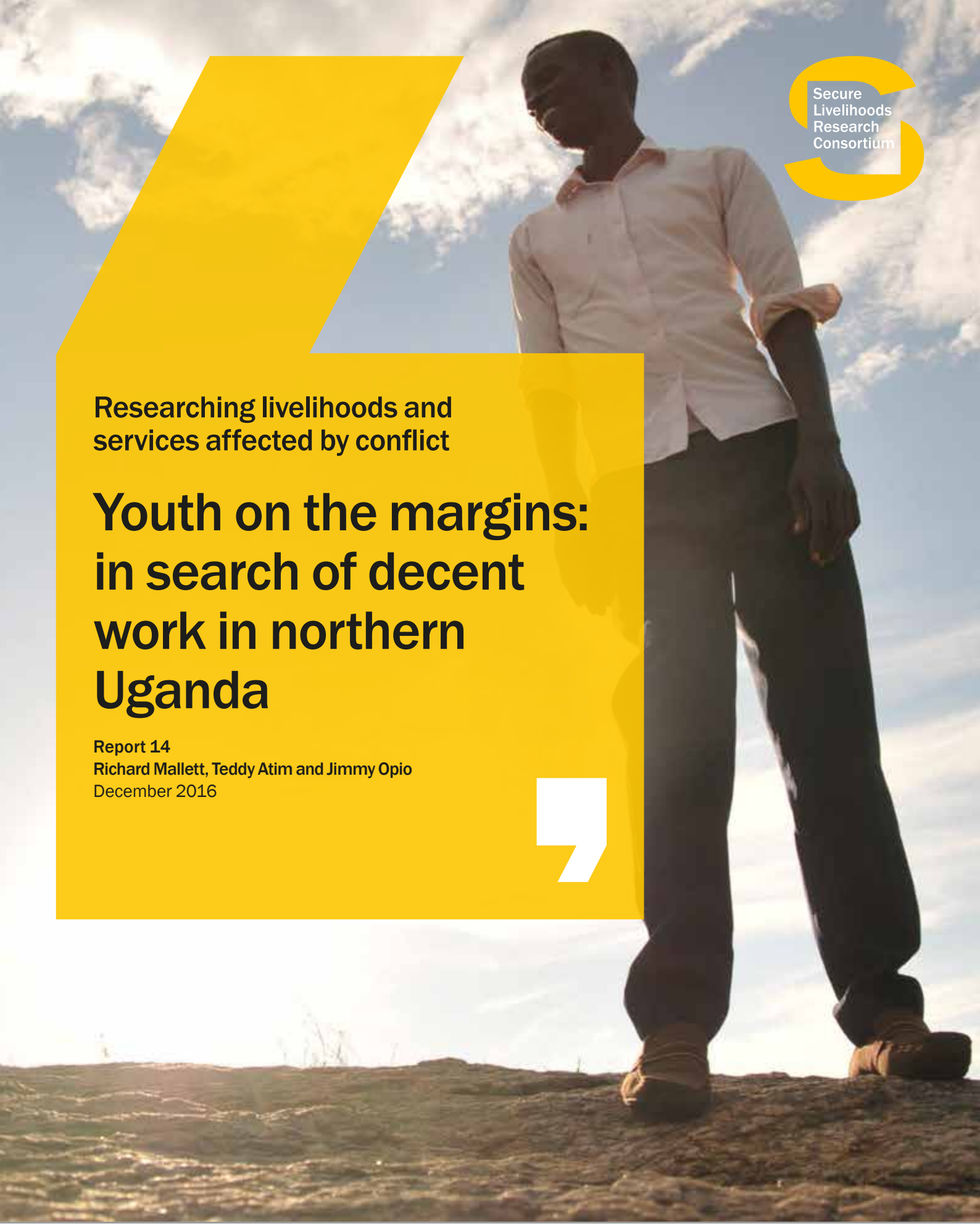

Secure Livelihoods Research Consortium

Researching livelihoods and services affected by conflict

Youth on the margins: in search of decent work in northern Uganda

Report 14

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ODI

Feinstein International Center

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SLRC reports present information, analysis and key policy recommendations on issues relating to livelihoods, basic services and social protection in conflict affected situations. This and other SLRC reports are available from **www.securelivelihoods.org**. Funded by UK aid from the UK government, Irish Aid and the EC.

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About us

The **Secure Livelihoods Research Consortium (SLRC)** aims to generate a stronger evidence base on how people make a living, educate their children, deal with illness and access other basic services in conflict-affected situations (CAS). Providing better access to basic services, social protection and support to livelihoods matters for the human welfare of people affected by conflict, the achievement of development targets such as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and international efforts at peace- and state-building.

At the centre of SLRC's research are three core themes, developed over the course of an intensive one-year inception phase:

- State legitimacy: experiences, perceptions and expectations of the state and local governance in conflict-affected situations
- State capacity: building effective states that deliver services and social protection in conflict-affected situations;
- Livelihood trajectories and economic activity under conflict

The Overseas Development Institute (ODI) is the lead organisation. SLRC partners include the Centre for Poverty Analysis (CEPA) in Sri Lanka, Feinstein International Center (FIC, Tufts University), the Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit (AREU), the Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI) in Pakistan, Disaster Studies of Wageningen University (WUR) in the Netherlands, the Nepal Centre for Contemporary Research (NCCR), and the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO).

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Executive summary

A few years ago, Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni was quoted as saying, 'Unemployment is the main problem affecting the youth in the country and the entire world.' It is a view shared by many in the development policy community: global youth unemployment has been recently described as a 'top policy concern' (ILO), a 'crisis' (World Bank), and an 'epidemic [representing] a great test of our time' (UN Secretary General, Ban Ki-Moon).[1]

The central argument of this paper is that the same phrases could and should be used in relation to the phenomenon of 'bad work' – forms of labour that are precarious, underpaid, exploitative.

Around the world, vast numbers of young people are eking out a living in towns and cities, not through formal wage employment or agriculture but via a range of informal and casual methods. The subject of this study is one particular sub-group of that population, several hundred young people living in northern Uganda's second largest town, Lira. Theirs is a context characterised by life after war, a slow process of recovery accompanied by limited institutional support, and an almost complete absence of decent work opportunities.

The evidence, drawn from a small-scale survey and in-depth interviews, clearly shows that just because someone is in work, it does not automatically follow that they are doing well. For many of those in this study, years of participation in the informal economy – often involving simultaneous combinations of labour, from self-employment and wage labour to taking on apprenticeships and unpaid work – has not helped them to get better off. Of the young people we surveyed, around half fall below the Ugandan national poverty line (currently USD 1.25 per day). This is not a result of unemployment, but of the nature of economic life at the bottom of the urban labour market. Here is a system which creates and sustains high numbers of working poor.

The real question then is not whether young people are working, but what the dynamics – the contents – of their work actually look like. For Lira's marginalised youth, several themes recur: low and irregular pay, insecure terms, transient, socially undesirable. And these are not just characteristics of independent casual labour. As we found in an earlier study (Mallett and Atim, 2014), working for someone else can expose young people to a range of exploitations, from the economic to the physical to the sexual.

What also characterises life in these low-return corners of the labour market is the degree to which young people appear to be stuck there, a series of factors combining to make escape unlikely. This is partly about the structure of the northern Ugandan economy: opportunities for formal wage labour are hard to come by, the large post-war investments entering the north are reportedly concentrated in the hands of a few, and the agricultural sector appears incapable of absorbing the region's massive supply of youth labour (in demographic terms, Uganda is the world's youngest country). In short, there simply aren't that many viable alternatives around.

But so too is it related to what some scholars call adverse incorporation, which describes a situation where individuals who are not faring well in the workplace are somehow prevented from moving onwards (and upwards). This is not about exclusion per se – as the term implies, these people are already 'incorporated' into the market – but rather the detrimental terms of their participation and the means through which that constrains economic mobility. To put it crudely, these people aren't poor because of their disconnectedness from the market but because of the way they are included.

For the youth in this study, mechanisms of adverse incorporation include:

- **Early school drop-out.** This was a characteristic shared by many of those interviewed. Its effects can be potentially very damaging, capping educational attainment – which SLRC survey research suggests is particularly important for wellbeing outcomes at the household level – and sending kids into intensive, sometimes hazardous labour from an early age.

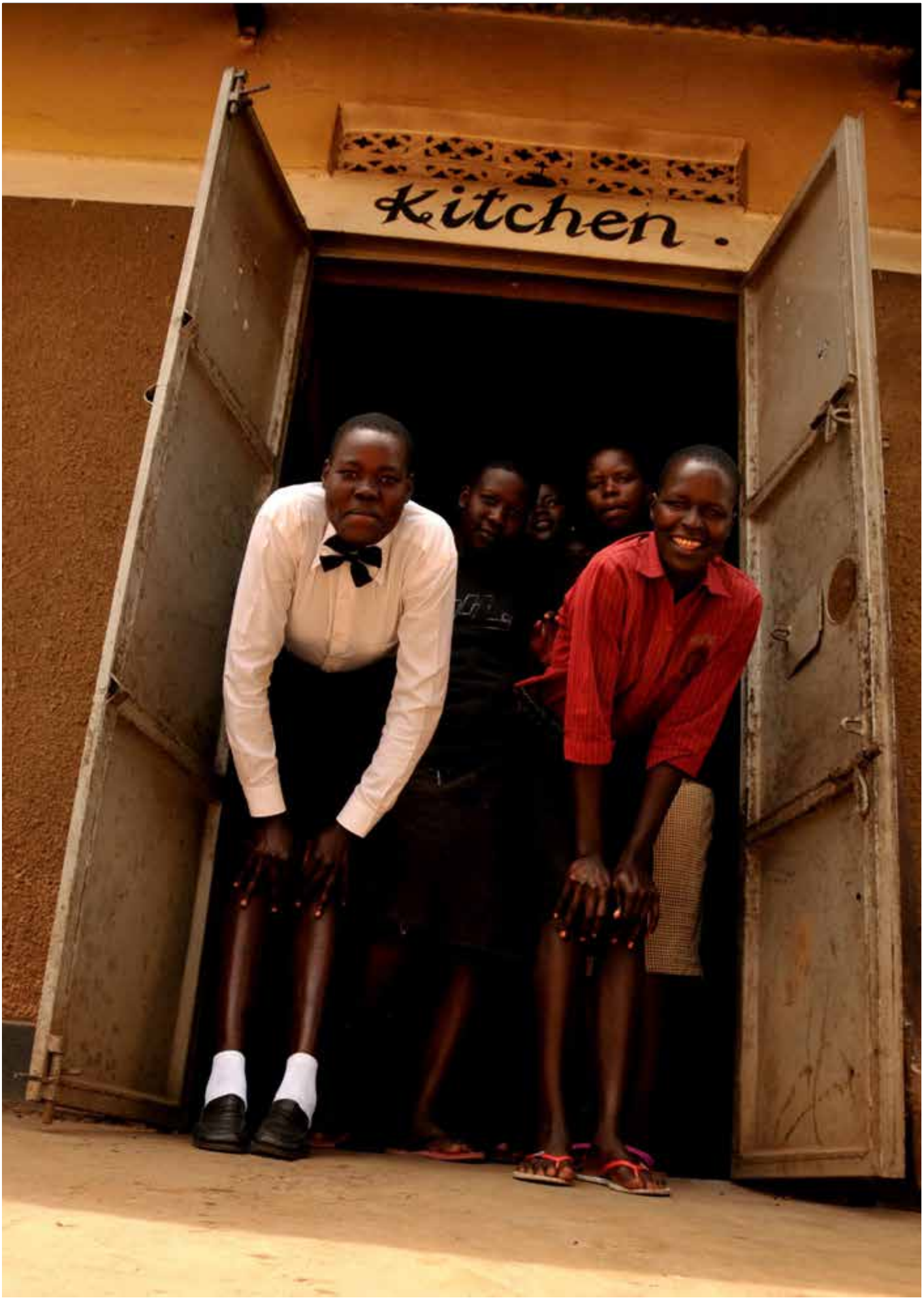
1 See ILO (2015), World Bank (2015b) and UN News Centre (2014).

