

Community Driven Empowerment and Social Status of Women: Evidence from a field experiment in Uganda

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1 Introduction

1.1 Motivation

Africa has 22% of the total world Agricultural Land in the world¹ from which more than 90% of it is unregistered and informally managed. This makes it very susceptible to land grabbing, conflicts and inappropriate expropriation. This has even bigger implications for women. Under customary law, women usually have usage rights of the land through the right given by the husband or a male relative. This relationship is extremely fragile, and often disappears when the husband or the relative dies or in the case of a divorce or family conflict. The informal character of these agreements lead to a problem of high tenure insecurity, especially in women. This causes women in Sub-Saharan Africa to own a 15% of the land they cultivate².

It has also been argued that this insecurity leads to underinvestment on agricultural goods that leads to low yields (Goldstein and Udry, 2008). Since property rights are not well defined both men and women invest less in the land since they have to dedicate more resources to guard the land (Besley and Ghatak, 2010; Goldstein and Udry, 2008) or because the maximization of future value of the land takes into account the risk of expropriation or grabbing (Besley, 1995; Banerjee et al., 2002).

Many programs have tried to increase land tenure security by creating costly and long programs demarcating agricultural land and formalizing titles in developing countries. These programs tend to be run by big international organizations that partner with the Ministry of Land to implement. The World Bank estimates that, on average, the registration process in Sub-Saharan Africa takes six steps, 120 days to complete and costs about nine percent of the total property value³.

This study proposes to implement and rigorously evaluate the impact of an innovative program that reduces the cost and increases efficiency of this kind of interventions to strength weak property rights, on the investment in common as well as agricultural goods. The proposed mechanism underlying is with the idea that Social Identity, or social status, of an individual in the community affects the degree of involvement in community issues. This study aims to empower individuals in the community and, by affecting their social utility function, increase their investment in Public Goods.

1.2 Context

In many countries in Sub-Saharan Africa there exist two kind of property rights, freehold and customary. While freehold is the more formal way of property of land, as we mentioned before, most land owned is ruled by the customary system. Within this system, many countries reflect the right of usage as well as the ownership of the land.

In Uganda, statutory law gives equal rights of ownership across gender, being one of the countries internationally recognized for its attempts to close gaps in terms of unequal use, access and ownership of land. These attempts are reflected in the Constitution and legislation⁴, but still remain a pending issue in terms of implementation in many parts of the country. In 1995, The Federation of Women Lawyers (FIDA), had a 40% of cases related to property rights violation to widows (Bikaako & Ssenkumba, 2003: 250).

In Northern Uganda, women do not have land rights independently. Under customary tenure, until women are married, the responsibility of women's land rights remains in the family where she was born, being transferred to the family of the husband when she marries. In case of death she can choose to stay in her husband's land or return to her family's, while in case of divorce the latest holds. In case of conflicts or rights violations, the woman has the right to appeal to the local clan leader which will intervene to solve the conflict. After twenty years of conflict in this region⁵, local leaders, communities and families have seen their relationships and cultural roots modified and eroded.

¹World Bank Data

²Oxfam International

³Doing Business 2014 Report

⁴Reforms in Constitution (1995) and Land Act (1998)

⁵For details, see <http://www.saferworld.org.uk/resources/view-resource/762-northern-uganda-conflict-analysis>

Yet, under the Domestic Relations Law, there is equal distribution of property in event of divorce, and, furthermore, under the National Land Policy, women and kids are protected relative to usage and ownership rights in case of death of the husband. However, only 10 percent of the population in northern Uganda had knowledge of the Land Act⁶.

This study proposes, with an innovative, more decentralized and community driven approach, empowering the community by informing their members of the law of property under statutory system. Because we acknowledge the importance of the law enforcement, that in this context relies on the local leaders, the program includes a training program for them. This research also aims to understand the effect that strengthen of land rights has in empowerment by raised their social status in the community.

1.3 Research Question

Specifically, I would like to answer the following questions:

1. Does a Community Driven Development program strengthen land tenure security for the community members, and especially for the least favored members of it?
2. Does providing information about the law and encouraging local leaders to implement it empower individuals, increasing their social status in the community?
3. Does this empowerment lead to more cooperative behavior?

