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LADDER Working Paper No.10

February 2002

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This working paper represents work-in-progress and the reader is advised that it has not been subjected to academic quality control, nor edited for errors of fact or interpretation. The paper forms part of a mosaic of research findings that will contribute towards an overall picture of rural livelihoods and micro-macro links to poverty policies in the case-study countries. The findings and views expressed here are solely the responsibility of the authors and are not attributable to DFID.

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Summary

This paper seeks to contribute a gender perspective to the analysis of rural livelihoods in three Uganda districts, focusing specifically on how gender-related constraints influence the livelihood options of male- and female-headed households variously. The general picture emerging from this review is that the livelihood portfolios in Mbale, Kamuli and Mubende districts vary substantially between male- and female-headed households, and among men and women. In all three districts, household assets and endowments, which are important determinants of household income, are strongly differentiated between male- and female-headed households, with the latter consistently disadvantaged relative to their male counterparts. Evidence also suggests that households are diversifying away from farming due to land and capital constraints that make reliance on agriculture as a sole income source less viable. However, the potential for, and benefits of, diversification are contingent upon the nature of household headship, as well as upon the kinds of off-farm activities in which households are likely to engage.

While the Ugandan government has implemented a far-reaching approach to gender policy, FHHs face a number of de facto constraints that circumscribe their capacity to expand and/or diversify their livelihood portfolios. These include gender specific constraints such as unequal gender divisions of labour, gender intensified constraints such as asymmetries in land rights and financial capital, and gender imposed constraints such as discrepancies in the provision of credit. The paper argues that while certain constraints pose more serious challenges for the livelihood security of FHHs than others, changing the way gender relations are materially expressed will require long-term commitment to realise the government's objectives of gender equity.

1. Introduction

There is now a sizeable body of literature documenting the complexity of rural livelihoods in developing countries.¹ These studies recognise that households seldom specialise in one income-earning activity but rather are sustained through myriad strategies of income generation and labour allocation. In Uganda, specifically, households have grown ever more dependent on a broad range of economic undertakings, including agriculture, petty trade, and wage employment.

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¹ See Ellis, 1998, 2000; Carney, 1998; Singh and Gilman, 1999; Gonzalez de la Rocha, 2000; Chambers, 1983; Chambers and Conway, 1992; and Scoones, 1998.

While the multidimensionality of rural livelihoods is now taken for granted, the role that gender plays in enabling or disabling these livelihood choices has received relatively little attention. Yet a number of well known gender-related constraints circumscribe the extent to which households are willing, or able, to increase their output. For example, livelihood choices can be compromised by gender differences in reproductive responsibilities and access to productive resources (land, capital, labour), as well as gender biases in marketing systems and infrastructure (Baden, 1998). Female household heads, in particular, face distinct constraints based on their unique position in the household including their often sole responsibility for income generation and reproductive work, and higher dependency burden than their male-headed counterparts (Rosenhouse, 1989). While some of these constraints can be difficult to overcome (e.g. cultural and religious norms), others have greater potential to be addressed through policy measures. Gender-specific information, therefore, might be helpful in formulating a more appropriate policy response by addressing the specific obstacles that female-headed households (FHHs), and women in particular, face in expanding and diversifying their livelihood activities.

This paper seeks to contribute a gender perspective to the analysis of rural livelihoods in three Uganda districts, focusing specifically on how gender-related constraints influence the livelihood options of male and female-headed households variously. The paper is structured as follows. Section 2 discusses why the gender composition of households is important to an analysis of rural livelihoods, and why gender identities present different opportunities and constraints for livelihood diversification. Section 3 provides an overview of the composition of female and male-headed households (MHHs), and presents data on the assets and entitlements with which those livelihoods are constructed. Section 4 outlines the main features of district livelihood portfolios, examining how participation in particular economic undertakings is conditioned by household headship. Section 5 presents the main constraints identified by FHHs, and discusses the extent to which they may or may not be amenable to policy measures.

2. Gender and Rural Livelihoods

Livelihood strategies are shaped by a broad range of economic, political, and social factors, and vary markedly between economic necessity (responding to shocks, vulnerability and poverty) on the one hand and choice (as a way to further investment, savings and accumulation) on the other (Kabeer and Ang, 2000).² However, while livelihood options are mediated by a number of external factors, they are also conditioned by the composition and internal dynamics of households. Individuals are not simply isolated, independent actors but are embedded in broader systems of household economic activity and undertakings (Newman and Canagarajah, 2000:8). As several anthropologists have shown, household relations, which are comprised of mutuality and dependence as well as authority and control, often circumscribe opportunities for social and economic well-being (Moore, 1988; Guyer, 1980,1988; Whitehead, 1981). For example, it is within the household that social divisions such as gender and kinship operationalise systems of labour obligation, resource allocation and income distribution giving rise to well-documented inequities. For women, in particular, the position they occupy within household and kinship systems often directly determines their

² Various external factors -- resource endowments, accessibility to markets, and the capacity to mobilise social networks -- differentiate local circumstances and structure the nature, form and extent that diversification will play in household livelihood strategies (Ellis, 2000; Whitehead, 2001; Kabeer and Tran Thi Van Anh, 2000; Hussein and Nelson, 1998).

capacity to access and mobilise resources and hence the types of livelihood opportunities that are open to them.

From a gender perspective, the fact that households are differentiated by individuals with varying degrees of agency, entitlement and mobility, needs to be central to any analysis of livelihood diversification. Poverty and economic change not only impose unequal costs and burdens on household members (Beneria and Feldman, 1982), but gender identities also visibly shape the options and rights individuals possess. However, the gender of the household member not only shapes access to particular livelihood opportunities but also the way in which social norms are expressed materially. For example, local conceptions of gender rights and responsibilities (men's work/women's work, men's expenses/women's expenses) will frame the possibilities for engaging in any number of economic undertakings. As a result, the potential to exploit a particular asset or capitalise on a livelihood option is as much governed by the social meanings attached to particular tasks (men plough, women plant) and modes of income generation (men's export crops, women's domestic crops) as to the individual bearer of gender. Hence, identifying the nature of gender relations not only provides a clearer picture of intrahousehold obligations and exchanges, but also shows us how livelihood strategies are negotiated, structured and legitimated through broader ideological processes.

Yet despite the key role that gender plays in facilitating or inhibiting the pursuit of particular livelihood options, it has received comparatively little attention in the literature on sustainable livelihoods. While several academic studies have documented the linkages between agrarian change and gender relations (Carney, 1992; Francis, 1998; Kabeer and Tran Thi Van Anh, 2000; Mackenzie, 1990), few have examined how gender relations both constitute and are constituted by household livelihood strategies. Policy makers themselves have tended to dodge gender dynamics. They either assume that households, whether male or female-headed, respond to economic incentives corporately (Warner and Campbell, 2001), or reduce women's contribution to household livelihoods as "survival" strategies in a context of growing poverty and economic vulnerability (Kabeer and Tran Thi Van Anh, 2000).³

One way of gauging gender differences in poverty levels and livelihood options is to compare the circumstances of female- and male-headed households. Over the last decade a wide range of studies⁴ have wrestled with the question of whether female-headed households (FHHs) are disproportionately represented among the poor, and subsequently, whether the category of "female headship" is an appropriate tool for targeting policy interventions. While these studies have yielded inconsistent conclusions, pointing to the tenuous and highly contextual nature of the relationship between female headship and poverty, headship nevertheless remains a useful tool for understanding how gender identity might condition the capabilities, entitlements and subsequent opportunities of households. Households headed by women, for example, are typically endowed with varying amounts and types of resources and capabilities that equip them to respond to change and opportunities differently. As a result, headship can provide a useful analytical device to identify how households adapt in the face of

³ See Hussein and Nelson (1998)

⁴ See Appelton (1996), Buvinic and Gupta (1997) Bruce and Lloyd (1997), Chant (1997), Handa (1994) and Fuwa (2000).

vulnerability, and how, more specifically, gender creates variation in the options for diversification,⁵ mobility and investment.

3. District Descriptions

This paper is based on quantitative and qualitative research undertaken to examine the gender dimensions of rural livelihoods in three districts in central and eastern Uganda: Mubende, Kamuli and Mbale.⁶ These districts were selected to capture the range of livelihood patterns represented including farming (crop and livestock production), off-farm, and fisheries-based activities (see Table 1). While Mubende, Kamuli and Mbale are generally classified as belonging to the montane, banana/finger millet/cotton, and banana/coffee farming systems respectively, there is considerable variability between and within districts. For example, Mubende district, which represents the typical banana/coffee production systems, is located in the Central Region, approximately 160 kilometres to the west of Kampala. The more remote areas of the district are relatively land abundant due to the depopulations arising from years of civil war.