- **Breakdown of the family structure.** This was another element common to so many people in our study, and is in many cases associated with early labour market entrance. The specific nature of the breakdown can take different forms, including marital divorce or loss of a parent (32% of the survey sample grew up with a single parent, while 23% grew up with neither), being subject to physical abuse by a parent or guardian (43%), and growing up with an alcoholic parent or guardian (39%).
- **The pejorative social attitudes directed towards young people, particularly those engaged in 'deviant' work.** This can (1) undermine (the perception of) their employability, thus further restricting the availability of opportunity, and (2) legitimise super-exploitation in the workplace.
- **An absence of personal connections to influential business people, politicians or state officials.** Having connections with these individuals is one of the most widely perceived means through which good jobs are secured.
- **The exploitative nature of some apprenticeship schemes.** In addition to the training fees often charged, students can also end up spending years working for their teachers without pay (or for very little).
- **Continuous exposure to 'bad work'.** Repetition of the same thing over time can contribute to a normalisation of negative working conditions and a mental internalisation of those as acceptable. One manifestation of this process is what some refer to as 'muted horizons', where people become indifferent to better opportunities (and therefore cease to aspire towards them).

The main implication of these findings is that we need to engage more seriously with the challenges presented by bad jobs – and, by extension, with the way in which labour markets actually work. If we accept that economic difficulties are created not just by exclusion from the market, but also by the problematic nature of people's participation, then the solution is not simply to facilitate entrance. That would be to assist people into new positions of vulnerability. Neither can the solution rest solely on enhancing young people's employability or encouraging entrepreneurial drive: as much as these are important, the real issues here are not to do with labour supply.

What is needed instead are stronger efforts to improve the quality of the labour market. In practice, this would look like a series of reforms designed to tweak what are known technically as the market's 'demand-side dynamics': these determine what kinds of work are available, how well conditioned they are, and the ways in which they get distributed. Unfortunately, it is much harder to influence these things than it is to teach a poor person new skills or provide them with finance, entailing as they do a more politically charged set of options. Minimum pay, workers' rights (and the observance thereof), access to legal redress when things go bad, unionisation: these are just some of the potential routes through which a better quality labour market could be built. And while that is clearly not an easy proposition, recent research into 'thinking and working politically' by the Overseas Development Institute (as well as similar initiatives led by other organisations) suggests it is possible to influence large-scale public reforms when external actors work with the right people, at the right time, in the right way.

But before any of that occurs, the most basic first step is to accept that labour markets are not neutral spaces of exchange. They are, in all too many contexts, sites of conflict, structural violence, appropriation and marginalisation. As such, to leave it up to the 'natural' forces of the market is to allow the reinforcement of existing socio-economic inequality.


Kitchen .

1 Introduction

The end of war is meant to signal the return of peace and the resumption of development. Ideas once popularised about conflict representing 'development in reverse' (Collier, 2003) suggest that, following its removal, things start moving forwards once again: households mend, communities recuperate, economies grow. Resolution, it is said, leads to a peace dividend (Hoeffler, 2012).

But although conflict can wreak devastation – a large body of evidence shows this (Mallett and Slater, 2012) – its absence neither automatically nor organically produces recovery. Research has documented how the legacies of war can last long into the 'post-conflict period' (ibid.), as wounds of all kinds fail to heal. Increasing recognition of this – the chronic, enduring nature of war's impact – has resulted in a policy agenda that seeks to artificially facilitate the process of recovery. With the formation and evolution of this agenda, a series of focal points have been established. Huge sums are today poured into capacity development enterprises, attempting to build the power of the state back up: indeed, while governments aren't the only actors on the playing field, they are one of (if not the) most important. The private sector receives a lot of attention too, with a range of aid-funded interventions and reforms geared towards promoting its expansion and efficiency.

Within the particular sphere of action concerning economic recovery, youth employment has emerged as a core issue. Not only has its prioritisation been driven and animated by the very real economic challenges confronting so young people living in fragile and non-fragile settings alike – the impacts of mass unemployment and underemployment tend to disproportionately affect this demographic (ILO, 2011; World Bank, 2013) – but also by the security threat they are seen by policy-makers to pose. Across a range of writing on the subject, the words 'Africa', 'urban', 'youth' and 'unemployment' are often accompanied by 'crisis' (Abbink, 2005). For some, the combination of these characteristics presents a 'potentially explosive social problem' (Hove et al., 2013: 9), where the 'likelihood of a violent onset is believed to be particularly acute in contexts where a large population of young people are coming of age in the face of unstable governments, insecurity and development challenges' (Mutto, 2007).

Job creation is normatively framed as a means of managing this potential security problem. Emerging from an influential stream of thinking rooted in neoclassical economics and rational-actor theory, the basic idea is that by encouraging or inducing people into work, they then have less incentive to pick up a gun or join a gang (see

Cramer, 2002). This assumes an 'either-or' relationship between labour and violence, classifying them dualistically against one another as options to choose between in life. Through this process, jobs are cast as an instrument of peace-building, their transformative potential stretching far beyond the generation of income.

But while these ideas have become mainstream, some quite serious questions persist. Most fundamentally, perhaps, the precise nature of the links between work and violence – if, that is, they are there at all – remain unclear and contested. This speaks in turn to the weakness of the evidence base in this area, the specific study of labour markets largely absent from economic research into violent conflict (Cramer, 2010). Neither has there been enough attention paid to how the experience of 'bad work' comes into this, even though there are often many more people slogging away at the bottom of the labour market than there are people doing nothing at all. And finally, at the most pragmatic level, there is still a great deal of uncertainty about how best to support young people through (the often long) processes of recovery, which is both a product of limited experimentation with policy and poor evaluation efforts (Izzi, 2013).

This paper is an attempt to engage with the ideas and assumptions reflected in the policy discourse around youth (un)employment, and to insert new empirical evidence into the areas of poor understanding. It follows a series of studies previously undertaken by SLRC into labour markets in conflict-affected environments (see, for example, Mallett and Atim, 2014; Minoia and Pain, 2015; 2016; Pain and Mallett, 2014). These studies have been concerned with understanding how labour markets actually work under such conditions, paying close attention to the ways in which people access them, the terms of their participation, and the consequences of their engagement. Of most relevance is the study carried out by Mallett and Atim (2014), which looked at the experiences of young people working in the catering sector of Lira town, northern Uganda – also the setting of this research. In that study, the authors found evidence of precarious work: for many young people, the sector is characterised by insecurity, bad pay and forms of exploitation. For women in particular, various degrees of sexual abuse appear widespread.

Yet catering, or at least certain parts of the catering sector, are seen by many of Lira's youth to offer the promise of decent work; as an economic space in which it is possible to make good (enough) money under good (enough) conditions. This was part of the authors' rationale for selecting it as a case study. The question thus emerged: what is life like for those further out on the margins of the urban labour market? For young people who are working casually, illicitly or even not at all?

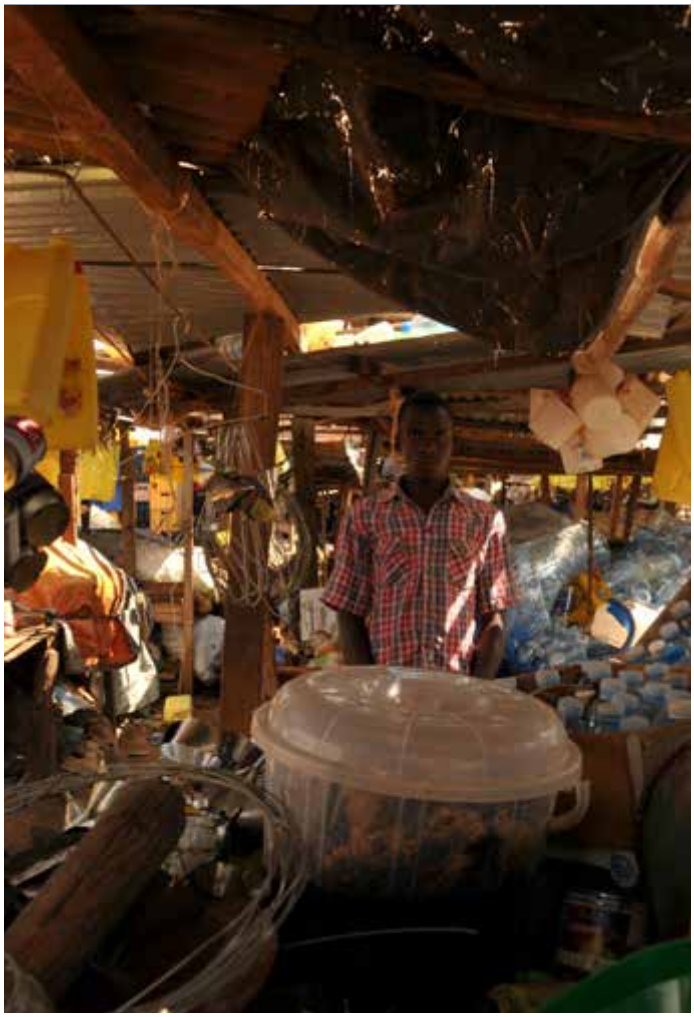
That was the starting point for this study. Drawing on what we found in 2014, we were interested in understanding more about this segment of young people. To that end, we developed a series of research questions:

- What features characterise economic life on the margins of the urban labour market?
- What explains how young people have ended up here?
- What kind of work do the individuals in question aspire to do, how does that relate to their broader aspirations in life, and what is blocking them from achieving it?