2 Literature Review

Many studies have theoretically and empirically argued that clearly specified and enforced property rights boost economic development (Acemoglu, Johnson, & Robinson, 2004; De Soto, 2000; Libecap, 2003; Norton, 2000). Trying to solve the problem of weak land tenure rights and the small percentage of land owned by women, many programs have demarcated and given titles to individuals all around the world. While in some parts of the world land titling programs have worked both in rural and urban settings (Deininger and Feder, 2009), in Africa they have not been so successful (Jacoby and Minten, 2007). Some of reason could be the lack the understanding of the informal, customary systems that are predominant in this region, the complexity of the process in these countries, or the lack of decentralized institutions (Teyssier and Selod, 2012). Even though this kind of programs have been widely implemented, very little rigorous evaluation has been done. There is also very little rigorous evidence on the gender effects these programs have. Ali et al. found that, in Rwanda, female farmers invested on soil conservation twice as much as the male farmers did (Ali et al., 2014).

One of the first attempts to measure the effect of land demarcation and formalization of rights and of gender effects rigorously was made in Benin (Goldstein et al., 2015). The authors evaluate the impact of the program (implemented in two phases) using a Randomized Control Trial (RCT). The first one consists on the demarcation of the land and the second on a decentralized formal title process. Thus, they are able to disentangle the effect of a customary community driven demarcation and the more formal process. They found evidence of investment by female-headed households on soil conservation compared to male-headed households.

While this program used a Community Driven Program that demarcated the parcels in the village, the outcomes collected are only at individual level. To the best of my knowledge there has been no study until the date that has tried to see the impact of increasing land tenure security on community outcomes such as social status and investment in PG. Our study is the first to study the effect of a Community Driven

⁶World Bank, Uganda Post-Conflict Land Policy and Administration Options: The Case of Northern Uganda, Report No: 46110-UG, May 2009, p. 12

Development Program, aiming to strengthen land rights, using customary law, that studies community as well as individual behavior. We would like to know if securing land rights people feel more empowered in the community and raise their social status, as some studies have suggested (Bardhan, 1988). This effect is identified by randomly assigning the program by communities, trying to eliminate all the endogenous factors associated to changes in land rights like parcel and household characteristics (Besley, 1995).

This context also gives an ideal setting to measure, if the empowerment leads to any change in cooperative behavior in the community. If, by increasing security on the property rights, individuals feel more empowered, their social status will raise in the community. By raising their status in the society, individuals increase their utility, that is a function of consumption of goods and services and identity or self image. This identity or self-image is, at the same time, formed of three other elements: assigned social categories, ideal characteristics of that category and the deviation from that ideal. "The social status of a category is given by the function of the identity, and a person assigned a category with higher social status may enjoy an enhanced self-image" (Akerlof and Kranton, 2000). This increase in utility will make feasible some of the previously unfeasible consumption choices, including Public Goods.

This study makes several contributions to literature: 1) being the first study that measures outcomes at both individual and community level; 2) working with the customary law at community level; and 3) conducting a rigorous experiment to identify the effects. As a secondary purpose it tries to identify a mechanism and measure cooperative behavior as a possible outcome.

3 Methodology

3.1 Survey and sampling framework

In order to answer all the questions rigorously, I will conduct a Randomized Control Trial (RCT) in the North region of Uganda. The districts targeted for the intervention are Gulu, Pader, Agago and Kitgum, all of them affected by the conflict between the LRA (Lord's Resistance Army) and several countries in East Africa (Uganda, South Sudan, DR Congo and Central African Republic). See Figure 1 in Appendix.

The intervention will be done at community level, so the assignment to treatment will be done at village level. A pilot will be conducted and power analysis will be based on a detectable impact obtained from this study. From the total number of communities calculated, with 10 households surveyed in each of the communities. A first stage randomization will be done to select the communities, stratified at district level, so same number of communities are selected in each district and assigned to one of the four treatments. After the randomization of the villages into treatments, in each village 10 households will be randomly selected in each of the communities to be surveyed. The households should own land to be eligible for the study. Both female and male headed households are eligible, as well as monogamous and polygamous families.