In contrast, Mbale district, which belongs to the coffee/cotton/maize production system, is an area of extreme land shortages. Lying on the slopes of Mt Elgon (4,321m) and some 250 miles from Kampala, the district is extremely densely populated, with an average population density⁷ more than three times the national average. Land scarcity is a significant factor underlying the choice of livelihoods in the region as the viability of farming diminishes for successive generations.

Finally, Kamuli district, bordering Lake Kyoga in the North, is based on the maize, millet and root crop farming systems, with considerable reliance on livestock grazing in some areas. While agriculture is the mainstay of economic activity, the district is distinguished from Mbale and Mubende by the importance of fishing to community livelihood strategies. This is particularly important from a gender perspective as there is considerable seasonal migration of fishermen, resulting in a high number of *de facto* female household heads in the area.

⁵ While the relationship between female headship and poverty varies widely, evidence suggests a positive association between poverty and the extent to which households are sustained through female earnings (Buvinic and Gupta, 1997, Chant, 1997).

⁶ Three villages were selected in each of the three districts, with a sample size of 35 households for each village. A series of PRA and wealth ranking activities were undertaken to ensure that the households drawn from each village represented, as broadly as possible, the full range of livelihood activities.

⁷ Average population density is 284 persons per sq km (James, Francis, and Turiho-Habwe, 2001).

Table 1: Main Livelihood Features of Sample Districts

	Mbale	Mubende	Kamuli
Crop Production	Banana, maize, beans, sweet potatoes, coffee Maize, beans, bananas, cotton, sweet potatoes and millet, horticulture	Bananas, maize, beans, Irish potatoes, ground-nuts, cassava, sweet potatoes, coffee	Maize, sweet potatoes, cassava, finger millet and cotton
Livestock and Fish	Dairy cattle, pigs, goats, chickens	Cattle (milk and meat), chickens and goats	Cattle (meat), goats, chickens and ducks, Nile Perch, <i>mukene</i> , Tilapia, Lung fish
Off- Farm	Sale of labour, petty trade (produce vending, brewing, bicycle transport, brick making, brewing, shop keeping)	Sale of labour (farm), petty trade (produce vending, trading banana juice, charcoal, mats, handicrafts, beer, porridge, snacks, brick making, clothes vending), food processing, shop keeping, transport, construction, government employment, tailoring, hunting	Fish trading, fish carrying, sale of labour, transport (bicycles and boats) shop keeping, firewood, brewing

Source: Qualitative research conducted in 9 Uganda villages in Jan-April 2001

4. Household Portfolios

In Uganda, the circumstances under which women become household heads, and the options and constraints this engenders, is particularly germane. Evidence suggests that between 20 per cent and 30 per cent of all households in the country are female-headed, and that FHHs may be among the most vulnerable of the country's population (Elson and Evers, 1997; Manyire, 1994; Goetz, Maxwell and Manyire, 1994). In this study, the proportion of female-headed households was similarly prevalent, constituting 20 per cent, 20 per cent, and 15 per cent of sample households in Mbale, Kamuli and Mubende respectively. Between 15 per cent and 30 per cent of these households were *de facto* female-headed, with the spouse reported as mostly or permanently away.⁸ The average age of household heads in *de facto*

⁸ While the issue of what constitutes the category of female headship is widely debated, the classification of FHHs nevertheless influences the type of policy inferences that can be drawn. For example, Buvinic and Gupta (1997) illustrate how even within the same country the likelihood of FHHs being poor varies according to the nature of circumstances that precipitated headship. In this paper FHHs include the following: a) female entered on

FHHs is less than *de jure* heads (34 in contrast to 55), with the latter characterised by a high proportion of widows.

As Table 2 (facing) indicates, the mean household size of FHHs is smaller than MHHs in all three districts. While the age profile of household members is comparable, FHHs as a whole have fewer resident economically active adults (EAAs) than MHHs, with 73 per cent of sample FHHs containing one or fewer EAAs in contrast to 17 per cent of MHHs.

The smaller labour pool of FHHs not only influences their production and investment decisions, but leaves them less equipped to cope with seasonal stresses and other unpredictable livelihood shocks. Conversely, FHHs have more non resident EAAs than their male counterparts, indicating greater levels of household out-migration. Migration is especially high in Mbale, where 37 per cent of all FHHs reported at least one household member permanently or mostly away. In the majority of cases, migration is mainly undertaken by adult sons, who generally travel outside the districts in search of agriculturally-based work (less than 30 per cent of migration was for activities outside of agriculture).

Women's mobility is curtailed by familial and/or childcare responsibilities, as well as cultural stereotypes that stigmatise the independent movements of women in rural areas. As a result, female migrants generally consist of daughters who have migrated to other parts of the country for purposes of marriage. While income is only one dimension of poverty⁹, in purely economic terms FHHs are disadvantaged relative to their male counterparts. Firstly, using income as a proxy for economic welfare, the proportion of FHHs situated in the lowest income quartile is higher in all three districts, with the disparity particularly notable in the agriculturally-based regions of Mbale and Mubende (see Table 3). Conversely, MHHs predominate in the highest income quartiles.

These findings are further reinforced by per capita income data, with mean per capita income lower in FHHs than in MHHs in all three districts.¹⁰ This poverty is partly a product of FHHs' inability to diversify into higher return activities, which is discussed in Section 4. However, within female-headed households, the qualitative research suggests that widows (particularly older widows) fare much worse than either *de facto* female heads or divorced women in terms of economic welfare. While the quantitative survey cannot substantiate this, widows typically expressed higher levels of income vulnerability and impoverishment. This suggests that widow-headed households may be worse off, both among all sampled households as well as within the category of FHHs itself.¹¹

survey form as household head (HHH: but excluding cases where there is a resident husband listed as well); b) female entered as 'Wife', but no resident husband; c) nobody entered as HHH, no husband listed; and d) husband or male household head listed as permanently or mostly away.

⁹ As Chambers (1989) argues, maximising incomes may be less of a priority among the poor than decreasing the vulnerability and enhancing the security of their livelihoods.

¹⁰ Per capita income was Ush 562,315 (USD 320) among MHHs in contrast to 388,306 (USD 221) among FHHs.

¹¹ See Appelton (1996) for a similar conclusion on Uganda as a whole.

Table 2. Selected HH Assets by Gender of HHH

	All		Mbale		Kamuli		Mubende	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Mean no. of years in education per EAA* per HH	4.8	3.1	5.7	2.6	4.6	3.1	4.2	3.9
Total no. of years in education (resident EAAs)	10.5	5.2	12.0	3.7	10.2	4.8	9.4	7.8
No. of years in education - household head	5.6	3.7	6.4	3.2	5.7	3.7	4.8	4.5
HH Size (Actual - resident)	5.8	4.0	6.0	4.0	5.9	3.8	5.5	4.1
HH Size (Actual - non-resident)	0.9	1.7	1.2	2.3	0.9	1.3	0.6	1.4
AEUs: residents	3.9	2.7	4.1	2.6	3.9	2.6	3.8	2.8
AEUs: non-residents	0.7	1.4	0.9	2.1	0.6	0.9	0.5	1.3
AEUs: homestead	4.6	4.1	5.0	4.8	4.6	3.5	4.3	4.1
No. of resident EAAs	2.1	1.3	1.9	0.9	2.2	1.3	2.1	1.6
No of non-resident EAAs	0.6	1.5	0.9	2.3	0.5	0.8	0.5	1.4
Percent with Migrant Household Members	11.8	23.1	18.6	36.8	8.1	15.8	8.8	14.3
Percent Receives remittances	9.9	44.2	10.5	63.2	10.5	31.6	8.8	35.7
Area owned (ha.)	1.6	0.8	1.6	1.2	0.8	0.3	2.2	1.1
Area farmed (ha.)	1.4	0.8	1.6	1.2	0.9	0.2	1.6	1.0
Livestock holding in CEUs ¹²	2.2	0.5	1.4	0.7	2.9	0.2	2.4	0.6
Tools ¹³	10.8	7.8	15.5	7.1	3.2	0.9	13.6	18.0
Boat assets ¹⁴	15.5	9.7	.	.	15.5	9.7	.	.
Fishing gear assets	14.6	7.8	.	.	14.6	7.8	.	.
Age of household head	40.4	50.1	42.1	55.4	38.3	45.8	41.0	48.6

*EAA = Economically active adults (Individuals aged 15-60 inclusive, except those in education)

Source: Sample survey conducted in 9 villages Jan-April 2001

Table 3. Distribution of HHs Across Per Capita Income Quartiles by Gender of HHH (%)

Per capita income quartiles for whole sample	All		Mbale		Kamuli		Mubende	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Lowest	23.2	34.6	22.1	36.8	23.3	31.6	23.1	35.7
Mid Low	24.3	28.8	23.3	36.8	24.4	31.6	26.4	21.4
Mid High	26.2	19.2	29.1	5.3	24.4	26.3	24.2	28.6
Highest	26.2	17.3	25.6	21.1	27.9	10.5	26.4	14.3
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: Sample survey conducted in 9 villages Jan-April 2001

¹² CEUs are Cattle Equivalent Units based on the following comparative values: Cattle = 1; Goats = 0.12; Pigs = 0.14; Sheep = 0.10; Turkeys = 0.04; Chickens = 0.02; Other = (given price/5 per cent trimmed mean price for cattle).