What emerges from the data is a story that fuses the world of the economic with that of the social, in which economic decisions and actions are underwritten not just by social norms but also by moments of breakdown and collapse within the intimate structure of the household. So too, we find, are people's social positions shaped by the work they do (and have done in the past). Their participation in this work illustrates the fact that these people are not 'outside' the labour market at all, but are rather operating very much within it – albeit on bad terms. Their standing within the labour market can thus be characterised partly by socio-economic exclusion – access to certain spaces of the market are essentially cut off from them – and partly by adverse incorporation, whereby the very nature of their past and present labour market inclusion is part of what makes it so hard to escape into something better.

We explore this story through the next three sections. Section 2 serves a largely descriptive purpose, establishing what types of work people in our sample are pursuing and identifying what the realities of that work look like. In Section 3, we focus on trying to understand why and how young people end up on some of the lowest rungs of the urban labour market, and start to probe what seems to make it so difficult to move upwards. We then move on, in Section 4, to a discussion of people's aspirations. Among those in this study, there is a near universal desire to 'become one's own boss': where is this aspiration rooted and why is it so widespread? In the concluding section, we reflect on what these findings mean for the way in which we think about the challenges of youth un(der)employment, and what appropriate policy responses could look like.

Before moving on, however, we first set some brief context and outline this study's methodology.



Context and data

Northern Uganda's two-decade-long war, running from 1986 to 2006, is often described as 'brutal'. Ostensibly a conflict between the Government of Uganda and the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) – but in actual fact one related in complex ways to the north's historical marginalisation, the normalisation of 'violent politics' in the post-independence era, and a crisis of state legitimacy (Otunnu, 2002; Refugee Law Project, 2004) – the shocks it produced were absorbed primarily by civilians. At its peak in 2005, nearly 2 million people were living in the 251 camps across the region, including roughly 95% of the population of Acholiland and one-third of that in Lango sub-region (in which the district of Lira is situated) (UHRC and OHCHR, 2011). Although the precise figures are unknown, it is estimated that 300,000 people died as the result of conflict (Kisekka-Ntale, 2007), and a recent Human Rights Watch (2010) report suggests the proportion of people living with disabilities in the north is 'very likely' higher than 20%.

The economic implications of the conflict are vast. To underline the scale of devastation, the aggregate figure of a USD 1.7 billion loss over the war's course (as calculated by CSOPNU, 2006) is often cited. But the specific manifestations reveal themselves more intricately at the micro level, where violence has resulted not simply in cost and loss but in a more profound rewiring of economic activity – and indeed of social life. As will be seen in this paper, underlying much of our analysis of the economic activities of Lira's 'unemployed' youth is a wider story of social and institutional change. Some of the old structures and frameworks governing everyday life, including young people's transitions into adulthood, have collapsed, perhaps not in an absolute sense but certainly to a degree. These structures have typically revolved around a set of social spheres: the family, the extended family, chieftainship systems. Social and economic stability used to be maintained through the bonding of families and lineages through marriage and birth, which brought with them financial transactions serving the interests of both a woman (and her family) and a man (and his family).[2]

The evidence suggests these institutions are no longer quite so powerful. As Baines and Rosenoff Gauvin (2014: 283) show in their study of motherhood and social repair in Acholi culture, two decades of war and displacement has had dramatic consequences for the governance of social life in northern Uganda: 'all forms of familial relations were put under extreme strain by violence, insecurity, immobility, lack of productivity and poverty'. This was most apparent among those in the camps, but the phenomenon was not limited to them. For example, recent mixed-methods research carried out in northern Uganda, including Lira town itself, has looked at the gendered character of post-war economic activity at the household level. Ahikire et al. (2014: 7) find evidence of some clear changes in socio-economic roles and relations over recent years, which the authors associate closely with the dynamics of war. Talking in terms of a role reversal, they note that while men generally became 'more or less absent from the household in both physical and symbolic terms', the role of women emerged as increasingly 'central and explicitly visible in the household economy'. Theirs, along with other research in the region (Onyango, 2012), speaks to the dislocating, demobilising effect of war, and the particularly acute way in which this was experienced by men. Vast curtailments on mobility,

2 Our intention here is not to romanticise the 'days of old'. Certainly, aspects of patriarchy, inequality and oppression have long characterised part of what it means to be included in these structures.

linked in part to a policy of forced encampment, resulted in a 'collapse of masculinities' (Dolan, 2009), as men found themselves in alien situations where their role as providers and disciplinarians was rendered largely irrelevant.

These dislocations of war ground down the social foundations of local economic life (not in an absolute sense, but to a degree). A series of tangible consequences followed: financial transfers between families upon the birth of a child stopped happening, thus 'illegitimating' the child (Baines and Rosenoff Gauvin, 2014); cohabitation became increasingly acceptable; alcoholism and physical domestic violence rose. Research suggests many of these are lingering legacies, still in full view today. The study by Ahikire and colleagues, for example, notes that large numbers of men are 'reportedly still stuck in the war period situation', struggling to reassert their economic status within the household and maintaining a dependent relationship with alcohol, (something also affecting many of the north's disenfranchised youth – Knutzen and Smith, 2012). At the same time, the diversification and increased visibility of women's economic activity – a vestige of their being forced out of the subsistence / reproductive economy and into the labour market during wartime – remains apparent. Whether one takes this as evidence of empowerment is questionable: in many cases it simply reflects a huge burden of responsibility for providing family sustenance, particularly given that many women are living as single mothers or are 'in relationships where spouses contribute little or nothing' (Ahikire et al., 2014: 6). It must also be situated alongside the rise and current prevalence of domestic violence towards women in the post-war era, linked in turn to the normalisation of 'negative masculinities' (ibid.: 6).[3]

On the economic context more broadly, the sense is that recovery, although under way, has been a painfully slow and uneven process. The primary effort to consolidate stability and improve the economy in northern Uganda has been the Peace, Recovery and Development Plan (PRDP), which was launched in 2007 and is said to provide the overarching framework for addressing the region's post-war needs. Now in its third phase, a central pillar of the USD 606 million government-led initiative is revitalisation and development of the economy. The most recent Human Development Report for Uganda suggests this component has seen limited success, noting that while there have been 'deliberate efforts to reverse the marginalisation of the region', it 'remains an eyesore in Uganda's relatively impressive national human development record' (UNDP, 2015: 22, 19). The report points to the limitations of the PRDP's 'small-step', incremental and intervention-focused approach to recovery, highlighting the lack of serious engagement with the bigger question of structural transformation: 'development', it argues, 'is not just about improvements in infrastructure' (ibid.: 20). Neither, one could add, is it simply about the dual intervention staple so popular in post-conflict settings of microfinance and vocational training (see Blattman and Ralston, 2015).

In many ways, the PRDP initiatives are secondary to what's going on in the Ugandan economy more generally. Although the last decade or so has seen strong rates of growth – about 7% per annum between 2005/06 and 2012/13 – it seems clear that this has not been accompanied by economic transformation, such as an expansion of formal wage sector employment (ACET, 2013). Neither does it seem that the spoils of increased growth have been shared out equally: at first sight economic activity in the north might appear bustling, but there are claims that its current 'boom' – characterised by substantial cross-border trade with South Sudan, a rising presence of Indian and Chinese enterprise in the local economy, and the prospect of big agribusiness and natural resource extraction opportunities – is mostly concentrated in the hands of a few (Okiror, 2016; UNDP, 2015). A recent SLRC survey of Acholi and Lango sub-regions suggests there have been very few significant improvements in the living conditions of many (if not most) northern Ugandans (Mazurana et al., 2014), and years on from war's end, the economy still lags. According to 2009/10 National Household Survey data, 46% of the northern Ugandan population was living below the poverty line, compared with 11% in the central region, 24% in the east, and 22% in western Uganda (UBoS, 2010). The region continues to have among the lowest literacy rates in the country, the worst access to any education facilities, and the highest rates of teacher absenteeism (ibid.).

Linked to this, youth unemployment and underemployment are considered huge problems, as a society demographically dominated by young people struggles to recover from war and displacement in an economy largely devoid of opportunity. Research suggests that as much as 80% of northern youth are either unemployed or unemployable in the formal sector as a result of low qualification levels (International Youth

3 The authors argue that when men lost their 'generative power' to provide for and make decisions on behalf of their families, what was left was for them to hold onto the 'destructive power' of domination and violence.

Foundation, 2011), finding themselves instead working in 'low-productivity subsistence agriculture and the informal sector, where returns on labour and capital are generally low' (ACCS, 2013: 26). The recovery attempts of many have taken them to the towns and cities of northern Uganda – the annual urban growth rate of Lira is expected to hit 10% any time soon (UBoS, 2012) – where new livelihood options are being sought beyond a life tied to the farm. But the reality of the urban economy, a site of costlier living yet still constrained in the possibilities it offers, has continued to push people into these low-return corners of the labour market. These are the locations in which you take whatever you can get, where the work is often casual in the extreme.

Mike Davis' work on slums, summed up here by James Ferguson (2015: 23), neatly characterises the situation many of Lira's youth today find themselves in:

> ***Vast masses of poor people across the global South have left rural livelihoods for city living in recent decades ... Instead of being swept up in an industrial revolution that would turn them into proletarians... they have more often been recruited into informal slums where they eke out a living via a complex range of livelihood strategies to which agriculture and formal-sector wage labor are often marginal.***

Ferguson goes on to refer to these individuals as those occupying 'precarious and ill-defined social locations', and it is this class of people which our study is interested in understanding more about. In what ways are their social (and economic) locations precarious? How precisely did they reach them? And what blocks their escape into something more stable and desirable?

We set out to answer these questions using mixed methods. In September 2015, we interviewed 29 people in Lira town using qualitative, open-ended interview guides. Six of these were key informants, whose particular views on the challenges facing Lira's youth we were interested in. They included local councillors, members of civil society organisations, and police staff. The remaining 23 respondents were young people (circa 18 to 30) living in difficult circumstances and working on the margins of the urban labour market, identified through a combination of opportunistic and snowball sampling. By some accounts, these people would probably be considered unemployed. In reality, they are engaging in very informal, very fluid, very tough forms of economic activity – we will dig into this in greater detail later on. Our interviews with these people, which were conducted in English or Luo (or a mixture of the two), consisted of in-depth conversations about their lives up this point – the things they saw, felt, experienced growing up – the day-to-day of their current lives, and their aspirations for the future. Two of the interviews were conducted as more detailed life histories, lasting several hours over the course of two to three sittings.