The randomization of the communities is done with information from the district offices and the household level one using data collected in a census with the local leaders and other community leaders. All randomization is done with replacement in case the community or household is not eligible or refuses to participate in the study.

3.2 Experimental Design

Intervention will be done at community level. The goal of the treatment is to strengthen property rights and land tenure security. This is done by working with the communities with a Community-Driven approach, specially targeting women. In order to answer the research questions posed before, there will be three different levels of collection of data:

1. Individual level data: it will be collected in a baseline and endline survey, in order to measure the level of perception of security over their land. It will also collect other outcomes related to participation in

the community, political or leadership positions, land conflicts, inheritance, basic agriculture investment and other socio economic indicators. These outcomes aim to measure the perception on security over their land to test if the program actually increased the perception of security.

2. Community outcomes: they will be collected by Structure Community Meeting (SCM) approach (Casey et al. 2011). In baseline only SCM (b) will be played while in endline communities will be asked to gather to participate in the three types of SCMs.
 - (a) Communities will need to cooperate to raise funds in response to a matching grant opportunity. This SCM aims to measure collective behavior, so amount of funds will be evaluated and compared between treatment and control communities.
 - (b) Communities will be asked to make a community decision between two comparable alternatives. A member of the research team will take annotations of the behavior of members in these meetings; number of meetings talked, number of motions raised, number of opinions raised... This SCM wants to capture the change in the social behavior and capture the social status change.
 - (c) Communities will be asked to allocate and manage an asset that was provided for free, where only if the community agrees the good will be provided. Same as in (b) plus also wants to measure cooperation between members in the community.
3. Behavioral games: in order to explore the mechanism of social identity and its effect on cooperative behavior, we will play a Public Good game in the endline. Community members will be asked to play and will compare the contributions between treated and control villages. This aims to measure cooperative behavior, expecting higher contributions from the treated villages, especially in those members that feel more empowered. Data will be collected at individual level.

The proposed treatment administrated to the selected villages is an intense community intervention. Community meetings will be held in the villages with all (or majority) of individuals to inform them about the land property rights and open discussions and interventions. Also information sessions will be held at the public primary school, giving information to girls and boys about property rights. Real cases will be rolled played in front of the community members. Flyers and posters will be distributed to the participants in the meetings.

The treatment will also involve the community clan leaders and other community leaders that will take part on the community meetings. Apart from this, they will be invited to a training at district level to receive information and sensitization about property rights and women. They will also be trained with conflict resolution tools and tips. See Figure 2 in the Appendix for more detailed timeline of the activities.

3.3 Estimation Strategy

The treatment is based on the assumptions that individuals in the community, and especially women, don't have information about the rights they have regarding land tenure and usage. It also relies on the assumption that this makes individuals underinvest in common and private goods and that the mechanism in place is social identity and status, that they attained with strength in property rights. An additional assumption is that empowerment might not be enough to solve the situation, and proper enforcement context, related to training of leaders is necessary to achieve the goal of strengthen land tenure security for a sustained community development. See a simplified Theory of change in Figure 3 in the Appendix.

After cleaning the data collected in the field (correcting obvious errors, checking for outliers, calculating attrition rates, calculating compliance rates and plotting and describing the data), the analysis starts. Treatment effect will be estimated using a simple OLS, difference in difference model, relaying on the nature of the experiment. Depending if we are estimating the effects on the community or on the individual outcomes, data will be at that specific level.

$$Y_i = \alpha + \beta T_i + \theta X_i + \gamma + \varepsilon_i$$

The β coefficient measure the average effect given access to the program at community level. This effect is probably relevant in our case, since not all women will own land or have situations relevant to the information given. The variable T_i is a dummy indicating treatment or control. We also include a vector of controls, X_i , in case we decide to control for some relevant characteristic (maybe unbalanced in baseline). It also includes villages fixed effects, γ . In case of attrition or partial compliance we would do further analysis and adjust for its characteristics.