¹³ Tools are a value-based index for ownership of axes, hoes, knives & sewing machines. The HH tool index = (total HH value of tools/maximum value within district sample) x 100.

¹⁴ Asset index. Boat assets = No. owned (per type) x 5% trimmed mean current cost (per type). Standardised by: (HH value/max value) x 100.

Secondly, economic welfare is also based on the assets, entitlements, and capabilities of households. As Table 2 indicated, FHHs support a narrower range of asset stocks than their male-headed counterparts, irrespective of type and district. Such incongruities may have repercussions on livelihood possibilities as the nature and quantity of assets stocks (e.g. land, livestock, water, credit, human capital) often directly shapes a household's capacity to move out of poverty.

In terms of human capital, residents of FHHs have half as many years in education as their male counterparts. At an individual level, 8 per cent of women in contrast to 32 per cent of men had attained no education whatsoever, with the gap more pronounced at secondary and tertiary levels. These gender differentials have implications for wider social and economic welfare. The capacity of a household to engage in off-farm work or otherwise diversify its income sources is commonly associated with its level of educational attainment, with wage rises and other opportunities corresponding with educational achievement. Further, low levels of education among FHHs are believed to perpetuate a cycle of intergenerational deprivation, as children's educational outcomes are jeopardised by household poverty¹⁵ (Appleton, 1996; Fuwa, 2000).

5. Household Livelihood Activities and Incomes

In all three sample districts, households pursue diverse livelihood strategies comprised of crop and livestock production, wage and self-employment, and a plethora of natural resource-based activities. While female and male-headed households (as well as the men and women within them) share many of the same economic undertakings, their reliance on particular activities differs (see Table 4). This section examines the main income earning strategies of households, and specifically, how gender composition conditions the nature of those strategies.

Table 4. Aggregated Income Portfolios* by Gender of HHH, All Cases and by District Sample**

All Cases	All HHs		Mbale		Kamuli		Mubende	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
	% of total income	% of total income	% of total income	% of total income	% of total income	% of total income	% of total income	% of total income
Bananas	20.1	28.1	34.4	47.2	0.0	0.0	29.0	34.9
Other food crops	11.7	10.2	9.4	13.4	6.6	2.6	24.4	13.8
Cash crops	0.6	0.1	1.0	0.2	0.0	0.0	1.0	0.1
Livestock	6.0	1.2	4.7	0.2	3.3	1.1	12.6	2.3
Total Agriculture	38.5	39.6	49.5	61.0	9.9	3.7	67.1	51.1
Wages	10.8	9.4	14.1	8.7	6.1	11.2	13.0	8.5
Self-employment*	26.7	31.1	34.7	13.2	23.3	46.3	18.3	34.1
Fish	22.8	8.2	0.0	0.0	60.1	26.2	0.0	0.0
Transfers	1.2	11.8	1.6	17.1	0.6	12.6	1.7	6.3
Total Non Farm	61.5	60.4	50.5	39.0	90.1	96.3	32.9	48.9

Source: Sample survey conducted in 9 villages Jan-April 2001

¹⁵ However, there is also evidence that women tend to allocate a greater proportion of household resources to their children, and thus children in FHHs may gain from such preferences.

Agriculture: Crop-Based Activities

In all three districts, agrarian-based activities¹⁶ play an important role in the livelihood strategies of rural households, with the gender profile of these activities representative of the country as a whole. For example, in Uganda, 90 per cent of rural women and 53 per cent of rural men are engaged in agricultural production, with women responsible for 80 per cent of food crop and more than 50 per cent of cash crop production (Kasente *et al.*, 2000; Elson and Evers, 1997). In Mbale and Mubende, reliance on agriculture is similarly predominant, especially among FHHs who derive 61 per cent and 51 per cent of all household income from farm-based activities (see Table 4). In fact, over 10 per cent of FHHs in both these two districts are solely reliant on farming, garnering no income outside of the sale of agricultural products.

Both Mubende and Mbale produce a broad range of food and cash crops including bananas (both cooking and eating), maize, beans, sweet potatoes, coffee, cotton, millet, and horticulture (see Table 5). In both districts coffee, formerly among the most remunerative cash crops, has declined over the last decade,¹⁷ with the market production of maize, beans and bananas becoming more prevalent. Kamuli is also characterised by crop and livestock production, with maize and mixed maize plots dominating lakeshore farm systems.

Table 5. Proportionate Crop Incomes by Gender of HHH

Crop	All Districts		Mbale		Kamuli		Mubende	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
	% of crop income	% of crop income	% of crop income	% of crop income	% of crop income	% of crop income	% of crop income	% of crop income
Bananas - cooking	61.4	73.2	76.1	77.6	0.0	0.0	52.6	71.5
Bananas - sweet	0.5	0.0	0.5	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.6	0.0
Beans	4.5	4.7	3.0	4.3	0.5	-0.9	7.5	5.3
Coffee	1.8	0.2	1.9	0.3	0.0	0.0	1.9	0.1
Cassava	6.6	2.7	1.4	0.0	45.5	-4.4	6.1	6.1
Cotton	0.1	0.0	0.2	0.0	0.4	0.0	0.0	0.0
Groundnut	1.7	0.4	2.5	0.5	-0.7	-4.1	1.1	0.4
Irish potatoes	1.7	2.1	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	4.6	4.6
Millet - finger	0.6	3.1	0.9	5.5	-0.2	5.9	0.3	0.2
Maize	10.3	6.4	5.8	7.6	19.9	26.2	14.8	4.2
Other crops	6.1	1.9	4.6	0.1	19.1	5.1	5.6	3.9
Sorghum	0.1	0.2	0.0	0.2	1.1	0.0	0.2	0.2
Sweet potatoes	3.6	5.1	1.8	3.8	14.6	72.3	4.0	3.5
Tobacco	0.1	0.0	0.2	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Vegetables	0.8	0.0	0.9	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.7	0.0
Total crop income	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: Sample survey conducted in 9 villages Jan-April 2001

¹⁶ This includes both crop and livestock production.

¹⁷ In Mbale, this decline is a product of increased land fragmentation, coupled with the dissolution of state sponsored co-operatives in the early 1990s. In Mubende, it is attributable to coffee wilt disease.

However, in contrast to Mbale and Mubende, farming activities comprise a much smaller proportion of livelihood activities in Kamuli, with fishing and fishing-related employment the primary source of income for most households. In part this reflects the dwindling viability of agriculture due to land constraints and widespread drought. The principal crops grown in the District-- millet, cassava, maize, sweet potatoes, beans, coffee and cotton -- have all been affected by drought, with many women either reducing the area under cultivation, or ceasing to cultivate altogether due to insufficient rainfall. As one female head claimed, 'There is no rain, therefore I cannot waste my money' [on farming].

The significance of particular crops to overall household income, however, varies between female- and male-headed households. For example, 28 per cent of total household income in female-headed households is derived from a single crop – cooking bananas (*matooke*) – in contrast to 20 per cent of income in male-headed households. Further, As Table 5 indicates, cooking bananas alone comprise 73 per cent of all crop income in FHHs.

While several respondents reported a decline in the sex segregation of crops, most households continue to demarcate fields for 'women's crops' and 'men's crops'. These cultural associations condition the types of crops that are typically grown on male versus female land, with women's garden plots earmarked for maize, beans, bananas, and cassava, grown for family provisioning and sale on the local market. Men's crops, which include coffee, cotton (Mubende), banana, maize, Irish potatoes, beans and cassava, are generally sold. In general, it is the outlet (consumption versus sale) rather than the crop itself that is delineated by gender. As Table 6 reveals, male-headed households direct a larger proportion of crops, excepting Irish potatoes, to the market (both domestic and export) than do female-headed households.