In addition to the qualitative component of this work, we carried out a small-scale survey in November 2015, administering a questionnaire to a total of 324 respondents. For this, we set out to try and find the same kinds of people we talked to in the first phase – ostensibly unemployed young people in Lira town, either not working at all or working 'bad' jobs (including illicit occupations such as sex work or drug dealing) – and ask them about family backgrounds, exposure to different forms of violence over the years, social ties, work histories, current activities, aspirations, and economic preferences. The content of the instrument was directly informed by initial analysis of the qualitative data generated beforehand. We followed a basic sampling strategy, combining purposive, opportunistic and snowball elements. It was not in any way random, and it cannot be interpreted as statistically representative of the wider population. But the resulting data do allow us to talk about the characteristics of Lira's youth with more confidence, and slightly more generalisability, than a purely qualitative approach would allow.[4]

In terms of analysis, for the quantitative component this paper incorporates raw numbers and descriptive statistics drawn from the survey data. Interpretation of the qualitative data was loosely informed by Simon Levine's conceptual paper for the SLRC, *How to study livelihoods: Bringing a sustainable livelihoods framework to life* (Levine, 2014). In this work, Levine places an emphasis on the need to think about what kinds of goals people set themselves, the non-material dimensions of what it means to make a living, and the role of people's *perceptions* in determining the choices they make and the aspirations they seek. We found this to be a useful way of getting at our respondents' relationship with the labour market.

4 Our choice of methods, as indeed wider elements of the research design, was inspired by Timothy Raeymaekers' (2011) study, Forced Displacement and Youth Unemployment in the Aftermath of the Congo War: From Making a Living to Making a Life, in which he draws on data from qualitative interviews and a short survey of 348 young people in Butembo, eastern DRC. We are extremely grateful to Tim for sharing his original questionnaire guides with us in preparation for our own study.

2 Realities of life in the informal economy

When we looked recently at young people's experiences of life in Lira town's catering sector, what we found, pretty much across the board, was employment on 'bad' terms. The dynamics of the work not only appeared to undermine people's capacity to realise future goals, but also affected their ability to support themselves (and their families) in the immediate term. More specifically, the analysis showed two things:

> ***(1) workers' incomes are not typically enough for them to achieve their life goals; and (2) participation in the catering sector has a range of negative impacts on welfare and wellbeing. The catering labour market is, for many, characterised by chronic job insecurity, an absence of workers' rights, long hours, demeaning attitudes from others in the community, and – especially for young women in the mid- and lower tiers of the sector – exposure to different forms of sexual and physical vulnerability (Mallett and Atim, 2014: 31).***

The main economic challenge facing these people was not unemployment per se but rather *under*employment. This term is sometimes taken to refer to situations where an individual is over-qualified or over-experienced for the particular role they find themselves in. However, what we are talking about here should be understood more as *inadequate employment*, which is usually treated as a category of underemployment (Greenwood, 1999: 9). It refers to situations that can be characterised by, to take a few examples, excessive hours, variable and arbitrary work schedules, and prolonged non-payment of wages.

Inadequate employment is how one might also choose to characterise economic life for many of Lira's marginalised youth. At the time of research, almost everyone surveyed or interviewed for this study was doing something to make money. Just 6% of the survey sample reported 'not doing anything', and, as seen in Table 1, there was quite a spread in terms of the type of activity currently pursued by the remainder.

Some of the activities listed might appear to overlap each other. For example, by some definitions 'casual labour' would cover many of the occupations in the table, such as washing cars or hawking. But here it refers to a form of work known locally as *leja leja*. This phrase originally referred to casual agricultural labour, where people would take on any odd job they could find in the village, often in quite an irregular and ad hoc fashion. This might include cultivating for others, ferrying produce, digging latrines, and so on. In an urban context, it takes on a similar meaning – selling one's manual labour on a highly

Table 1: Primary current occupations of survey respondents (n=324)

Primary current occupation	% of sample	*N*
Casual labour (*leja leja*)	16.7	54
Bar/lodge	11.1	36
Sex work	11.1	36
Betting/gambling	10.8	35
Washing cars	6.5	21
Not doing anything (unemployed)	6.2	20
Drug dealing	5.2	17
Mechanic	5.2	17
Paid housework	4.6	15
Construction site porter	3.7	12
Local music artist	3.4	11
Hawking	3.4	11
Boda boda (motorcycle taxi) rider	2.8	9
King/queen dancer	2.8	9
Agriculture	1.9	6
Robbery/theft	1.5	5
Brokering in the sex trade	1.2	4
Brewing local beer	0.9	3
Collecting scrap metal	0.6	2
Repairing electronics	0.6	2
Office work	0.3	1

informal basis by engaging in non-specific economic activities – but the range of occupations obviously differs. What separates 'casual labour' here from many of the other activities listed, is that people engaging in *leja leja* are not working in any particular occupation on a regular basis. They are simply 'looking for things to do',[5] and that might involve any kind of activity. In contrast, those people reporting 'construction site porter' or 'collecting scrap metal' as primary occupations are likely to be engaging in those specific activities almost systematically and on a regular, day-to-day basis.

Yet, there are a few things which connect these various occupation types. First, they are generally located in the informal economy. As one indicator of this, imperfect yet illustrative, 94% of the sample reported not holding contracts for their current primary occupation. The exceptions to this include people reporting 'not doing anything', and possibly those engaged in the illicit economy, which is related to but might be considered a little distinct from the informal economy. If we lump together sex work, drug dealing, theft and sex trade brokering, we see that nearly one-fifth of the sample could also be classified as engaging in this sphere. Second, incomes are generally not reliable: 71% of respondents reported having days when they do not make any money. And third, pay is not good, with 95% of the sample reporting that their primary current occupation does not generate enough income to cover their main expenses (rent, food, fuel, etc.).

In line with what we might expect of the experience of inadequate employment, the individuals engaging in these forms of work generally do not perceive them positively. When asked whether they felt they had *ever* worked a 'good job' – as defined and interpreted by respondents themselves – 89% answered no. Current occupations were included in that evaluation. The remarks of one interviewee, Roland, captures the general sentiment: 'Now there is nothing good I'm doing. Just casual work.'[6]

5 Interview 19 (see Annex 1)

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A closer look at the nature of people's work histories suggests why so many feel they have long been stuck with 'bad jobs'. As a starting point, we see from the survey data that:

- **56%** of respondents have previously worked without pay
- **51%** have experienced delayed payment of wages
- **46%** have been subject to verbal abuse in the workplace
- **40%** have worked over time without additional pay
- **14%** have been subject to sexual abuse in the workplace
- **10%** have been subject to physical abuse in the workplace

Several of these indicators can be read as proxies for inadequate employment. More concretely, they speak to the insecurity of economic life in Lira's urban economy which, in some senses at least, appears quite widespread. For example, more than half the sample have either worked without pay or experienced delayed payments, and significant shares have experienced forms of abuse.

What the evidence also tells us is that economic life for many young people is characterised by, in some senses at least, quite high levels of mobility. One strong theme to emerge from the qualitative analysis was the frequency with which young people move, and have moved, between different activities. Their work histories were often full of change. But this was not about constantly shifting from one sector to the next, always trying something new until an ideal occupation had been found. The phrase 'churning' perhaps best captures what we were seeing: regular switching between jobs but within a very limited range of occupation types (or sectors). Repetition of roles was a common story, where an individual would work in one occupation for a while, try something else, and then return to the former. Sometimes the interval between leaving and returning to a particular occupation would be years; sometimes it would be built into people's everyday routines. For example, one young man, Ambrose, described a typical day to us. The first thing he does after waking up is revise for his forthcoming O-level exams. After that he goes out looking for jobs, which involves visiting what he calls 'joints' – specific sites throughout town, often near motorbike stages or around football fields, where people go to find casual work. What kinds of things? Washing cars, pushing wheelbarrows, running domestic errands for others, carrying food. Basically, he said, 'anything people give you money for'.[7] This is what *leja leja* – the primary current occupation of 17% of our sample – looks like in practice.

Regardless of the frequency of the 'churn', this general pattern played out across many people's work histories. Two separate pieces of evidence illustrate this. The first emerges from the survey data: the average number of specific occupation types engaged in, including in the past and right now, was three. For some respondents, this was much higher – seven the reported maximum. But it seems that most people have been moving around within a relatively limited range of jobs, the overwhelming majority of which are very much located on what we might consider the 'lower rungs' of the urban labour market: things like portering on construction sites, hawking, bar work. The second piece of evidence comes from the qualitative data, and is brought to life through Brenda's story of long-term mobility as she cycled between a limited range of occupations (see page 9). While this is clearly just one person's story, we saw similar characteristics in many young people's work histories.

When we looked at Lira's catering sector two years ago, we observed a similar dynamic: very high levels of 'sideways' / horizontal mobility (people regularly and rapidly moving on from one lodge or restaurant to the next) accompanied by very low levels of 'upward' / vertical mobility (extremely limited opportunities for progression up the career ladder within the sector). It seemed to us then that the origins of this sideways churn lay in the relationship between employee and employer. On one occasion we were told by a lodge manager that this was a 'hire-and-fire business. The work…is not secure. You cannot be sure of yourself' (in Mallett and Atim, 2014: 22). This idea of hyper-flexibility, where staff could be dismissed as easily as they were taken on, appeared to be linked to a norm of precarious labour conditions: employers regularly overworked and underpaid their employees, often using workers' wages to absorb business costs (e.g. broken equipment, stolen drinks) and sometimes delaying payments for months at a time. The term to describe this would not be far off 'super-exploitation' (Valencia, 2015).

At the time, we weren't sure whether this situation was specific to the catering industry. We suspected not. This study offers some confirmation of that suspicion, the figures cited earlier suggesting a prevalence of abusive and exploitative practices within the urban labour market.

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Brenda's Story

This dynamic seems to (re)produce a continuous journey in search of decent work. People end up trying different things in the hope that they might find something that pays more fairly and more regularly than the last, and where the relationship shared with one's boss might not be so exploitative and extractive.

It is also for this reason that we see many people 'weaving in and out' of employment and self-employment, as Thorsen (2013) has previously observed in Ouagadougou's informal economy. Thorsen's argument is that 'many young people are highly mobile in their attempts to weave a resource base for social mobility, combining strings of employment, strands of entrepreneurship and continued migration' (ibid.: 215). We see evidence of each of these three strategies, if that is what we can call them, in our qualitative testimonies of people's work pasts and presents. It is precisely the insecurity of economic life – palpable even when working for someone else – that demands this ever-shifting combination of approaches to securing income. What's more, it is not always the case that one follows another in a cleanly repetitive cycle; these approaches are often pursued at the same time.

Eunice, for example, makes most of her money through sex work – a relatively secure occupation compared to many others.[8] But there are still slow days, which she compensates for by going to wash clothes at various people's homes. There are also times when she returns to her village in Gulu to help cultivate, in the process maintaining her social relationship with family back home through participation in the agricultural economy there. Ronald, 23, is originally from Tororo in the east of the country, moving to Lira ten years ago with his mother and siblings after his father died.[9] He is currently working multiple jobs. The first one he mentions to us is his *olal* (tyre sandal) business, which he has been doing for a few years now. The problem with this, he explained, is that the market is becoming flooded with factory-made sandals, which consumers in town seem to prefer. So he needs something else on the side; something to act as a safety net when he has a bad day or week. For Roland, that's working as a 'bodyguard' for a local music group and dealing drugs.