4 Concluding remarks and policy relevance

This study proposes to implement and rigorously evaluate the impact of an innovative program that reduces the cost and increases efficiency of this kind of interventions to strength weak property rights, on the investment in common as well as agricultural goods. The proposed mechanism underlying is with the idea that Social Identity, or social status, of an individual in the community affects the degree of involvement in community issues. This study aims to empower individuals in the community and, by affecting their social utility function, increase their investment in Public Goods. To the best of my knowledge there has been no study until the date that has tried to see the impact of increasing land tenure security on community outcomes such as social status and investment in PG.

Our study is the first to study the effect of a Community Driven Development Program, aiming to strengthen land rights, using customary law, that studies community as well as individual behavior. This effect is identified by randomly assigning the program by communities, trying to eliminate all the endogenous factors associated to changes in land rights like parcel and household characteristics.

Detectable effects at community level might be hard to capture in such a short term span of time between the treatment administration and the endline data collection, since the channel in which we expect them to work is the empowerment, that might need some time to influence behavior on individuals in the community.

It is arguable if the best way to increase land tenure security is enforcing the existing law (even coming from a community intervention). An alternative way would be to change social norms at community level, and especially at village leader level. This opens an exciting new field of innovation and research to understand how to change behavior of the people enforcing the rights at community level.

Regarding implementation, this study would be a challenging one from the point of view of community meeting administrators and data collection. Enumerators will need to have a long training in which all the details of the project are explained.

The policy implications of this program could be very big, thinking about the significant reduction on cost and time of implementation of big demarcation programs. Governments could work on strengthen the property rights by working in the communities from a bottom-up approach and training their leaders to enforce the existing law.

Women would see their property rights secured, changing from a position of working the land to a position where they can actually decide on the land they cultivate. This could have effects on investment on the agricultural land and potentially strength their position in the community as well. Women becoming more active in decision-making in the community and being involved in political activities is also beneficial to represent the preferences of women. Empowerment is still a complex mechanism that we aim to explain and understand better.

Cooperative behavior is a key component of community relationships, that would increase the community welfare. Many researchers and implementing organizations have tried to boost cooperative behavior through community interventions and we propose a channel that has not been explored yet and that is very cost effective and easily scaled up.

Appendix

Figure 1: map of North Uganda



Figure 2: Activities Timeline

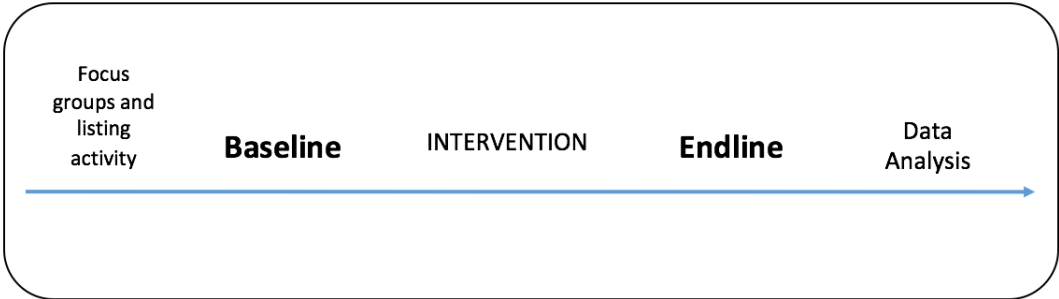


Figure 3: Theory of Change - simplified

Theory of change - simplified				
Need	Input	Output	Outcome	Impact
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Underinvestment in community goods: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Low accountability Low quality public service delivery Low political representation (especially women) Lack awareness of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Property rights Rights inheritance Conflict solving rights Conflicts and weak tenure security <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Land conflicts between families Corruption Inappropriate expropriation Land grabbing Underinvestment in private goods <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Low investment agricultural goods and infrastructure Low yields 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Information provided on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Land rights Inheritance and marriage rights Tools on conflict resolution and legal tutoring Motivation: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discussion and meetings Encouragement of action at community level Training held for community leaders on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Property rights Tools on conflict resolution 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase knowledge of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Land property rights Inheritance rights Accountability tools Increase community involvement of all individuals in the village Increase the knowledge of the leaders of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conflict solving Property rights 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase empowerment women community Increase Informal political participation Strengthen land tenure security Increase community participation (more investment public goods) 	<p>Sustained Community Development</p>

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