Table 6. Aggregate Proportions (%)¹ for Crops Sold, by Gender of HHH (%)

	Male	Female	All HHs
	Aggregate % sold	Aggregate % sold	Aggregate % sold
Bananas - cooking	35.5	29.2	34.8
Bananas - sweet	47.6		47.6
Beans	47.5	43.8	47.2
Coffee	98.2	74.1	98.0
Cassava	23.0	7.8	22.5
Cotton	100.0		100.0
Groundnut	29.3	21.9	29.1
Irish potatoes	68.4	73.6	68.9
Millet - finger	23.4	8.4	19.1
Maize	64.5	39.3	63.3
First other crop	45.9	0.0	44.5
Second other crop	90.9	72.8	90.7
Third other crop	95.4	0.0	94.8
Sorghum	75.8		68.2
Sweet potatoes	7.0	6.0	6.9
Tobacco	100.0		100.0
Vegetables	75.9		75.9

Source: Sample survey conducted in 9 villages Jan-April 2001

Similarly, while men and women are assigned normative responsibility for specific crops, several respondents reported less rigidity in the distinction between male and female agricultural tasks, and some chinks in prevailing gender ideologies. This was particularly marked in Mubende where extensive gender sensitisation has been undertaken in rural areas. However, in most households, the labour process is still governed by cultural norms of rights and responsibilities, with clear expectations of work allocation by gender. For example, men retain primary responsibility for land clearing and ploughing while women are responsible for sowing, planting, weeding and harvesting, on both their own and their husband's crops (see Table 7). According to one female head, however, these definitions are particularly uncompromising with "workloads culturally termed as women's work." In most cases, visible disparities in agricultural labour burdens persist, and what is culturally termed women's work actually means longer hours as unpaid family workers. Several female heads alleged that the only way that labour allocation could become 'ungendered' was through illness, death, or divorce in the family, compelling men to assume more responsibility for ostensibly 'female' tasks.

Table 7: Land Use by Gender of Cultivator

Use	% of total area for crop cultivated by:			
	Joint	Female	Male	Unspecified
Bananas	57.0	22.0	1.3	19.6
Banana/coffee	57.6	23.6	5.4	13.5
Banana/other	27.7	52.8	11.5	8.0
Maize/maize	62.9	21.3	3.7	12.1
Millet	44.6	39.5	0.0	15.9
Food crop mixture	76.8	17.8	3.8	1.7
Roots (monocrop)	58.8	27.2	1.5	12.5
Pulses	36.6	37.3	3.5	22.6
Livestock uses	63.5	8.2	14.3	14.0
Other	5.8	1.9	2.9	89.5
Unspecified	7.9		0.0	92.1
Total	46.6	20.1	3.9	29.3

*U= Unspecified

Source: Sample survey conducted in 9 villages Jan-April 2001

Agriculture: Livestock Activities

In contrast to crop production, livestock rearing plays a relatively small part in the economic portfolio of sample households despite its importance as a buffer against market and climatic shocks. There are, however, clear gendered patterns of livestock ownership, with male and female-headed households characterised by different levels and types of livestock endowments.

Overall, reliance on livestock as an income earning strategy is considerably less among FHHs than MHHs, with the former deriving only one percent of their total household income from livestock. As Table 8 illustrates, a significant proportion of FHHs have no livestock whatsoever. For example, while the percentage of sample FHHs owning *no* cattle was 85 per cent overall, varying between 68 per cent in Mbale, 86 per cent in Mubende and 100 per cent in Kamuli, it was significantly less among MHHs (68 per cent: see Table 8).

In general, ownership of small stock (chickens, goats, pigs, ducks and rabbits) is more widespread among FHHs with 39 per cent, 31 per cent and 15 per cent of all sample FHHs owning chickens, goats and pigs respectively. Despite the marginality of livestock to overall household income, several female heads adopted livestock rearing (particularly larger stock such as goats and pigs) as an investment strategy, enabling them to either augment existing income earning strategies or diversify into something new.

As one female head in Mbale described, ‘I have more farming activities now because I bought a cow and 2 goats a couple of years ago. I wanted to invest my money in order to be able to pay my granddaughter’s school fees when she starts school. I also wanted to get cow dung to fertilise my bananas, and I milk too’. In addition, several female heads referred to the importance of livestock as an asset that could be quickly liquidated in circumstances of economic shortfall or for lumpy expenditures such as medical care, school fees or to pay bride price for married daughters. As one respondent from Mbale said, ‘We are trying to invest our money in cows so that in the future, we can sell them to cover our children’s school fees’.

Table 8. Percent of Households Owning No Livestock, by Gender of HHH

	All		Mbale		Kamuli		Mubende	
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
Cattle	68.4	84.6	61.6	68.4	70.9	100.0	72.5	85.7
Goats	52.9	69.2	57.0	52.6	46.5	78.9	54.9	78.6
Chickens	30.0	61.5	11.6	36.8	40.7	84.2	37.4	64.3

Source: Sample survey conducted in 9 villages Jan-April 2001

While FHHs may have fewer livestock endowments than their male counterparts, women in FHHs generally experience fewer restraints to securing access to, and control over livestock and livestock products than do women in MHHs. For example, none of the female heads interviewed were limited by restrictions as to which animals they could maintain and/or sell. In contrast, the potential of women within male-headed households to exercise claims to livestock was contingent upon marital negotiations and the leverage that they could exert within their households. While there was substantial intra-district variation, for the most part women in MHHs reported that they do not control the disposal or sale of the animals they tend, and must consult their husband before an animal is sold. Similarly, women may control some, but not all, livestock products such as meat, milk and manure but not the right to sell/use animal skins and/or wool.

Non Farm Income Activities

While agriculture is an important ingredient in household livelihood strategies, over the last decade new avenues for income generation have emerged, reflecting the growing monetisation of the rural economy and the importance of off-farm income to household income portfolios (James, Francis, and Turiho-Habwe, 2001). Recent development literature has generally depicted diversification into off-farm activities favourably, associating diversification with poverty reduction, employment generation and enhanced market linkages for rural households (Reardon, 1997; Yunez-Naude and Taylor, 2001; Ranis and Stewart, 1993; Ellis, 2000). In Uganda, for example, poverty levels among households participating in non farm activities experienced a more precipitous decline than among those solely reliant on

agriculture.¹⁸ This decline was particularly marked among FHHs, where the decrease in poverty for those participating in non farm activities was greater than that experienced in MHHs (Newman and Canagarajah, 2000). However, has diversification similarly buffered sample households against vulnerability and poverty? And, are the types of diversification activities undertaken conditioned by the composition and headship of households?

Diversification and Income

Across all sample districts there is evidence that households are diversifying away from agriculture. The impetus for this diversification stems largely from the crisis in agriculture, with all three districts beset by declining soil fertility, crop and livestock diseases, increased land fragmentation, and climatic change in recent years. As a result, households (both male and female-headed) now straddle several different types of income generating activities and rely on myriad non farm income sources to comprise household livelihood portfolios. The interlocking nature of these strategies was captured by one female head who said, 'I was only involved in farming 5 years ago. I sell my labour now, because at least I can get food to feed the children with. I grow more bananas because even if it is the dry season, we can still get some food from them. I keep chickens too, because they are easy to look after and I can sell some when I don't have any money'. Among female-headed households specifically, income from non farm sources represents 39 per cent, 96 per cent and 49 per cent of total household income in Mbale, Kamuli and Mubende respectively (see Table 4 on page 8).¹⁹ The contribution of this income to the overall household income level is clear. As Table 9 illustrates, 64 per cent of FHHs with no access to off-farm income fall into the lowest income tercile in contrast to 26 per cent of MHHs. Income from these off-farm sources is generally derived from three broad categories: self-employment, wage employment, and remittances.

Table 9: Distribution of 'No Non Farm Income' Across Income Tertiles, by Gender of HHH (%)

	All		Mbale		Kamuli		Mubende	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Low	26.2	64.3	40.0	66.7	100.0	0.0	23.8	75.0
Middle	47.6	21.4	35.0	11.1		100.0	52.4	25.0
High	26.2	14.3	25.0	22.2		0.0	23.8	
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: Sample survey conducted in 9 villages Jan-April 2001

(a) Self Employment and Trade

The majority of sample households are characterised by extensive participation in self employment and trade-related activities (see Table 10).

¹⁸ For example, among households whose primary occupation was agriculture, poverty fell by 20 per cent and for those in non-farm activities, it fell by 31 per cent. In contrast, among households working entirely in non farm activities poverty fell by 42 per cent in contrast to agriculture only at 17 per cent (Newman and Canagarajah 2000).

¹⁹ These figures are consistent with Reardon's (1997) review of 23 studies in SSA, which calculated over 45 per cent of rural household income based on non farm activities.