Diversifying income streams, and indeed taking up different strands of self/employment at the same time, is an established method of getting by when the market is insecure and safety nets are lacking. Under some circumstances, it is also associated with improvements in wellbeing. For example, longitudinal evidence from SLRC's panel survey in northern Uganda shows that households increasing their number of livelihood activities between waves also experienced an accumulation of assets over

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the same time period (Mazurana et al., forthcoming).[10] While we have to be careful about drawing direct causality there, the underlying association appears relatively robust.

But it is not always possible for young people to take on simultaneous economic activities. What we find in our own research is that certain forms of urban labour market participation can actually undermine young people's capacity to engage in multiple activities, even where they want to. A defining feature of some forms of employment – the catering sector is a perfect example, particularly among people working for bar or lodge managers – is long, sometimes unpredictable hours accompanied by uncertainty over when wages will get paid. This can prevent diversification in two main ways. First, long hours take time out of one's day, making it hard to pursue things on the side. This is particularly the case for those with dependents, such as young children. Second, late payments strangle people's ability to plan ahead, because saving and strategising become that much more difficult. This is intensified when there is a very real possibility that the eventual payment might be lower than expected, should it materialise at all. An individual's financial capacity to accumulate enough to start up an enterprise of one's own – such as a small poultry farm (see Dan's story in Mallett and Atim, 2014.: 19) – then becomes compromised. Thus, while the terms of labour market participation often compel people to seek additional activities on the side, born out of a rational desire to guard against future risk, at the same time they can actively prevent people from doing so.

But in some ways the question of whether someone is able to diversify is secondary to their position within the labour market more broadly. Regardless of how many things they might doing right now, the young people in this research are – and have indeed long been – confined to a relatively limited space of the urban labour market. As discussed above, the economic mobility we see, both embedded in people's work histories and often visible in an everyday sense, is characterised far more by movement from side to side than it is by progression into different, more remunerative economic spaces. So, while opportunities for upward mobility are tightly limited, as is many young people's capacity to take advantage of them, this is not to say they exist 'outside' the labour market.

In their paper on social exclusion and adverse incorporation, Hickey and du Toit (2007: 5) talk about the weaknesses of a *residual* approach to explaining economic poverty. This approach 'views poverty as a consequence of being left out of development processes, and contains the assumption that…what is required is to integrate people into markets'. On the other hand, a *relational* notion of poverty sees it as a product of 'the workings of markets' (ibid.: 5). In other words, the unenviable position of so many, not just in Lira town but around the world, is the result of their inclusion into markets and processes of development more broadly – or more accurately, the *terms* of their inclusion – rather than their disconnectedness per se.

Our own analysis sits more comfortably alongside the latter view. There is clear evidence that the young people we interviewed are very much 'inside' the labour market. Their problem is not one of economic exclusion in an absolute sense, and the appropriate response to their situation would not be to integrate them into the market on whatever terms possible. Yet, there is very much an element of exclusion to their situation. While Lira's youth may be operating inside the labour market, and even moving around it quite a bit, this is a constrained form of economic mobility. There are forces at play that are keeping people confined, preventing them from accessing spaces of the market containing what might be more realistically considered 'good jobs'. Throughout the rest of the paper, we attempt to probe what these forces look like.

10 The survey involved interviewing the same people at different points in time: once in 2013 and again in 2015.

3 The origins of participation in 'bad work'

So who are the people working the sorts of jobs just described? How has their life led them to this point, and what is making it so difficult to move into better forms of employment? Through this research, we wanted to try and understand how people's past experiences – vis-à-vis family life, wider social communities, and physical surroundings more generally – shape their economic choices and behaviours in the present. And indeed, how those outcomes continue to be influenced by social forces acting today.

From both the qualitative and quantitative data, we see a few common traits emerging that potentially help us explain the origins of engagement in this kind of work. It should be emphasised that these characteristics are not necessarily exclusive to this particular group. In fact, it is quite possible that they are shared by broader sections of society, including those working in more formal occupations or running successful enterprises. But they nonetheless appear to form important shared elements of the trajectories under study here.

The first relates to just how early in life labour market participation actually starts. In some contexts, entering the world of work is considered a key part of one's transition into adulthood. For those we talked to in Lira, however, it was actually a central feature of people's childhoods. Among our interviewees, the kinds of labour engaged in as a child varied, and there are different dynamics underlying these variations. In some cases, interviewees recalled going off in search of work as a means of supplementing household earnings. While still at school, Paul remembers doing things on the side – 'joining the street' as he put it, indicating an early engagement in the kind of *leja leja* work discussed above – in order to help buy food and support the general upkeep of his family.[11] Another example can be seen in Francis' story, illustrated in detail on the next page. These forms of labour market participation are primarily about bringing in additional money for the household, and often involve the child joining in the productive economy. This typically involves dropping out of school early, something which came out very strongly from both datasets.

As Figure 1 shows, the majority of the sample (54%) attained only some level of primary education, with 7% missing out altogether. In addition, 62% of respondents reported not being in continuous education, their schooling interrupted by money problems (as was the case for Ambrose and Moses)[12] or external shocks such

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Francis' Story

Francis is born in Lira town. From his early years, he remembers his father having a drinking problem.

Started school

Dropped out of school at P6. His parents were struggling to pay the fees, and every day he came from school he found there was no food to eat.

Leja leja; collecting scrap metal

Joined 'the corridor' – started sleeping rough and became a gang member. He says that 'life was interesting'. The gang leader, a very violent man nicknamed Apap, would assign his daily tasks, usually involving street theft: 'just grabbing and running'.

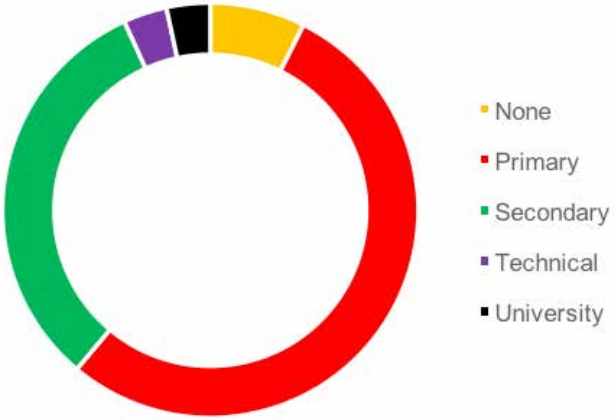
Smoking drugs (*jai*), fighting, selling drugs, stealing

In 2013, Francis was jailed for six months for stabbing another streetkid. Just before this happened, he and his girlfriend had a baby. During his time in jail, she started doing sex work in order to support herself and her child. He now feels like he cannot stay with her because of what she did at this time.

1993 2000 2006 2010 2013 2015

After prison, he initially went back into the gang where he received several beatings and was again forced to sell drugs. In the years since, he was tried to distance himself from that life. He has gone back to leja leja: 'I am always moving around'. He knows it will be hard to turn his life around, but prays every day that he will achieve his goals. Francis aspires to rear pigs and own a pork joint: through this, he thinks, he will be able to own a home, lead a more stable life, and pay his child's school fees.

Figure 1: The majority of respondents did not move beyond primary education



as LRA attacks and displacement (as was the case for Ruth and Roland).[13] Money problems were also identified as the main reason for stopping school altogether by 81% of the sample. While these figures might seem high, they are actually fairly consistent with the national data on dropout rates: although enrolment levels are strong, the most recent Global Education Digest available suggests that as much as 68% of Ugandan children leave primary school early (UNESCO-UIS, 2012).

Other early work engagements looked a little different, geared more towards helping out with general household and agricultural chores. Brenda recalls dropping out of school at P2 level (early in primary school) because her guardian at the time (her aunt) refused to pay her fees.[14] Her attention turned to house- and garden-work, activities which she pursued for many years and for various relatives. Eunice stayed in school until P7 (the end of primary schooling), but during that time still participated in 'several household chores as expected of a girl growing up in our community: cooking, fetch firewood, wash utensils, collect water. I would also help with work in the garden sometimes, especially on the weekend when not going to school.'[15]

As can be observed from just these brief illustrative examples, there is a gendered slant to the kind of labour engaged with throughout childhood. Girls appear more likely to carry out chores around the home and in the garden – that is, activities centred primarily in the reproductive economy – while boys may seek work further afield, 'outside' the household in the productive economy (but often also still engaging in agriculture). Of course, in reality this clean split might not always hold, but such was the general pattern emerging from our qualitative data.

These findings are consistent with several other studies highlighting the prevalence of child labour in Uganda. One national household survey conducted in 2009/10 found that 25% of all children aged between 5 and 17 (2.75 million) were engaged in economic activities, around half of them engaged in what is referred to as 'hazardous work', involving long hours in mines, construction sites, agriculture, factories and quarries (GoU, 2012). A slightly older survey, carried out in 2006 to specifically assess levels of child labour in agriculture, found that orphans are more likely to be working during childhood than non-orphans (IPEC, n.d.). We see parallels here in our own data, with many interviewees growing up with non-parental relatives missing out on education because they were instead forced to help support the household. Indeed, there is a particular dynamic around orphan children, and the increasingly difficult economic context constraining guardians' capacity to care for them, which we will go into below.

There are several aspects to early labour market participation. First and foremost, it is about supporting the rest of the family in a material sense. This is usually the case when households are living in poverty. Applying regression analysis to national-level survey data from 2011/12, researchers at the Understanding Children's Work programme find that poorer Ugandan households are more likely to send children to work, while those with higher educated household heads are less likely to (UBoS / UCW, 2014). They also find that child employment is associated with parent illness and presence of elderly household members, suggesting that the pressures and dependencies created by these characteristics push children into the labour market early. Another pressure that might contribute to this, our own evidence suggests, is social chaos within the domestic sphere. This is most apparent in relation to the stability, or otherwise, of the parental and guardian structure. Our qualitative research indicates that labour market entrance often immediately followed a breakdown of that structure, such as the death of a parent – either through war or other means – or marital separation. This experience appeared more acute when it was the father who was removed from the household composition, in the process exposing the mother to a particular form of socio-economic vulnerability. There is more on this below. Even more acute was the loss of both parents, with newly made

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orphans either losing the supportive structure of the family altogether or becoming subject to exploitation by extended relatives. Again, we explore this in greater detail below.

Just as the negative restructuring of domestic life during childhood and adolescence appears significant, so too does the nature of the wider economic environment. As pointed out in the introduction, there are structural economic factors compromising the ability of families in northern Uganda to achieve economic security. Two decades of conflict and violence ground the economy to all but a standstill, and subsequent efforts at recovery have played out unequally. The evidence suggests that, while the north is experiencing a degree of 'catch-up' at an aggregate level, large numbers of households continue to struggle. Opportunities for decent work appear relatively limited, even in supposedly advantageous urban spaces, and recent bouts of inflation are rendering the costs of living increasingly difficult to meet. Broader contextual factors such as these also have their part to play in understanding why so many people are forced into entering the labour market at such a young age. They also point to the intergenerational dimension of this phenomenon: poorer families experience the brunt of these forces more forcefully than better off ones, meaning their children have to enter the labour market on whatever terms they can get, regardless of how negative or disruptive.

