justice and land rights in northern Uganda".

Finally, Ahikire said: "we hope that when we come to you, invite you, seek for information, advice, protection all these things will be available in you and your networks". We hope through this together and collective analysis we shall be able to come up with credible outputs and impacts". She thanked the participants and wished them fruitful deliberations.

Plenary discussion

In the plenary session, participants had a lot of contributions that were very enriching for the study as acknowledged by the researchers. The participants observed that the research has come in very timely considering what the region is undergoing in the process of return and resettlement. They are hopeful that the outcome of the study will bring positive transformation in the region. It was also noted that like Prof Josephine had said in her presentation that the research acknowledges that a lot of efforts is being done by the people, their leaders to overcome the sufferings caused by war but something seems to perpetually be undermining the return of social cohesion and also that some of the good practices may/have not be documented.

The Program Coordinator Acholi Cultural Foundation (ACF) had this to say "guns have gone silent, what is next for social cohesion? And made mention that Ker Kwaro Acholi in 2009 developed guidelines as the basic principal of managing cultural land and also noted that there is need for justice for former abducted girls because on return, they face a lot of challenges and this was further echoed by the Vice Chairperson LCV Amuru that there are a number of gender related injustices that affects women in the region. He made mentioned that land conflicts in the region has undermined the rights of girls and women in the region in that many girls that have returned from captivity have been rendered homeless because

everybody is fighting for land and this refusal to give girls that have returned from captivity land for themselves and their children greatly undermines their rights to land and livelihoods. The LCV Chairperson Pader shared his experience and had this to say “.....Today nobody listens to women!!! I have a typical example three days ago I was mediating a case where a woman who lost her husband about 1 month ago, pregnant and with 2 children being chased away by the relatives ...in the past such things never happened!..... What do you expect her to do?... women continue to suffer because of culture that has changed/been eroded”. It was hence acknowledged by all the participants that the culture of Acholi people has drastically changed from what it used to be before the war and has had very bad negative impacts on social relations/cohesion of the people.



Mr. Oringa LCV Chairperson Pader District

The issue of formerly abducted girls and their ordeals on return from captivity kept cropping up and raised a lot of debate on how the girls were suffering especially the rejection they face at family and community levels. It was observed by all the participants that formally abducted children especially the girl's face a lot of challenges than their male counter parts especially when they returned with children born in captivity who are not accepted by their families and communities and thereby leaving these girls as homeless. Some of these challenges include; stigmatization and rejection of their children by their parents. According to one participant, people are deviating from the cultural norms. Prof Ahikire posed a question that “... there are traditions where if a girl is not married and she produces a child, for instance there was never any form of marriage, that child is presumed to belong to the family of the girl and now the question is, is it the same here and if yes!, Why is it that children of formerly abducted girls are not presumed to belong to the families of their mothers? The response was that people are deviating from culture. One participant added that in his experience working with the girls, one said that *“my father has rejected me because I was forcefully taken”*... “In regard to this, many participants implored the researchers to dig deep into the reasons why people reject formally abducted children especially the girls and their children and what can be done to support these children to the extent that some participants suggested that government should provide shelter for this children who are homeless. Some participants referred to them as a new clan in Acholi, yet this would

have negative social implications but most importantly their land rights are undermined both for the mothers and children.

In reference to children born in captivity, it was noted by all participants that there is a growing number of children now living on the streets of the districts in the region and this is a security threat to the people. LCV Chairperson Pader had this to say: “These children we like it or not are a threat and they are already taking away our peace.....they steal, attack and are lethal and if this continues unabated we are faced with a generation of young people who are not manageable...” these children in the streets are mixed those born in captivity and have been rejected by their maternal relatives are now living in the streets ,majority of whom are boys and some of these boys are children who have been neglected by their parents and end up in the streets. These developing trends has negative impacts on the social cohesion of the people and needs to be addressed and this was further echoed by one participant who emphasized that the voices of children needs to be captured during the study so that their aspirations are documented for planning purposes.

Rwot Pagea in his submission appreciated the efforts by Amani and CHUSS and that the study is a good initiative that will help drive peace in the region. He further said that war can bring poverty but at the same time wealth and this he related it to the land disputes in the region caused by poverty. He further



Rwot Pagea Mzee Yusuf Adek

implored all the partners/researchers that for the study to contribute to the development of the region it has to depend on the truth and honesty but unfortunately these days getting an honest person in Uganda seem impossible. He also noted that to solve land problems in Uganda, laws needs to be followed/amended. But also echoed that in Uganda,laws no longer exists because some people are above the law for example the Apaa issue where he believes there has been a lot of dishonesty among the people involved. The issue of unity was raised if land disputes in Uganda are to be resolved for example between Acholi, Madi and Nyankole people.