Table 10. Percent of HHs with Non-farm Income by Gender of HHH, by District (%)

	All		Mbale		Kamuli		Mubende	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
None	16.0	26.9	23.3	47.4	1.2	5.3	23.1	28.6
Wages	24.7	15.4	29.1	21.1	12.8	15.7	31.9	7.1
Salary	1.9		3.5				2.2	
Self-employment	30.0	32.7	32.6	26.3	24.4	31.6	33.0	42.9
Fishing	7.2	1.9			22.1	5.3		
Multiple	0.4				1.2			
Wages & self-employment	8.0	15.4	10.5	5.3	3.5	21.1	9.9	21.4
Salary & self-employment	0.4	1.9	1.2			5.3		
Fishing & wages	0.8				2.3			
Fishing & self-employment	10.6	5.8			32.6	15.8		
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: Sample survey conducted in 9 villages Jan-April 2001

These activities are comprised of a mixture of food processing, produce vending, retail trading, the transportation of produce and people by bicycle (*boda boda*), brick-making, *malwa* brewing/ trade, handicrafts, charcoal, food preparation and vending, shop keeping, brewing, selling clothes, hunting, brick making, transport, construction, and a range of other petty trade activities. Most of these activities are characterised by strong gender differentiation, with women (in both male- and female-headed households) predominantly selling cooked/processed food, alcohol, and charcoal, and men involved in brick making, beer trading, and fish processing.

Overall, FHHs are highly dependent on self-employment activities, with a greater proportion of income in FHHs derived from self-employment activities (31 per cent) than their male counterparts (27 per cent). In fact, while mean household income is higher among MHHs across the sample as a whole, income derived from businesses is considerably greater among FHHs than MHHs (1,329,807 to 927,246 Ushs).²⁰ This difference is particularly salient in Kamuli, where participation in self-employment activities -- processing and trading *waragi*²¹ and cooked food, handicrafts, brick making, selling firewood, and fish processing and trading -- is sizeable. In Kamuli, 43 per cent of FHHs in contrast to 13 per cent of MHHs are engaged in self-employment activities, largely due to the dominance of fish trading. While a decline in the quality/quantity of fish stocks has precipitated a move away from the more lucrative Tilapia and Nile Perch toward *mukuene* trading, for many women the *mukuene* trade continues to furnish opportunities for income, both for subsistence as well as for investment in other income generating activities. Obtaining the capital to engage in *mukuene*²² processing and trading, however, varies between women in MHHs and FHHs households. For example, married women obtain the initial capital from their husbands, who provide their wives with Ushs.3,500/ (equivalent to about 6 basins of *mukuene*) at marriage to enter the *mukuene* trade in order to contribute to household income. Among FHHs, the capital to engage in fish processing and trading is typically acquired through the sale of local food

²⁰ This is equivalent to 751.30 and 523.87 USD. In April, 2001, 1,000 Uganda Shillings (Ushs) = 0.56497 US Dollars (USD); 1,000 USD = 1,770,000 Ushs

²¹ An alcohol distilled from cassava.

²² Prices of *mukuene* vary but a basin generally costs between Ushs.3,000-5,000/= fresh weight and Ushs.4,000-4,500/= dry weight.

crops, which are now threatened by drought. However, in both cases, women's capacity to realise more substantial gains from fishing is curtailed by social norms that proscribe female participation in fish harvesting itself.²³ While many women said they would like to acquire the skills in fishing, there are no opportunities do so, both due to lack of capital and the potency of cultural norms.

While diversification into self-employment activities is widespread, to what extent does it embody possibilities for long term security and broader accumulation? From a gender perspective, the picture is mixed. For female-heads in Kamuli, trade has indeed broadened their options, if not economically then socially. In fact, all women who were asked which of their income earning activities they valued the most cited trading due to the enhanced status and economic autonomy it conferred. On the other hand, self-employment may have limited potential for long term investment and growth.

Firstly, while participation in self-employment enables women to balance income earning with domestic responsibilities, trade is also an area in which gender segregation and differential remuneration are apparent. FHHs and women in particular tend to be concentrated in low wage activities such as selling cooked food, alcohol, juice and handicrafts on the local market.

In Mubende, for example, while both men and women trade in coffee, women trade in parchment beans (due to a lack of capital to engage in coffee processing) while men sell processed coffee. In most cases women sell their coffee at the farm gate to traders who offer lower prices than can be obtained in market centres. Further, with the exception of fish trading, women are restricted to participating in businesses that have few entry barriers and low start up costs, with the income derived from these activities markedly less than the income garnered through men's trading activities.

This type of labour market segregation has been documented in other parts of SSA. Whitehead (2001) cites Scotts' (1995) work in Zimbabwe, which demonstrated that brick making (a 'male' occupation) garnered 7 times as much income as beer brewing (a 'female' occupation) despite comparable investment. Similarly, Hussein and Nelson (1998) showed that women's main off-farm income earning strategy (selling beer) was less profitable than men's (selling grain) in Burkina Faso. Such gender segregation limits the potential of trade as an avenue for upward mobility among women in either male- or female-headed households.

Secondly, while there is a strong correlation between participation in diversified income sources and income levels across case-study districts, this correlation is less auspicious for female-headed households engaged in self employment. Despite the substantial participation of FHHs in self-employment, and their concomitant dependency on it as an income source, close to 50 per cent of FHHs engaged in self-employment fall into the lowest per capita income tercile (see Table 11). This suggests that the association between gender of household head and occupation may be a strong indicator of household poverty.

²³ According to cultural norms, the presence of a woman on a fishing expedition jeopardises the prospects of a successful catch, and hence, women are limited to fish processing and trading.

Table 11. Participation in Self-Employment, by Gender of Household Head and Income Terciles

Gender of HH	All		Mbale		Kamuli		Mubende	
	Male	F	Male	F	Male	F	Male	F
All lowest	30.4	47.1	28.6	40.0	42.9	66.7	30.0	33.3
All middle	29.1	11.8	35.7	20.0	33.3		16.7	33.3
All highest	40.5	41.2	35.7	40.0	23.8	33.3	53.3	50.0
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: Sample survey conducted in 9 villages Jan-April 2001

Thirdly, it is important to distinguish between diversification activities that are adopted to reduce risk and avert crisis from those that are part of wider household accumulation strategies (Reardon, 1997). For most FHHs, particularly those in Mbale and Mubende, participation in self-employment reflects a dearth of alternative options rather than an opportunity to capitalise on investment opportunities. As one female respondent claimed, “[Non-farm activities are the] only sources of livelihood where I get money to feed my family, buy clothes and pay school fees’. Another said that, “I would prefer to plant more maize and beans but I don’t have enough money to hire cows to plough the land. I need to sell local brew, which gets enough income to supplement what I get from farming’. This suggests that not only would households prefer to remain in farming but that they are compelled to diversify, choosing self employment in the face of deteriorating economic options.

(b) Wage Employment

A second avenue of livelihood diversification is through wage employment, particularly as the opportunities for farm labour expand in the region and households place more workers in the labour market as a defence against poverty. While more men are involved in wage employment than women, in both Mbale and Kamuli the stigma formerly attached to women working on the land of others has diminished, with approximately 10 per cent of women in the labour market in both those districts. In Kamuli, for instance, the increase in female wage labour was attributed to the government gender sensitisation campaign conducted as part of a wider appeal to the community to diversify its income generating activities. The prevalence of female wage employment remains low in Mubende due to strong patriarchal norms that associate female labour participation with male default on marital responsibilities.

The nature of wage employment, however, is gender specific. While both men and women are engaged in seasonal employment on nearby farms (see Table 12), women are hired for the labour-intensive tasks of planting, weeding, heaping potatoes, harvesting maize and coffee, collecting firewood for sale, and selling water. Men predominate in tasks that require significant physical strength such as land clearing, ploughing, brick making, logging, transport (on heads), and construction of pit latrines. In addition, a greater share of men are engaged in regular wage employment than women, suggesting a link between gender and household migration strategies.

As discussed in Section 3, within FHHs there is a higher proportion of men that migrate than women, indicating either that men have greater mobility or that they have more earning power when they migrate. The latter may be related to education, as the types of employment that men and women obtain is correlated to their educational level with higher levels of educational attainment translating into more secure and better remunerated positions.

Conversely, lower levels of education are associated with farm labour, and otherwise manual, unskilled work in which women predominate (Muzaki, 1996).

