

# Recovery in Northern Uganda: How are people surviving post-conflict?

## Key messages

- Most households don't have the education level or jobs that will pull them out of poverty, improve wealth and assets or reduce food insecurity.
- Households that experienced serious crimes during the war are significantly worse off today than other war affected households.
- Livelihood and social protection services are rare and aren't targeted to those who need it most, in fact, these services often go to better off households.

The [Secure Livelihoods Research Consortium](http://www.securelivelihoods.org) (SLRC) is an eight-country<sup>1</sup>, six-year research programme funded by DFID, Irish Aid and EC investigating how people in places affected by conflict make a living and access key services such as healthcare, education and social protection. The SLRC Uganda team is lead by the Feinstein International Center, Tufts University, partnering with Overseas Development Institute, African Youth Initiative Uganda, and Women's Rural Development Network Uganda. The overall question guiding the research is: **"How are people surviving and recovering from conflict and what role does internal and external interventions play in supporting their recovery?"**

In 2012/13, the SLRC implemented the first round of an original sub-regional panel survey in Uganda, designed to produce information about:

- People's livelihoods (income-generating activities, asset portfolios, food security, constraining and enabling factors within the broader institutional and geographical context)
- Their access to basic services (education, health, water), social protection and livelihood services
- Their relationships with governance processes and practices (participation in public meetings, experience with grievance mechanisms, perceptions of major political actors); and
- The impact of serious crimes committed by parties to the LRA/GoU conflict on households' livelihoods, access to basic services and relationships with governance processes.

<sup>1</sup> Countries included in the study are Afghanistan, Democratic Republic of Congo, Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Sierra Leone, South Sudan and Uganda,

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Image credit: Rich Mallett

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## Methods

This briefing note presents the baseline findings emerging from statistical analysis of the first round of the Uganda survey data. We collected data from a survey sample of 1,887 households. The survey is statistically significant at the study level and representative of the Acholi and Lango sub-regions and at the local level (village and peri-urban center). Acholi and Lango are the two sub-regions most affected by armed conflict between the Government of Uganda (GoU) and Lord's Resistance Army (LRA), and home to approximately 3.63 million people. Fieldwork was conducted in January and February 2013 in 90 different survey locations (villages or peri-urban centers).

## Key Findings

### Which factors most influence households' livelihoods status?

A household's primary **type of livelihood activity** had the **greatest impact on the household's overall wealth and food security**. Those households whose primary livelihood was working for the government (3 percent of the entire population in Acholi and Lango subregions) or owning livestock (4 percent) had the greatest wealth and lowest food insecurity. Those engaged primarily in casual labour (2 percent) and own cultivation (81 percent), had among the worst food insecurity.

The variable that had the **second-largest impact on many of the main household outcome variables** (after primary livelihood activity) was **level of education of the household head**. Households whose head had **achieved O level or above** (27 percent of households) had greater wealth and food security; the higher the level of education, the better off the household. **Female household heads needed at least an A level** to show greater household wealth and food security; these made up 11 percent of all households with heads educated at A level or above. However, the majority of household heads (53.5 percent) in Acholi and Lango had not completed primary school, and consistently reported some of the worst household outcomes. Female-headed households made up almost one-quarter (24 percent) of the total households in the population. These **female-headed households reported significantly lower wealth** compared to male-headed households.

We also found that **post-conflict wealth and asset recovery requires far more time than popular narratives**

**suggest**, with no significant improvement in wealth and asset accumulation until a displaced household had been back in the village for at least ten years. Female-headed households start off further behind and even after ten years do not catch up with male-headed households.

The findings from our livelihoods analyses are stark: the **vast majority of households do not have the education level or primary livelihood occupation that will allow them a way out of poverty, a means to improve their wealth and assets and reduce their food insecurity**. This trend does not appear likely to be reversed any time soon. Current primary education graduate rates in northern Uganda are at 47 percent, and access to secondary school in northern Uganda remains extremely low (only 15 percent of villages). Furthermore, government and donor policies continue to encourage youth into agriculture-based livelihoods<sup>2</sup>, which our survey finds is a livelihood that keeps many households at the bottom of the economic order, with fewer assets and less wealth, and worse access to health and education services.

### Which factors influence people's access to and satisfaction with basic services, social protection, and livelihood assistance?

**Only a small proportion of households – 16 percent – reported receiving any form of livelihood assistance<sup>3</sup>** in the last three years, and half of these were seed distributions worth only a few dollars. Furthermore, over half of the receiving households reported no positive impact from the assistance. **Households that received livelihood services were significantly more likely to have better food security and greater wealth**, were significantly more likely to be **working in the private sector or for an NGO**, and had significantly more agricultural fields than those who did not receive services. There are two possible explanations for these results: either the services have had a positive impact on households' food security; or the targeting of services has been skewed (accidentally or deliberately) away from the households most in need of support to those already in better circumstances. Survey data and subsequent qualitative research point to the latter explanation.