While early labour market entrance might seem purely economic at the surface, there is also a social aspect to it. As Thorsen (2013: 206) notes, in many African societies 'work is an important element of child socialisation'. There is often an *expectation* that children will provide labour. Some research suggests this is about parents and guardians wishing to provide guidance about how to complete tasks and run businesses (Bass, 2000 and Schildkrout, 1978, in Thorsen, 2013: 207). In this sense, the purpose of child labour is to 'prime' children for the 'real world' once they are out of school, helping them prepare for life in the competitive space of the economic marketplace. But in some ways it is also about maintaining and building social relationships within the family network: by supporting the economic activities of adults, bonds of trust, responsibility and reciprocity are established through children's entrance into the labour market. In many cases, this action then helps create a support system later in life, with (extended) family networks becoming a safety net which can be drawn on when economic circumstances demand it. At the same time, however, the expectation of children's support often lasts long past their transitions into adulthood, as family and kin members continue to make claims on the individual. This is why Brenda explained that whenever she returns to the village she takes 'some stuff [for my family], as is expected of anyone who is going home'.[16] And why Mercy said, 'Every time you go, people expect something good from you … There are expectations that anyone in town should be better off than those in the village'.[17] Thus, there is also a rural-urban dynamic at work here, as perceptions of life, opportunity and achievement 'in the town' fuel expectations about what young people will contribute.

What really matters for the purposes of this study – to better understand how and why some people get locked into some of the worst spaces of the labour market – is what the implications of early labour market entrance might be. Naomi Hossain (2009) has looked at the links between school drop-out and social exclusion in Bangladesh. Her work suggests that taking kids out of school early in order to earn money for the household 'also incorporates children into labour markets on adverse and unfavourable terms' (ibid.: 8). Although these terms guarantee an immediate (yet minimal) return, as well as some form of short-term economic security, they also mark the beginning of what can often be a long life in the lowest segments of the labour market; segments characterised by 'hazardous, physically demanding, demeaning and low-paid forms of work' (ibid.: 8). This is essentially a twist on Wood's 'Faustian bargain', cheaply selling off labour for immediate economic security, foregoing routes into greater accumulation and security in the long run, and hence staying poor (Wood, 2003). The difference being: it is not the (child) labourer themselves making that decision, but, in many cases, the people responsible for their wellbeing and upbringing.

The second trait connecting many of the people in this study is the remarkable prevalence of family breakdown in young people's lives, which we have already started seeing evidence of. This was one of the strongest themes to emerge from the qualitative interview data: almost all of those we talked to had experienced some degree of domestic collapse growing up, ranging from parental separation to physical abuse to losing both parents. But problems in the immediate family network were often just the first stage, as many youngsters who went on to stay with relatives then experienced rejection and further abuse. Those who lost parents seemed

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particularly vulnerable to further social chaos, finding themselves in situations where individuals who then ought to be providing care for them – typically, members of the extended family – simply did not fulfil that function. These individuals usually ended up taking care of their own affairs, losing (at least some) trust in the supportive structure of the family / kin network and, in response, going off to 'look for ways to survive'.[18]

The survey data add to the picture. Of all those sampled: 43% reported being physically abused by a parent or guardian; 44% witnessed physical violence within the family; 39% reported growing up with a parent who suffered from alcohol abuse; 26% grew up without parents; while 33% no longer had a mother and 50% no longer had a father.

These striking figures tell us something about the difficulties many people experienced growing up; difficulties experienced within their closest social circles. They also tell us something about what has happened to the central social structures and frameworks that have 'traditionally' guided young people's transitions into adulthood, as well as their more general navigation of social and economic life. These are issues we will return to in the final analytical section. But what is also important to observe at this point is that these kinds of social abrasions are not the only difficult things that have happened to many people in our study. Returning to the survey data, just under half of the sample (48%) reported being displaced, while more than one-third (36%) were affected in some way by the LRA. A number of those we interviewed for the qualitative component, for example, had either lost relatives through LRA atrocities, had their villages attacked, or been personally abducted (and in some cases been forced to kill).

Thus, many people we talked to and surveyed experienced extreme vulnerability and hardship within the wider political surroundings in which they grew up. An equally high number also experienced problems in the social circles they developed outside their immediate family / kin networks in the years following childhood. For example, 38% of those we surveyed had been subject to physical violence from a partner. Many of those we interviewed described how some of the relationships they had entered into, often as a result of prior family collapse or rejection, turned bad, exposing those individuals to further forms of social and economic insecurity. This was particularly the case for young women. For example, Ruth got pregnant at 16, but the father-to-be wanted nothing to do with her and provided no support, so was forced to rent her own house.[19] She remembers going to work 'with her baby strapped on her back'. Collin went through a similar experience, having a child at 16 but enduring an unhappy marriage for years, her husband at the time 'fighting over nothing'.[20] And finally, having left her village to live with a man she met, Linda remembers how he used to 'fight me a lot. Right now, my ears make a funny sound [because of the beatings], as if a vehicle is passing by'.[21] Indeed, pretty much all the female sex workers we interviewed had previously experienced domestic violence from a partner.

We are starting to see the role that violence plays, or has played, in the lives of young people currently working 'bad jobs', which takes us in turn to a crucial aspect of the current policy agenda around employment in fragile and conflict-affected places. Much of this agenda is built on the logic that people with nothing to do, and particularly young men, are potentially likely to take up arms, be recruited into armed groups, and commit acts of political violence. Christopher Cramer (2010) has critiqued this quite heavily. He points out that although there may be certain conditions under which the idea might have some truth to it, the relationship is far more complex than made out by some policy-makers. Our research supports this very strongly, suggesting that while work and violence may be related, the lens through which that relationship is viewed must be widened beyond ideas of political violence (or propensity to 'take up arms').

In the lives of Lira's 'badly employed' youth, violence emerges as a central theme, but not in the way laid out by the mainstream policy narrative. In fact, 99% of those surveyed felt it was *not normal* when people use violence to (a) make money, or (b) settle an argument. In contrast, what we find is that many young people are themselves often subject to violence, linked in various ways to the world of work. Consider, for example, the structural violence of the informal workplace. Young people with limited economic options often end up in segments of the labour market that disproportionately expose them to high levels of risk and vulnerability. Young men who labour on construction sites can end up suffering a range of physical injuries, such as the chest pains Ambrose experiences,[22] as can those operating machinery without the correct safety equipment. Tonny, for example, can no

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longer work as a mechanic because of eye problems from when he used to weld metal.[23] Young women working in bars and lodges are often confronted with sexual harassment and abuse from customers who might be expecting them to behave a certain way. Moreover, the long, late hours involved in the industry mean women may have to return home well into the night, often walking back in order to save money and subsequently finding themselves in extremely dangerous situations.

More generally, many people working on the lowest rungs of the urban labour market are stigmatised by the wider community ('those who stay out at night are differently viewed from the rest in society'),[24] perceived as deviant, immoral, unclean and referred to as *bayaye* (a pejorative term used to describe young people on the margins of society). Young people themselves are quite aware of this perception. Around half of all those surveyed felt that older people within the community viewed them as either 'dangerous criminals' or 'lazy and spoilt'. What's more, research cited by Walker and Pereznieto (2014: 8) suggests that young Ugandans more broadly feel they are perceived as 'risky and aggressive' and 'demanding', with the authors going on to note that 'this perception among adults often limits the spaces allowed for young people to participate effectively'.

While the study just cited focuses on youth participation in governance processes, it does not take much to see that these kinds of attitudes towards young people can filter too into other aspects of life, including the economic. Our own research, for example, suggests that framing youth in this way legitimises abusive behaviour towards them, such as verbal abuse, shaming and public humiliation – often from members of their closest social circles. For this reason, some people hide what they do, attempting to be as invisible as possible in their daily routines. Just under one-third of survey respondents, for example, kept the reality of their work secret from their parents – and one-third of those in turn were female sex workers. One interviewee, Eunice, elaborates: 'I have never told my family what I do. I don't want them to know exactly what I do because this is not a fine job. If they know, they will say I am a spoilt woman and unsuitable for marriage.'[25] For women engaged in sex work, hiding away the reality of their labour is seen as an essential strategy to preserve social order and shore up future prospects. Participation in the sector is socially taboo (somewhat ironic given the high demand for their services from male members of the community). It is seen to tarnish the women involved, rendering them unsuitable for serious relationships beyond the sexual. As Ruth told us, 'Once you have a record of being a prostitute,

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it's hard to settle down in a relationship.'[26] Negotiating a marriage becomes all but impossible, thus removing one of the few mechanisms for effectively (and traditionally) dealing with future economic insecurity and establishing a sense of social order. It is illustrative, for example, that one of our interviewees saw marriage as 'the only thing that can restore my honour and relationship with family', having previously 'done wrong' by them.[27] This then creates a cyclical effect, locking women into a particular arrangement of economic life in which vulnerability is the norm. The links between labour and people's social worlds are clearly visible here, and the dynamic of violence underpinning that relationship is complex but apparent.

One conversation we had with Lucy, the chairperson of a savings group for sex workers, corresponded with the presence of that dynamic. Talking about why some people end up doing sex work, Lucy felt strongly that past broken relationships form the source of so many young women's engagement in the industry.[28] And the survey data back her up: descriptive statistics show that women engaging in sex work as a primary current occupation are also likely to have i) been physically abused by a parent or guardian, and ii) had a violent partner (both correlations statistically significant at 1%).

Another interview, this time with a community development officer, helps us clarify what is going on here: 'Society expects every woman to settle down in a proper relationship. [That is how they can] be respected and acknowledged.' So in an 'attempt to settle down', it is quite common for a woman to meet a man and have a child at a relatively young age. But, we were told, abandonment after pregnancy is also quite common, meaning the new mother loses out on the long-term male support that this kind of relationship has traditionally provided.

To make matters more difficult, there is then a concurrent and very real risk of rejection from her own family and kin networks. This is rooted in ideas not only about belonging and responsibility but also economic security, with marriage or the birth of a child historically features of a woman's transition into new networks of provision and care on the husband's side. One aspect of this transition is the diminished role of natal family networks in her economic life, substituted as they are by the newly secured ones (which bring with them new claims to different land). This norm, when combined with the shame that being a single mother brings – not only upon herself but also on her family members[29] – can mean social rejection upon return to the village. 'Families and communities start to call them names,'[30] and the resulting neglect forces these women to 'find ways to raise children on their own'.[31] The collapse, or rather the withdrawal, of these structures creates a need to survive more autonomously – away, if at all possible, from the 'sticky web of dependence on others' (Dolan and Rajak, 2016: 520) – and that means finding something consistent enough to pay the bills. Compared to many other jobs in the informal economy, sex work can offer that. While Eunice accepted that her work was not 'socially good', she saw the value in it relative to other occupations, which she, like many others, had engaged in prior to participation in the sex industry: 'At least with this one, I can find enough money to buy food and afford accommodation.'[32] Mercy agreed, explaining that sex work helps her support her family in ways that other jobs would not allow.[33] For her, 'that is more important [than the immorality of the work]'. In other words, it is a trade-off Mercy is willing to make.