Table 12: Participation in Wage Labour by Gender of Individual - All Cases

	All Districts		Mbale		Kamuli		Mubende	
	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women
Worktype	% of	% of	% of	% of	% of	% of	% of	% of
Seasonal wage	15.5	5.3	14.5	6.7	9.0	7.3	22.4	1.9
Regular wage	13.1	2.2	25.0	2.9	6.0	2.7	11.2	1.0
Seasonal wage & business	1.8	0.6	5.3	0.0	0.0	0.9	0.9	1.0
Regular wage & business	0.7	0.3	0.0	0.0	1.0	0.0	0.9	1.0
Total	31.1	8.5	44.7	9.5	16.0	10.9	35.5	4.8

Source: Sample survey conducted in 9 villages Jan-April 2001

At a household level, while wage employment constitutes a lower proportion of household income in FHHs, there is substantial intra-district variation. Wage employment figures less in the livelihood portfolios of FHHs in Mbale, where crop based activities are prominent and more strongly in Kamuli, where agriculturally-based activities have become less viable (see Table 13).

Table 13. Aggregated Wage Income Portfolios* by Gender of HHH, All Cases and by District Sample**

	All		Mbale		Kamuli		Mubende	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
	% total income	% total income	% total income	% total income	% total income	% total income	% total income	% total income
Regular wages	6.2	3.9	8.9	2.2	3.4	6.5	6.0	4.6
Seasonal wages	2.5	2.9	2.6	2.0	1.0	3.6	4.8	3.9
Govt/parastatal salary	2.2	0.0	2.6	0.0	1.7	0.0	2.2	0.0
Private sector salary	0.0	0.2	0.0	0.0	0.0	1.0	0.0	0.0
Total wage	10.8	7.0	14.1	4.3	6.1	11.2	13.0	8.5

Source: Sample survey conducted in 9 villages Jan-April 2001

Yet there is the broader question of whether diversification into wage employment ultimately contributes enhanced household welfare. This depends on a number of factors. Firstly, in situations where male household members migrate for employment, the domestic burden of female heads is exacerbated as they must assume full responsibility for reproductive activities. Likewise, the income-generating options for female-heads confronted with the resultant labour shortages may be limited. While these adverse consequences might offset by remittances (due to the capacity to hire labour), this is contingent upon the nature of intrahousehold relations.

When employment is undertaken by female heads themselves, it raises a different set of issues. Chant's (1997) research on FHHs in Mexico suggested a positive correlation between female labour force participation and the welfare of FHHs, which was somewhat supported by the Uganda data. In contrast to self-employment, the majority of FHHs that participate in wage employment fall within the middle income tercile (see Table 14), suggesting a positive correlation between employment and household income, and enhanced options for diversification and investment. This was echoed by a female head from Mbale, who said "I earn at least 1000 shillings per day by selling my labour and I have bought a

cow. I am even able to look after my children better than when I was with my husband, who was a dictator in the house’.

Table 14. Participation in Wage Employment by Gender of HHH and Income Terciles

Gender of HH Head	All		Mbale		Kamuli		Mubende	
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
Lowest	40.0	25.0	32.0	25.0	54.5	33.3	41.4	0.0
Middle	40.0	62.5	40.0	50.0	45.5	66.7	37.9	100.0
Highest	20.0	12.5	28.0	25.0			20.7	0.0
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: Sample survey conducted in 9 villages Jan-April 2001

There is, however, a need to exercise caution in viewing employment as a positive diversification strategy, particularly employment that is casual or seasonal in nature. Firstly, as Evans’ (1992) work in Uganda illustrated, women often seek employment in response to social and economic crises such as separation, divorce and widowhood, or under otherwise “distress” conditions. In this study, such ‘distress sales’ were recorded among several sample households in which divorce, separation and death precipitated a discernible shift toward wage employment. However, in these situations women enter the bargaining process in an inferior position, as poverty and vulnerability may compel them to sell their labour well below market rate (Whitehead, 2001:38). In such cases, entry into employment may indeed represent a “coping” strategy in a context of crisis and deprivation.

Secondly, while employment has the potential to transform women’s lives (Sen, 1999), employment alone may not be a sufficient condition for empowerment. This was demonstrated by Gonzalez de la Rocha’s review of 22 poverty studies from 15 countries, which found that women’s participation in wage employment failed to produce equality in gender relations (2000). This is partly related to wage inequalities stemming from gender based discrimination in labour markets, with women locked into low productivity occupations. In Uganda, for example, women’s wages average 40 per cent below men’s with half of that difference attributable to discrimination (Appleton, 1995). Casual and seasonal labour, specifically, is characterised by low and irregular wages, insecurity, and often poor employment conditions. Hence, although FHHs are diversifying, their lack of assets (skills, information, command over labour and technology, or credit) may confine them to poor quality employment with low returns.

Finally, the opportunities for household members to benefit from employment are governed by cultural systems that define who gains access to, and control over resources (Goetz and Sen Gupta, 1994). These cultural norms and ideologies determine, to a great extent, whether or not women and their households will reap the benefits of their labour. As Kabeer (1999) notes, there is no straightforward relationship between wage earnings and the capacity to exert claims on household resources. We need to know more about how household dynamics will govern women’s decisions to participate in market activities and under what conditions they will be able to secure control over their income.

(c) Remittances

As Table 4 (page 8) indicated, FHHs have less diversified income sources than MHHs, signifying more opportunities for mobility among men. The constraint on female mobility is also suggested by the differential reliance that male- and female-headed households have on

remittances. While remittances and other transfers scarcely register in the livelihood portfolios of MHHs, they are a critical source of income for FHHs. As Table 2 (page 7) indicates, as a whole 44 per cent of FHHs (in contrast to 10 per cent of MHHs) receive remittances, ranging from 63 per cent, 32 per cent, and 35 per cent in Mbale, Kamuli and Mubende respectively. And more significantly, FHHs draw a greater share of their livelihoods from remittances (12 per cent) than do MHHs (1 per cent). This is particularly marked in Mbale where transfers and remittances comprise 17 per cent of income in FHHs in contrast to 2 per cent in MHHs, and where remittance income of FHHs is double that of MHHs (see Table 15).

Table 15. Transfers and Remittance by Gender of Household Head (Mean)

	Male	Female
All	48,461.54	87,125.53
Mbale	58,944.44	119,750.00
Kamuli	47,277.78	56,571.43
Mubende	38,000.00	51,600.00

Source: Sample survey conducted in 9 villages Jan-April 2001

Likewise, the qualitative data suggest that remittances play an essential role in FHHs. They provide a buffer against failing agricultural production in cases of climatic and/or market shocks, and give female heads who lack access to land a vital income stream. However, in contrast to Appleton's (1996) study, remittances do not appear to enhance opportunities for income diversification among FHHs. While they help to assure subsistence, they do not necessarily facilitate wider investment in either agriculture and/or trade.

Nevertheless, the positive effects of diversification into both self and wage employment are more apparent among MHHs. What are the factors that contribute to these gender differentials? What barriers do FHHs confront to participating in more high value activities?

6. Gender-based Constraints to Livelihood Diversification

Over the last decade, the Ugandan government has implemented a far-reaching approach to gender policy, raising the profile of gender issues in legislative and policy circles, and carving space for the participation of women in public life. In fact, among those women who felt their lives had improved over the last decade, the majority attributed the improvement to the government's platform on gender issues. However, while the legal situation of women has dramatically improved since the redrafting of the 1995 Constitution, women (in both male- and female-headed households) cited numerous *de facto* constraints that circumscribe their capacity to pursue different livelihood strategies.

Kabeer and Tran Thi Van Anh (2000) have developed a typology for assessing the nature of gendered constraints (gender specific, gender-intensified and gender-imposed constraints), which is helpful in identifying areas that might be amenable to policy intervention (Whitehead, 2001). At one level are *gender specific constraints* that stem from the specific nature of gender relations themselves such as the inter-relationship between reproductive and productive spheres. At another level are *gender intensified disadvantages* that reflect the uneven and often inequitable distribution of resources between men and women, as well as boys and girls within the household. Such asymmetries include cultural/religious

conventions, and the social rules and norms that regulate property rights, inheritance practices, and resource endowments. While *gender-intensified* constraints are not always gender specific, they often effect women more deeply than men. Finally, *gender imposed constraints* consist of disadvantages that result from the biases and partialities of those individuals who have the authority and power to allocate resources. These include clear policy areas such as the provision of credit, information, and agricultural extension, and hence, may be more conducive to policy responses.