**Slightly over 4 percent of households reported receiving social protection assistance<sup>4</sup>** in the last three years. However, one-third of all social protection transfers reported are one-time support. The near complete lack of social protection services is notable in a region recovering from over two decades of

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<sup>2</sup> International Youth Foundation (2011) Navigating challenges. Charting hope. A cross-sectoral analysis on youth in Uganda. Baltimore: International Youth Foundation ([www.iyfn.org/sites/default/files/YouthMap\\_Uganda\\_Vol1.pdf](http://www.iyfn.org/sites/default/files/YouthMap_Uganda_Vol1.pdf)).

<sup>3</sup> "Livelihood transfers" include: seeds, fertilizers, pesticide and tool distribution; agricultural extension services including training and marketing; seed money for revolving funds (savings and credit); non-agricultural services, including training and marketing; and any other project that helped the household with their livelihood. Social protection includes: free food or household items; school feeding programs; old age pension; feeding patients in hospitals; retirement pension; and any other money payment from the government or other organisations.

<sup>4</sup> Drawing from international law and the context of the GoU and LRA armed conflict, the following were categorized in our survey as experiences of serious crimes when they were perpetrated by parties to the conflict: destruction and/or looting of property; abduction; forced recruitment; forced disappearance; severe beating or torture; being deliberately set on fire; being a victim of and surviving a massacre; sexual abuse; returning with a child born due to rape; being forced to kill or seriously injure another person; being seriously wounded by a deliberate or indiscriminate attack; and suffering emotional distress that inhibits functionality due to experiencing or witnessing the above. These crimes were recorded if they were perpetrated by parties to armed conflict including government forces, militias, LRA rebels, or Karamojong raiders.

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armed conflict and receiving hundreds of millions of dollars of international recovery aid.

Overall, **basic health services**, and particularly **access to necessary health treatments, remain extremely weak** in Acholi and Lango sub-regions. The average travel time required of a household to reach basic health services was approximately two hours, with households in Lango traveling on average 30 minutes more than Acholi households. **Only one in eight people** across the two sub-regions reported that **they could access a health centre and that the treatments that they needed were available**, whereas almost half of all households reported that they “can access a health centre but the treatments we need are usually not available.” The situation was significantly worse in Lango sub-region.

**Households where members had suffered serious crimes during the war had significantly greater difficulties in accessing necessary health services, reporting more barriers to access from travel time, cost, and transport.** Also, the greater the number of serious crimes experienced, the worse the household’s present situation overall. They were also significantly more likely to live further from a water source and to be dissatisfied with their children’s education.

On average, households with school age children reported their children traveling slightly more than 50 minutes to reach school. Again, **the education level of the head of household was correlated with travel time – the higher the education level attained, the shorter the travel time.** Furthermore, **wealthier households had significantly shorter travel time to a school, and their children attended school more frequently.** Households that reported their children attending a school run by the private sector or an NGO were significantly more satisfied than households whose children attended a government-run school; however this population accounts for an extremely small proportion of the student population, as nearly all students went to government-run schools.

### **Which factors influence perceptions of local and central government?**

Overall, the **majority of respondents did not believe that either the local or central government decisions generally reflected their priorities.** While perceptions of both levels of government are overwhelmingly negative, perceptions of central government are comparatively worse. Even more troubling for the citizen/state relationship, 41 percent believed that local government decisions “never reflect their priorities,” and 19 percent believed that local government decisions “almost never reflect their priorities.” Additionally, 48 percent believed that central government decisions “never reflect their priorities” and 16 percent believed the central government

decisions “almost never reflect their priorities.”

Overall, **households that were less satisfied with their access to and quality of health care, education and water had more negative views of government**, while the small percentage of households that felt the quality and access were good generally had more positive views.

**Households that reported having access to community meetings and grievance mechanisms around services were significantly more likely to have a positive perception of local government.** While not all variables were significant in all of our regressions, those respondents who reported having been to a service-related community meeting, having access to an official way to lodge a complaint, or having been consulted in other ways generally had more positive perceptions of local government. This speaks to the important role of these mechanisms in building the citizen/state relationship at the local level.

### **What role do serious crimes play in people’s livelihoods, access to services and perceptions of governance?**

Our research provides the first representative figures on households’ experiences of serious violations of international humanitarian and human rights law for all of Acholi and Lango sub-regions, as well as the first large-scale representative analysis of the impact of serious crimes on people’s livelihoods, access to services and perceptions of governance in Uganda.

**The number of households and individuals that have experienced serious crimes is substantial**, including 55 percent of Acholi households (between 147,211 and 179,597 households) and 28 percent of Lango households (between 67,555 and 104,403 households). Our data show that between 903,108 and 1,184,001 individuals in Acholi and Lango sub-regions have experienced serious crimes and the majority experienced more than one serious crime.