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4 Being your own boss: in search of decent work in a landscape of constrained possibilities

Out of all of those surveyed for this study, just 1 in 10 felt they had experienced a 'good job' at some point in the past.[34, 35] Descriptive statistics suggest there are certain variables very strongly associated (statistically significant at 1%) with the kinds of people reporting this. They include:

- Have received a university education
- Have grown up with role models in their life
- Still have role models in their life today
- *Definitely* grew up with parental love and care[36]
- Have had a father with a university education
- Have had a mother with a university education

These correlations certainly paint a picture.[37] They suggest that what potentially makes a difference are high levels of schooling – SLRC's baseline survey findings support this (Mazurana et al., 2014) – and an upbringing characterised by strong social ties that support the development of wider horizons. At least, this seems true for an individual's perception of whether they have ever had a good job. But most people feel they have never had this. Their past work has failed to meet their own expectations in some way, and the figures reported in the previous section show that a large proportion of individuals have previously experienced some form of exploitation or unfairness in the workplace.

Given this absence of decent work in most young people's pasts, what is it that they actually want out of the labour market? What form does desirable economic activity take for them? We asked survey respondents how they would define what a 'good job' looks like, and presented them with a number of options (they could also state alternative characteristics under an 'other' option). Two-thirds of the sample selected 'you are your own boss' as a core criterion, and this was also one of the strongest themes to come out of the qualitative data. Our interviews split broadly into three parts: past, present and future. Under the last third, we explored people's goals in life, asking them where they wanted to be in ten years and how attainable they felt that was. Running a business of one's own was one of the most consistently mentioned plans. Mercy, currently a sex worker, described how she

34 We acknowledge that part of the phrasing of this chapter's title is borrowed from Dolan and Rajak (2016: 518)

35 The phase 'good job' was not defined in the instrument, but was instead left open to interpretation by respondents.

36 The emphasis on definitely is there to highlight the fact that one of the options was whether respondents felt they had sometimes grown up with parental love and care.

37 It must be reinforced that we are dealing with low numbers of observations here, so the correlations should be treated with some caution. At the same time, they are potentially illustrative.

wanted to open up her own shop.[38] Zainabu, also in the sex industry, wants to run her own bakery.[39]

While these are just two of multiple cases, they illustrate that this is about more than a desire for simple self-employment. Most of those in our sample are working casually, and are already responsible, to a degree, for their own economic affairs. Of course, some of these will be sharing an informal relationship with a 'boss' of some kind, on whom they might rely for stock or sale opportunities (or even clients). But in a sense, so many of these people are already working for themselves – partly because they have had little choice in the matter. What sets the aspiration to 'be your own boss' apart from self-employment more generally is that it entails running one's own business, and a successful business at that (hence Mercy and Zainabu's remarks about shops and bakeries). There are connotations here about asset ownership, the capacity to take greater control over the shape and direction of economic activity, and even the employment of others.

What dynamics underpin this particular aspiration, and help explain why it appears so widespread? Carving out a successful enterprise in a fiercely competitive, saturated marketplace is far from easy, and young people are well aware of this. So what is going on? Again, it is probably quite likely that a large section of Ugandan society aspires to exactly the same thing, implying that different histories and experiences can still lead people to holding a similar goal in life. But what we have tried to do here is seek out themes shared across our sample of interviewees and respondents that provide some clues into the origins of the aspiration to 'be your own boss'.

What we find is that the nature of people's work histories – and for our purposes the detrimental nature of those histories – appears to (re)align their economic preferences for the future. This was something that emerged from our previous study into the town's catering sector, where people's reporting of mistreatment in the industry seemed to square quite consistently with ambitions for greater economic freedom. While we are still not in a position to claim there is a direct causal relationship at play here, the findings of this study, which explicitly set out to investigate this link, appear to support the idea quite strongly. It also fits with a wider recognition in the field of behavioural economics that preferences over economic choices are shaped by both the social and economic interactions of everyday life (Henrich et al., 2005).

As discussed, our survey data confirm that high numbers of young people have experienced problems in the workplace similar to what we saw in the catering research: verbal abuse, delayed payment, non-payment, long hours. It is simply logical that these individuals want to distance themselves from those kinds of conditions in the future. In some senses, this is because 'bad employment' makes it difficult to achieve economic security. And that in turn is an important issue because, as we saw earlier, economic security is bound up within ideas about social aspiration: the desire to support one's family, to acquire land and livestock, to get married, have kids and settle down. Eunice's interview captures it succinctly: 'I want to find something else [other than sex work], but I fear I might get exploited again [or] not paid, as before in other jobs where you work for someone.'[40]

So what's the alternative? The conceptual approach to studying people's livelihoods outlined by Levine (2014) suggests that, in order to understand the choices individuals make and the strategies they pursue, one also needs to understand how they perceive the options available to them. People are more likely to engage in activities they perceive and internalise as viable; things within their reach, perhaps not in the most immediate term but at some point down the line. In Lira, several options are seen, by many, as simply beyond reach. These often include NGO jobs, 'office work' and public sector employment. One of the main reasons they are viewed as unviable is because certain personal connections are required in order to secure them. In fact, 38% of the survey sample ranked 'not having the right connections' as one of the main barriers to securing a good job. Another reason, closely related, is the lack of opportunities for formal wage employment. The economy of northern Uganda, and of the country more generally, is characterised by the prevalence of informal work. Formal employment options are few and far between. Because of their relative absence, and because those that do exist are seen to get distributed to a select few, these options are simply not seen as being within reach for Lira's marginalised youth.[41]

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41 In a sense, there is no 'contagion' or 'neighbourhood' effect: if no one in your local peer group is doing activity x, you're probably less likely to consider it a real possibility.

Many of the remaining possibilities in Lira town are not viewed as particularly appealing. There is a huge casual economy in which people engage on a daily, or even an hourly, basis. Opportunities in that economic space are ubiquitous, but they are not well paid, often back-breaking, and seen as some of the lowest status urban activities one can engage in (and subsequently also attract stigmatisation from the wider community). Young people accept that these are options, but they are certainly not preferences. This became apparent when we asked interviewees how they felt about the work they are currently engaged in. A few examples follow:

- Ambrose is a porter on a construction site. He finds it difficult: he gets little rest time, earns no respect from those he works for, makes little and gets paid late. But while he 'does not feel good about this work', he has 'no choice but to do it'.[42] He explained why, identifying four reasons: he doesn't have the skills for other things; he gets physical pains in his chest (precisely because of the work he currently he does); he receives no support from his relatives; and he does not have higher education (see the statistics presented at the beginning of this section).
- Eunice told us she would get out of sex work 'if there was a way ... if any alternative existed'.[43]
- Paul, who often smokes drugs and brokers sex workers some of the time, said that finding something else – something 'better' – is so difficult because 'that life is not known to you. It's hard to change'.[44] The idea of 'equilibrium behaviour', whereby people think and act in accordance with what they feel is expected of them by others (see earlier discussion of negative attitudes towards young people), is potentially relevant here. The World Bank (2015a) discusses this in its *World Development Report* on 'Mind, Society and Behaviour'.
- And in one particularly sombre interview, Moses described how he felt it completely impossible to escape the cycle of *leja leja* and sports betting. When asked, where do you see yourself in ten years, Moses had no answer, falling silent for 30 seconds before stating simply: 'I don't know'.

These quotes speak to the nature of young people's horizons. They suggest that, when individuals get adversely incorporated into low status and poorly paid economic activities – itself partly a function of earlier

school exclusion (Hossain, 2009) – it becomes difficult to envisage a future entailing much else. In a sense, their dreams and aspirations get ground down, occasionally to the point where they come to be essentially non-existent, as was the case with Moses. Under these conditions, viable alternatives become hard to locate mentally (let alone physically). This idea is supported by existing research into the nature of 'muted horizons' and the factors associated therewith. Thozur et al. (2007) have looked specifically at the effects of experiencing bad work, particularly over long durations. Their research suggests that factors such as 'low pay and poor labour market position become internalised into a perspective on work and opportunity that is then simply reinforced by long hours and hard work' (ibid.: 140). This, they continue, can act as a mechanism which keeps people in the same low-status segments of the labour market month after month, year after year, as upward mobility becomes difficult to perceive. Through this process, forms of 'quasi-stability' emerge in what can often be unstable labour market settings (ibid.: 149).

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Yet, for one reason or another, ideas about being one's own boss endure. Part of what explains this is the perceived reality of the economy – the sheer unobtainability of formal wage employment. Against this backdrop, the tilting of preferences and aspirations *away* from this option is the product of a rational decision-making process. But what our evidence also suggests is that, in opting for self-employment, the sense of meaning and purpose that this kind of work is seen to produce matters. In other words, the non-material aspects of the activity appear influential.

Robert Solow has said that labour is not just a commodity like any other; that the labour market 'really is different' from markets of other kinds, because it operates as a deeply social institution (Solow, 1991, in Cramer, 2010: 4). It is not, as some might think, an 'impersonal arena for the purchase and sale of labour along economic textbook lines' (Kabeer, 2012: 50), but a space in which power, norms and status are expressed through the kinds of economic relationships and exchanges taking place. Put simply, work is not just about making money (although of course to a large extent it is).

As we have already seen, aspects of people's social lives and histories can affect what they end up doing to make money. This includes both dynamics occurring within the intimate space of the household as well as the influencing role of people's wider surroundings; the coercive dimensions of larger events and macro processes, such as insurgencies and structural economic change, have their part to play too. We have also seen that work can be a means to achieving social aspirations and life goals in a broader sense, just as it is for people around the world.

But, in addition to these things, we find that economic preferences, choices and behaviours are related to the construction of self; core elements in the long process of identity formation. The work we do speaks directly to what kind of person we want to be – or rather what kind of person we believe it is possible to be. The reason for this links back to Solow's argument that norms and status are incorporated into, and transferred through, labour relations. People extract non-material value and meaning from the economic activities they engage in. Likewise, activities aspired to are framed as offering values and meanings beyond what current activities might be offering.