Gender Specific Constraints

Labour

In SSA, women's access to labour and/or to the capital to mobilise labour are often considered more central to well being than having access to land (Whitehead, 2001). In large part, how labour is defined and allocated within the household differentiates the opportunities of men and women, and mediates their options for income security and livelihood diversification. Section 4 discussed the gender dimension of the labour process in reference to productive work. However, a gender analysis of livelihood strategies also needs to take into account the inter-relationship of 'market' and 'non-market' spheres that underpins the potential to engage in productive activities. For example, the allocation of women to the 'reproductive economy' (the unpaid economy of domestic work and childcare), coupled with an absence of improved domestic technology (piped water and cooking stoves), significantly compromises women's ability to expand and/or diversify production. Among sample households the gender division of labour in reproductive work was very rigid with domestic responsibilities borne almost wholly by women. As one female-head in Mubende said, "[there is] No flexibility [in labour]. If the wife is sick the children cook and someone is hired to dig. [the] Husband does not do any home chores."

It has been argued that women's double day (combined productive and reproductive work) is particularly adverse for FHHs, who face greater time poverty due to their often sole responsibility for income generation and reproductive work. It has also been argued that time deprivation can engender the intergenerational transmission of nutritional poverty, particularly to daughters, whose own health and/or educational opportunities are undermined by assuming domestic responsibilities. Among sample FHHs, 'time poverty' was exacerbated by the small pool of resident EAAs, making it difficult to accomplish daily tasks, and almost impossible to develop new economic undertakings. For example, time constraints not only placed pressure on women's food cultivation but prevented them from re-allocating their labour time to crops that might be more commercially lucrative, or to labour market opportunities. As a result, policies aimed at providing agricultural or labour market incentives may produce a weak or negative supply response unless they account for the inelasticity of female labour obligations.

One final labour-related constraint registered among sample households was the prevalence of age and illness, which were identified as major factors leading to a decline in livelihood activities. While health impairment is not gender-specific per se, it directly shapes a household's ability to perform daily reproductive and productive tasks, and in all three sample districts was considered a significant constraint on the capacity of households to profit from, or diversify out of agriculture. This was particularly notable in Mubende, where AIDS led to the impoverishment and destitution of several households. For example, one female head in Mubende claimed that 'I rely on the income from mat making because I have little energy [to farm] compared to long ago. I can't plant more crops because I'm old and I

can hardly do anything for myself. I've spent a lot of time in hospital looking after my son, who died 2 days ago. My household situation has worsened because of the loss of my sons and daughters due to AIDS and I am at God's mercy'. Among widow-headed households, specifically, the debilitation of old age reinforced and exacerbated the gender disadvantages faced by labour, land and other resource-based constraints, leading to circumstances of severe distress and vulnerability.

Gender Intensified Constraints

Land

One of the most significant gender-based constraints that women face is access to land. In Uganda, both the 1995 Constitution and the 1998 Land Law have provided an encouraging framework for enhanced tenure security. However, the implementation of the law has been variable, particularly with regard to women, who own only 7 per cent of all land in the country (Tripp, 2001; UWONET, 2000). While women are legally entitled to own land,²⁴ in practice their access to land remains contingent on social rather than material relations. In most areas, succession and inheritance practices, based on kinship²⁵ and conjugal norms, continue to take precedence over statutory rights. These cultural systems determine, to a great extent, the allocation, management, and control over land, and circumscribe the capacity of men and women to make certain livelihood choices.

The asymmetry in control over land has direct implications for the productivity of women's labour, their willingness to invest in land, their capacity to influence land use priorities, as well as for the nature of livelihood activities they are likely to undertake. As Agarwal (1997) has illustrated in the Indian context, control over land can strengthen an individual's fallback position, not only as a direct entitlement but also through the conversion of land into capital (e.g. loans and credit) and other assets. For women, in particular, endowments of land can contribute to a stronger bargaining position, as well as bolster their claims against wider gender inequalities.

However, despite the close connection between land rights and gender equity, in all three districts the paucity and fragility of women's land rights were considered a main source of women's vulnerability, as well as a significant constraint on their livelihood options. While women in both male- and female-headed households consider themselves land-poor, the total amount of land owned by FHHs was less than that of MHHs in all three sample districts. Sixty-two percent of female-headed households had land holdings of under 0.5 ha in contrast to 37 per cent of male-headed households, (see Table 16), with FHHs owning an average of 0.8 ha in comparison to 1.6 ha among MHHs. These figures emulate Appleton's (1996) study of FHHs in Uganda, which indicated that FHHs were less likely to claim cultivable land among their assets than male-headed households.

²⁴ In Uganda, ownership means that women have the right to plant perennial crops, sell or bequeath the plot, or use it as collateral without male participation (Kasente *et al.*, 2000).

²⁵ All three districts in this study are characterised by patrilineal kinship systems, where land is inherited agnatically from father to son. While it has been argued (Whitehead and

Table 16. Distribution of Land Owned by Gender of HHH (%)

Area owned	All		Mbale		Kamuli		Mubende	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Less than 0.5	37.3	61.5	30.2	52.6	62.8	89.5	19.8	35.7
0.5 - 1 ha.	19.4	7.7	29.1	15.8	12.8	5.3	16.5	
1-2 ha.	18.3	17.3	16.3	15.8	14.0		24.2	42.9
2-3 ha.	8.0	7.7	7.0	5.3	3.5		13.2	21.4
3-4 ha.	6.1		5.8		1.2		11.0	
More than 4	11.0	5.8	11.6	10.5	5.8	5.3	15.4	
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

However, these aggregate figures mask considerable inter-district variation. While there is no district in which FHHs own as much land as MHHs, land endowments are somewhat greater in Mubende than in Mbale and Kamuli, stemming from variations in land availability and migration histories. For example, land abundance in Mubende has been a catalyst for an influx of in-migration, with a number of different ethnic groups arriving in search of land and employment. This is represented in the higher percentage of FHHs that own over 1 ha of land (64 per cent) in the district. In contrast, in Mbale, where pressure on arable land is acute, less than 32 per cent of FHHs own over 1 ha of land, and 53 per cent own less than 0.5ha. This reflects widespread land shortages resulting from high population growth and customary inheritance practices that compel each man to divide his property among his sons.

While sub-division at inheritance is an important factor determining the ability of successive generations to gain a living from farming, it is inimical for women, particularly those who never marry, who are widowed/divorced or have no sons. Female heads, specifically, are made more vulnerable with the practice of subdivision as they do not retain access to the land they have been granted to farm as wives upon divorce/separation or widowhood. For many female heads, the nature of inheritance practices has adversely impacted the scale of their farming activities. As one older female head claimed, 'I have less farming activities now because my land had to be divided amongst my married sons. In the past, I had land and I managed alone. But now my land has been sub-divided and this has reduced my farming area. I have no source of income and no one to assist me. The children who would have helped me are also old and have their own families to manage'. The deleterious impact of land fragmentation was widely echoed by other women in Mbale, in both male- and female-headed households.

In Kamuli, endowments of land are less common among both MHHs and FHHs, with the bulk of fishing households lacking customary claims to property inland from the shore (Ellis and Bahigwa, 2001). However, the lack of land is more pronounced among FHHs, who own less than 8 per cent of the total land. In fact, only 10 per cent of FHHs households in Kamuli own any land, with the average amount 0.3 ha. Among the vast majority of FHHs, land scarcity was cited as the main impediment to agricultural expansion, and the primary motivation for off-farm diversification.

However, even where FHHs may own land, this may not confer ownership and/or access rights to individual women within those households. While the quantitative survey did not capture intrahousehold variables, the qualitative data suggests that in all three sample districts customary inheritance practices hinder women's options for securing land. Most respondents acquired land through marriage, and less commonly by hiring, purchasing, or borrowing from

Tajiskstra, 2001) that women can have strong claims to land within patrilineal systems, this was not reflected in sample households.

sons (who have inherited the father's land). In the bulk of cases, women's rights hinge on the benevolence of their male kin, placing them in a perpetual cycle of dependency. As one woman said, "[life is] more difficult. Women used to have their own pieces of land to manage. Now the husband manages all the land leaving the women with nothing to sell. When the children were young a little food was set aside for family consumption. This is now set aside for sale."

Furthermore, while women in both male and female-headed households are awarded rights of usufruct from their husbands and sons,²⁶ they face several obstacles to retaining those rights in the case of divorce, separation, and widowhood. For example, in Kamuli 40 per cent of sample FHHs were widows,²⁷ and half of them had lost access to their husband's land upon his death. Either their father-in-law had expropriated the land, or it had been passed down to their sons. Similar occurrences were recorded in Mbale, where one interviewee said, 'My land was taken away by my sons when my husband died and now I have to sell my labour to get money for survival'. In another case, a woman's husband had sold off their land before his death in order to pay for medical costs.