During the discussions, especially coming from elders, they acknowledge that in the past women had rights to land literally one would own land through his wife/mother and people referred to land to belong

to a woman like “ngom pa min Adong” meaning the land belongs to the mother of Adong never the “wune” Which is the father, now it is something else. The Acholi culture respected/protected the rights of women to land in the past. Rwot also noted that land brought problems to the Acholi people many years ago starting from the colonial time and until now the Acholi people continue to suffer because of land.

All participants agreed that the Acholi culture has been eroded badly as a result living in the IDPs and this ultimately has affected the return to social cohesion. The LCV Chairperson -Pader noted that “living in the Internally Displaced Camps (IDPs) eroded the Acholi culture. Today nobody listens to women!!! Women continue to suffer because of the culture that has changed. Many abducted girls who returned with children born in captivity face a lot of challenges; parents do welcome their daughters back home from captivity but rejects their grandchildren, who do not know where their fathers....where do you expect these children to go? This kinds of rejections by parents further works to undermine the rights of these girls and their children to land which is the basic source of livelihoods. In reference to the eroded culture, young people were reported not to have respect for elders anymore (the young generation have no culture)

Land is a very volatile item in the region at the moment that the anxiety and the conflicts creates a lot tension as expressed by the participants. The Chairperson LCV Pader noted that land which they believed should have helped is not helping instead the future is getting darker because of the land conflicts in the area and yet the majority of the population is young over 50% of the Acholi people are below 18 years;3% elders;10% vulnerablethis is not a good sign” Rwot Pagea believes that if we are to solve the problems of land, there is need to have people with talent, commitments, truth and above all with knowledge of the law and he laments that unfortunately in Uganda people don’t follow the law and other people are more powerful, they change the laws the way they want and this cannot bring sustainable peace.

Participants acknowledged that the cultural institutions of Acholi Ker Kwaro is trying their best in carrying out on their mandates as custodians of culture and Acholi land but they face a lot of challenges such as resistance from their people whom they are supposed to lead and some of these has been attributed to the changing culture which has been influenced by the fact that people lived in the IDP camps for close to 20 years and majority of the youth today were born in the camps where they never interfaced with the

cultural leaders and therefore talking about chiefs (Rwot) does not make sense to them. In response to this, some of the participants suggested that there is need to appreciate and understand that culture is not static and therefore people should be open to change and adopt with what really works (we need to confront the realities of life instead of glorifying the past which will not repeat itself) to enable people have peace. In regard to this, participants suggested that there need to interrogate what is causing resistance to the cultural leaders because they are the custodians of social cohesion.

Participants also reflected on the work being done by other stakeholders in trying to bring about social cohesion to the community notably was the Acholi Religious Peace Initiative (ALPI) whom they commended for mediating in land conflicts and offering guidance and lasting solutions to land disputes in Acholi. ALPI also advocates and participates in mediating for the former abducted children especially girls and their children to be accepted by their families.

Compensation issues were raised during the plenary for the lost property and lives. One of the Chiefs alluded that government has to compensate them “we need compensation for our people who are lost” he lamented that “being a chief you can’t have only four people and worse of all people who have no resources because their resources have been taken and resourceful people have been killed”.

Key Emerging Issues

The key emerging issues from the plenary included;

1. Need to broaden the scope of transitional justice mechanisms and look at how we can situate the formal justice system into the informal justice system since the two go hand in hand.
2. Capture the voices of children in the research for planning and interventions that meet their needs in post conflict especially children born in captivity. (Over 50% of the population are below 18 years of age). The issue of children born in captivity invariably brings gender at the centre and needs to be adequately interrogated.
3. The research should focus on other factors not only the war but also the changing gender roles as a problem. Issues of masculinity should be examined.
4. Interrogate/analyze what is bringing a lot of resistance to the cultural leaders that undermines their authority on the people they are meant to lead and the return of social cohesion.

5. Examine the impact of interventions and also confront the realities of life today and adopt instead of glorifying the past.
6. Investigate why children born in captivity are being rejected in total disregard of the

Conclusion and Way forward

There were a number of issues raised during the plenary for consideration by the research team. Participants noted that the custodian of culture and social cohesion is the cultural institution Ker Kwaro of Acholi which apparently are facing a lot of resistance from their subjects. It was therefore recommended that the research should look at the points of resistance to the cultural institutions and make recommendations on how they can work together with the changing trend.

The researchers acknowledged the inputs made by the participants and promised to incorporate the rich ideas into the study tools notably Prof Ahikire promised to change the language used as recommended by Rwot Pagea The participants especially the district leaders and the cultural heads promised to give support to the research team during the study whenever called upon and where they can.

The participants expressed gratitude to the research team and thanked them for the efforts made to consider the region for the study and hoped it would contribute to identification of lasting solutions to the challenges undermining social cohesion.

Prof Ahikire and Mr. Oola thanked the participants and promised to work very closely with them so as achieve the desired impact.

Link to chuss website:

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