To illustrate the magnitude of crimes, 14 percent of households had **members violently killed by parties to the conflict** (representing 67,747 to 99,941 people violently killed), while 13 percent of households had **members forcibly disappeared and never returned** (representing 63,826 to 99,180 people). Thus in total, the two sub-regions had **131,573 to 199,121 people violently killed, or disappeared and not returned.**

Our findings show that **experiencing serious crimes is significantly correlated with having worse food security, worse access to health care and water, and less satisfaction with education services.** Several of the serious crimes experienced within a household were also **significantly correlated with less wealth and negative perceptions of local and central**

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<sup>5</sup>The current population statistics for Acholi are based on the population of 1.17 million in the 2002 census, then extrapolated to account for yearly 3.57 percent population growth (see <http://www.indexmundi.com/g/g.aspx?c=ug&v=24>) to reach a 2012 estimated population of 1,502,451. For Lango, the population estimate in the 2002 census was 1.5 million, extrapolated to reach a 2012 estimated population of 2.13 million. The error of estimation is approximately 1% in each direction with a probability of .95. Rather than present the median figure, we present the range of the estimated total affected population.

**government.** Importantly, in all of these areas, **the greater the number of serious crimes a household experienced**, the worse off the household. Our findings also show that households that experienced serious crimes are no more likely to receive livelihood or social protection services than other war-affected households whose members did not experience serious crimes (who are also extremely unlikely to receive such support). In other words, livelihood and social protection services – if they exist – are not being targeted to those who need it most.

**Ten percent of the population of Acholi and Lango are war-wounded** (defined as physical, psychological or emotional injury that impairs functionality), with people in Acholi significantly more likely to be injured. Households that have war-wounded members are significantly more likely to be female-headed, older, poorer and have very low levels of education. **Furthermore, war-wounded households are significantly more likely than households with no war wounded to have suffered serious crimes, have lower wealth, fewer assets, food insecurity, to employ more coping strategies, and have a less diversified livelihood portfolio.** The more serious crimes a household experienced, the significantly more likely that the household has members with war-related injuries which impair their ability to work. The vast majority have not received effective treatment for their injuries.

## Conclusions and implications

**The vast majority of households in northern Uganda do not have access to the education or primary livelihood activity most likely to support them to move out of poverty and improve their wealth, assets and food security.** Less than half the population graduates from primary school, yet what is needed is secondary and post-secondary education levels. The vast majority are far more likely to pursue agriculture as their primary livelihood activity, and are in fact encouraged to do so by donor and GoU policies, despite the fact that our study finds that **agriculture is strongly correlated to the worst livelihood outcomes for households in the north.**

**The livelihood activities that are correlated with better outcomes for households** – working for the government or an NGO, or owning one's own business – are **available only to a very select few**, and it is those households that seem to be receiving the limited livelihood and social protection assistance that is available. We find that **policy emphasis on targeting the most "viable" households has put others without those resources and connections at a distinct disadvantage.** In the meantime, the worst-off households, including those headed by single females, and those with members who have suffered serious crimes, sexual violence, and/or ongoing war-related injuries that impair their ability to function, **receive little or no targeted support.**

The implications of these findings on **statebuilding policy** are significant. **The oft-presumed link between access to services and citizens' belief in the legitimacy of the state is not substantiated** by our findings, perhaps because most people believe such services to be a basic right, not a privilege

for which to be grateful. We find the citizen-state relationship is very weak in the north overall. Given that the approach of the government to addressing local needs has thus far been focused mainly on generalized economic development – which has yet to result in any notable improvement in the lives and livelihoods of the vast majority of the people in the two sub-regions – it is unsurprising that most respondents felt their priorities were not reflected in government policymaking.

Our findings on **serious crimes** clearly show that significant proportions of households have been affected by such crimes, including having members violently killed (14 percent) or forcibly disappeared and never returned (13 percent). Overall, 55 percent of Acholi and 28 percent of Lango households had been affected by at least one type of serious crime, and that experience was significantly correlated with those households' having worse access to basic services and livelihood outcomes, and more negative views of basic services and government. Moreover, the experience of multiple crimes has a compounding effect on household outcomes. Yet these households are no more likely to receive services or livelihood/social protection services than others.

## Further resources:

**Report:** Surveying livelihoods, service delivery and Governance: Baseline evidence from Uganda: [http://www.securelivelihoods.org/publications\\_details.aspx?ResourceID=295](http://www.securelivelihoods.org/publications_details.aspx?ResourceID=295)

**Briefing Paper:** The impact of serious crimes during the war on households today in Northern Uganda: [http://www.securelivelihoods.org/publications\\_details.aspx?resourceid=298](http://www.securelivelihoods.org/publications_details.aspx?resourceid=298)

**Briefing Paper:** The war-wounded and recovery in Northern Uganda: [http://www.securelivelihoods.org/publications\\_details.aspx?resourceid=299](http://www.securelivelihoods.org/publications_details.aspx?resourceid=299)

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