For those women who lack ownership and/or access rights to land, renting in land is common. This is particularly significant in Kamule, where renting land from inshore villages is widespread (63 per cent of FHHs rent land in Kamuli in comparison to 16 per cent and 18 per cent of sample FHHs in Mbale and Mubende respectively). However, for some households the cost of renting land is prohibitive.²⁸ As one female head said, '[There is] no land to cultivate crops. In the past we used to cultivate freely, but now you have to hire land which is impossible for us[...]I don't have a husband to hire for me land for agriculture'. In fact, the cost of renting land was a key factor leading to a shift toward non-farm activities. For those women who have the resources to rent land, other issues arose regarding the duration of land leases. One female head from Kamuli mentioned that her landlord only allows her to rent for one season, which restricts the types of crops she can cultivate, particularly cassava. She said, 'I have not started new farming activities in the past 5 years due to poor health and no land. I would have to hire land, and would only be allowed to cultivate it for one season. It's better to trade [fish] than to beg for land every season.'

Financial Capital

A second type of gender-intensified constraint confronted by sample households was a shortage of capital for investment in production activities. Reardon (1997) has termed such capital constraints investment poverty -- a paucity of resources to direct toward income generation. While the majority of respondents expressed aspirations of expanding their income generating activities, including a wide range of crop production, livestock management and trade-related activities -- they faced several barriers in materialising those aspirations. For example, several households claimed that they would prefer to specialise in

²⁶ Women in male-headed households are allocated plots by their husbands, on which they cultivate largely for home consumption.

²⁷ While widows (as the mother of a son in the patrilineage) can have strong claims to maintenance following the death of their husband, this claim was not enforced in these cases (Whitehead 2001).

²⁸ In Bukhasusa, Mbale renting land for cultivation averages approximately sh.50000/= per acre for one production season.

agriculture but lacked the money to purchase land. Female heads, specifically, expressed a desire to cultivate new crop varieties, however, the majority lacked the resources to purchase inputs (seeds, fertilisers, pesticides), and/or to hire the labour to assist them.

Capital constraints also contributed to gender differences in the capacity of male and female-headed households to participate in non farm activities. For example, most FHHs claimed that their inability to finance initial start-up costs prevented them from investing in businesses and trade activities. This leaves FHH confined to trading activities characterised by low returns, limiting their prospects of generating a surplus for reinvestment in agriculture or other off farm endeavours. The dearth of capital, thus, is likely to perpetuate poverty among FHHs, and potentially intensify gender-based income differentials in rural areas (Whitehead, 2001).

Gender Imposed Constraints

Credit

One way that capital constraints can be alleviated is through the provision of credit, which is generally considered a promising route out of poverty for the rural poor. Likewise, most sample households identified credit as the main resource that would enable them to broaden their livelihood options, whether it be agriculture, trade, or other non farm entrepreneurial activities. However gender-based institutional barriers that exclude women from formal credit have been widely documented in Uganda (Goetz, 1995),²⁹ and were similarly evident in sample districts. As a result, most women resort to informal credit systems such as the female-dominated rotating savings and credit associations (*kamatuli*) found in both Mbale and Mubende.

In both male- and female-headed households, *kamatuli* were seen as a valuable source of savings and economic betterment, providing several women with the ability to hire land and labour, and pay for medical costs and school fees. They also fulfil important social capital functions. As one woman noted, “Nowadays we also have associations which we can participate in and get credit and can meet with other women to share problems and get solutions.” However, the potential of *kamatuli* as a way to secure capital for broader investment is limited. The associations generally represent a narrow segment of women in the middle-income tercile, and tend to marginalise poorer women who are unable to mobilise the funds required to meet the regular repayments. Similarly, the Foundation for Credit and Community Assistance (FOCCAS), a well-known micro-finance institution, offers credit to several women’s groups in Mbale. Again, these loans were best placed to assist better-off women, particularly those who had businesses or stable trading activities, and could meet the weekly repayment schedule. This effectively excluded women who wanted to invest in agriculture, which rarely yields weekly returns. However, of wider concern were the cases where the pressures of repayment forced women to liquidate their assets. For example, one woman from Mbale said, ‘I no longer dig as I used to, because I don’t have enough money to employ labour. Even the cassava and soya beans I used to grow have declined due to diseases, and I sold my cow in order to pay back the loan I got from FOCASS’. Hence, while there is a clear need for microcredit to engender livelihood security, at present credit schemes do not appear to reach the women and households that may need them most.

²⁹ In Uganda, women’s share of formal credit is only 1 per cent. Gender-based inequalities in obtaining credit stem from several factors, including women’s lack of mobility, time and collateral (Elson and Evers, 1997).

Thus, this section has shown that a combination of cultural, financial, and institutional constraints pose impediments to the attainment of gender equity in rural livelihoods. While certain constraints are more destabilising for households than others, they are also mutually reinforcing. For example, access to land determines a household's ability to obtain credit, which in turn impacts their capacity to invest in business activities. Investing in businesses would allow them to generate the income required to invest in hired labour and/or agricultural innovations. Thus constraints in one sector affect the functioning of the others and are likely to compound the difficulties that households face.

7. Conclusion

The general picture emerging from the above review is that the livelihood portfolios in Mbale, Kamuli and Mubende districts vary substantially between male- and female-headed households, and among men and women. In all three districts, household assets and endowments, which are important determinants of household income, are strongly differentiated between male- and female-headed households, with the latter consistently disadvantaged relative to their male counterparts.

Similarly, the potential for diversification is differentially experienced by male- and female-headed households. While the importance of livelihood diversification for poverty reduction has been well-documented, this analysis suggests that the benefits of diversification are often contingent upon the kinds of off-farm activities in which households are likely to engage. Because the number and type of off-farm opportunities available to FHHs are more circumscribed than they are for MHHs (due to variations in assets, mobility etc.), the former are more likely to participate in self-employment activities that have low barriers to entry and generate lower returns. Overall, diversification into self-employment has not provided a route out of poverty, and the majority of FHHs participating in self-employment remain in the lowest income tercile. Hence, self-employment and trade are more strongly correlated with sustaining or augmenting existing livelihood activities rather than diversifying out of them entirely. In contrast, wage employment is more positively associated with higher income levels among FHHs. However, the nature of that employment and its implications on gender equity are less clear. Firstly, a large part of employment in FHHs is comprised of men who have out-migrated, leaving the burden of reproductive responsibilities to women. Secondly, in cases where female heads themselves are employed, the outcome depends on the quality and security of the employment, and the extent to which employment encroaches on the time available for other productive and reproductive responsibilities. Hence, while employment may go some length in mitigating income poverty, it may fail to ameliorate other forms of inequality and vulnerability in households.

This paper has also pointed to differences in the nature of constraints that female- and male-headed households face, which tend to circumscribe their capacity to stabilise and/or broaden their livelihood portfolios. While these constraints can be mitigated, some pose more serious challenges for livelihood security than others. For example, gender-imposed constraints such as access to credit, agricultural extension and training may be more amenable to policy intervention than either gender-specific or gender-intensified constraints. The paucity of credit awarded to women is an area ripe for policy attention, and could dramatically facilitate women's capacity to expand both on and off farm activities. Likewise, initiatives to support trading activities (e.g. measures to limit taxation) could especially benefit FHHs, who derive a greater share of their income from trade-related activities than male-headed households. Finally, interventions to alleviate unequal labour burdens through labour saving devices

and/or social infrastructure such as water supply and childcare facilities could enhance productivity and advance gender equity both within and between households. Nevertheless, such ‘enabling’ strategies are not as straightforward as they seem. The provision of credit and technical assistance, for instance, has had a long and chequered history of unintended consequences, overlooking the most marginal of the rural poor in favour of the better-off. Any policy measures adopted to mitigate gender-imposed constraints need to be mindful of this tendency, and designed specifically to strengthen the capacity of the poorest such as FHHs to participate in economic opportunities.

Gender-specific and intensified constraints, on the other hand, can raise more potent obstacles to gender-differentiated policy design. As this analysis has documented, cultural and social norms that define property rights and labour responsibilities strongly differentiate the opportunities for livelihood security and diversification by gender. Cultural rules and conventions, however, are among the most impervious to policy change, requiring broad and deep policy interventions to alleviate gender discrimination, and the underlying social norms that perpetuate it. The Uganda government has initiated positive steps in this regard. The devolution of power and resources to locally-elected bodies has created an entry point for addressing gender concerns at a local level and created space for women’s participation in a range of local decision making bodies (MoGCD, 1997). Likewise government and NGO sensitisation campaigns have raised awareness of gender issues in rural areas, creating an attitudinal shift among men, who are beginning to allow women some degree of economic independence and social autonomy. These efforts should be supported and reinforced as changing the way gender relations are socially constructed will require persistent and long term commitment to realise the government’s stated goals of gender equity.

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