Different occupations are viewed differently by society (family, kin, the wider community). To put it crudely, some jobs are thought to be better than others, not (only) because they generate more money but (also) because they are considered morally superior. Talking to young people in Lira town, there is a palpable sense that these individuals feel they are being looked down upon, which, as noted earlier, is part of a wider trend not confined to those in our sample (Walker and Pereznieto, 2014). The origins of this stigmatisation lie in the type of work marginalised youth do: manual labour, odd jobs, washing cars, dealing drugs, the sex trade. Their outward identity is defined by engagement in these occupations, their values, principles and moral character all expressed at the surface through the way they choose to make money. These dynamics continuously compel young people to go in search of something better – a new job they feel would more accurately reflect the type of person they want to be. One which supports the construction of the desired self, and which also repositions them in society. Through this lens, a 'good job' becomes a way of modifying one's social standing.

So where does self-employment – or, more specifically, the ubiquitous yet elusive goal of being one's own boss on successful terms – come into it? The preference for this option is so strong that most people would sacrifice higher earnings for it. In the survey, we asked respondents to

consider two labour market scenarios and tell us which one they would personally go for. In the first scenario, they are running their own business but pay is low and irregular. In the second, they are working for someone else, making more money than in the first scenario but also being mistreated by their boss. 86% of the sample chose the first one. For many people, self-employment – or at least the perception of self-employment as a viable option – is more in line with i) how they define a good job, and ii) the way they want to live their lives more generally. Interviewees would describe decent work as something that is 'very free',[45] referring to jobs in which 'you are given more responsibility to decide how to do the work'[46] and where a boss 'does not shout on you'.[47]

In our reading of the data, 'being your own boss' is not necessarily about finding the economic option that is most capable of maximising income. It cannot be understood as the pure expression of an inherent entrepreneurial streak. Rather, the aspiration to run one's own business is seen as one of the only viable ways to avoid being (continuously) adversely incorporated into the lowest segments of the labour market on highly unequal terms.

It also seems to emerge from a far deeper and more fundamental desire for a greater degree of autonomy over aspects of one's life; for the aspiration to make a living in a more dignified and respectful way (interviewees often talked about the importance of this). The histories of those we talked to and surveyed for this study are filled with moments of breakdown and collapse; stories of domestic conflict, missed opportunity and general mistreatment are littered throughout the testimonies, and the survey data suggest they are not exceptions. Thinking about the things that have gone wrong in these young people's lives, we see that what connects a great many of them together is dependence gone bad ('adverse dependency', as it were). Almost all of our interviewees were forced out of school and into the labour market at an early age. Much of the time this was because the people responsible for them failed to pay the fees, whether out of poverty or a troubled child-guardian relationship. Some people grew up experiencing and witnessing violence within the intimate space of the household, made to suffer by those who should have been providing care. Stories of partner abuse and abandonment after marriage or childbirth were also common among the women we spoke to. The relationships they entered into were supposed to provide social and economic security long into the future. But instead these women found themselves rejected by their partners and, in some cases, cut off from their original natal network; ending up between a rock and a hard place and having to find new ways of surviving. In the workplace, different forms of abuse and unfairness are widespread, with people's experiences consistently speaking to an exploitative relationship between employee and employer. In each of these cases, young people have been let down by others, their strategies for getting by (and better off) splintered by the behaviour of others – by things beyond their control.

The tilting of economic preferences towards self-employment is one part of a broader effort to re-establish control over social and economic life. It is an instrument for creating a new sense of order. Of course, this is not to say that young people are looking to sever their social ties; the village remains a profoundly significant place, and family a vital social structure. But the shift towards 'individualism' in the economic marketplace – a shift the urban labour market is more capable of dealing with compared to the rural one – can ultimately be understood as a response to institutional settings on the move. The 'traditional' support structure of the family has, for many of those we interviewed, simply failed, manifesting in the abuse and exploitation of children and adolescents; the framing of marriage as a mechanism of provision and care is no longer quite so watertight; village elders lack the authority they once had, which is possibly linked to reports of some acting more in their own interests rather than those of the community (ACCS, 2013: 14); and government means very little to many young people (99% of those surveyed have never received any support from the state). Against this backdrop of marginalisation and adverse dependencies, alternative frameworks for living are being sought. This search takes place in all dimensions of life, including in their economic space of Lira town's labour market.

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5 Conclusion

The point of this paper has been to better understand the lives of young people occupying what Ferguson has called 'precarious and ill-defined social locations' within the urban labour market. This refers to the vast numbers of individuals who, across the global South, have ended up in towns and cities only to find themselves locked into insecure, casual forms of labour outside the spheres of agriculture and formal employment. For these people, the promise which might once have come good of absorption into urban-based, industrialised employment has failed to materialise, and they have subsequently been left with having to take whatever they can get.

Young people living out these situations are often the focus of policy in peripheral post-conflict areas such as northern Uganda, framed not only as individuals facing grave economic challenges but also as a potential security threat (Sommers, 2006): unemployment, it is thought, breeds violence. In this study, we see that although the worlds of work and violence are related, they are not so in the way popularised by the typical policy approach.

The first step to understanding this relationship is to rethink the way we view violence; not (necessarily) as a political action, but as a more fundamental aspect of socio-economic life. Violence of course takes many forms, and is connected to the world of work in a variety of ways. It is structurally present in the lowest segments of the labour market, where precarious jobs are the norm. It takes on a gender-based dimension in certain workplaces, with women in the catering sector, for example, exposed to a spectrum of sexual harassment and abuse. And its presence within the intimate spaces of family, partnership and marriage can lead people towards economic choices and behaviours they might never have otherwise considered.

This is not to say that unemployment should not be of concern, nor that it is actually the experience of bad work which drives people to violence – there is not enough in our study to demonstrate that link, although evidence from elsewhere suggests there might be something to it (Cramer, 2010; Gould et al., 2002; Grogger, 1998; Machin and Meghir, 2004 in Izzi, 2013: 110). But what we do see is that the nature of work on the precarious margins of the labour market brings with it a range of challenges for policy-makers to engage with.

The central implication of this is that policy analysis should move beyond its preoccupation with unemployment – with the idea that economic problems are first and foremost characterised by people's absolute

exclusion from the economy (i.e. the residual perspective). There needs to be an additional consideration of the ways in which labour markets are actually working for the people within them, particularly for those struggling to carve out a livelihood in their worst spaces. What this study perhaps shows more than anything else is that just because someone *is* working, it does not automatically mean they are doing well. Many people are locked into low-paid, unprotected positions where they find themselves vulnerable to abuse and exploitation by managers and other senior staff. More than one-third of all Ugandans are classified as 'working poor', and that share is concentrated disproportionately among young people (GoU, 2006). What these two points suggest is that unemployment by itself is probably not a particularly helpful measure of economic performance or personal wellbeing. We would do better to think less in terms of whether someone is employed and more in terms of the actual content of what they do to make a living, regardless of its degree of in/formality. This is exactly how some have argued for how we should be defining the fuzzy notion of 'decent work' more globally (Deranty and MacMillan, 2012).

When we do look at the content of what Lira's marginalised youth are doing to make money, we observe a number of recurring themes: low pay, irregular pay, insecure, transient, socially undesirable. We also find a degree of adverse incorporation. This is not in the sense that people find themselves locked into highly specific roles, the same job persisting year after year. In fact, our evidence suggests that young people are often highly mobile, flitting between activities, employers and geographies on a fairly frequent basis. Rather, these individuals tend to find themselves adversely incorporated into a particular stratum of the labour market, from which it is extremely difficult to escape. While physical mobility might be quite high, it is usually confined to the worst occupations available: casual labour (*leja leja*), hawking, brokering, low-grade bar work, the sex industry. Indeed, the very fact that someone is doing one of these things itself makes it hard to secure alternatives, affecting as it does personal horizons, the capacity to accumulate the 'right kind' of human capital, and the perceptions of others within the urban community. There are various reasons why this particular kind of adverse incorporation emerges for so many people, from early school drop-out to disconnection from (relatively) powerful figures to the straightforward absence of better paying, better conditioned formal wage labour. Thus, when we consider what the alternatives to casual labour actually are, and there do not seem to be many of them (at least attainable ones), it is not too difficult to see why so many of Lira's marginalised youth aspire to become their own boss. That life may not be secure or reliable – it *is* competitive and difficult – but it offers at least the possibility of living life on one's own terms when the alternatives fail to guarantee stability.

In some senses, this aspiration reflects the current range of policy approaches seeking to support entrepreneurship and enterprise. As Dolan and Rajak (2016: 515) tell us, aid-driven attempts to produce fleets of young entrepreneurs embody a normative 'vision of a personalised economy of development' in which the focus has shifted 'from macroeconomic restructuring to a more humanised focus on individual self-actualisation'. In practice, this shift away from restructuring, and the idealised conversion of Africa's youth into 'job creators' rather than 'job seekers', essentially gets governments and agencies off the hook. Gone is the need to understand how labour markets actually work, and to incorporate that understanding into policy approaches. So too the need for structural economic change, replaced as it has been with more targeted interventions geared towards increasing employability and 'liberating the inner entrepreneur' (ibid.: 515). As a result, the demand-side dynamics of labour markets – that is, the factors which determine how much decent, secure work there is available and in what ways it gets distributed – go relatively untouched while an ever increasing quantity of surplus youth labour finds itself between a rock and a hard place: a cut-throat, low-return world of self-employment on the one hand, an 'expanding informal economy' characterised by 'low wages and unstable, unprotected employment' on the other (Meagher, 2016: 493).

So what, then? The evidence shows that some of the standard vehicles for post-conflict recovery, namely microfinance and vocational training, generally have little impact (Blattman and Ralston, 2015). Perhaps it is time, therefore, to test out some alternative approaches.

- At one end of the spectrum would be an **intensification of that standard package**: make access to finance and skills even easier by expanding those options. Many of those in our survey sample identified a lack of credit as a major barrier to economic activity in Lira town, suggesting it is quite difficult for many of the poor to participate in these schemes. Expanding such programmes, and incorporating a degree of mentoring and supervision into their implementation, might see some better results. Given the saturated and weakly diversified nature of the labour market, however, that seems unlikely.
- Addressing some of the root causes of adverse incorporation would seem sensible. To that end, a range of measures designed to **keep children in school** and ensure secondary completion could be a priority. One element of that might entail better systems of social support, providing both financial and psychosocial support to single mother households and orphans vulnerable to economic exploitation.
- Part of what is making the labour market such a difficult space to get by in is the lack of viable alternatives beyond casual work. One response to this would be to try and create more alternatives, particularly in relation to the availability of wage labour. Large-scale **public works programmes** are one example, offering people a decent wage in exchange for their labour on particular projects.
- Most radical of all would be **greater collective action on labour rights and conditions**, entailing advocacy for a minimum wage, the implementation of labour laws combatting exploitative practices in the workplace, and an insistence on having grievance mechanisms for when exploitation does occur.

Of all the options available, these last measures are arguably the most politically charged. But they are also the ones likely to have the highest potential impact when it comes to the question of how to change the way in which the labour market actually works.

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Annex 1: List of interviewees

Interview No.	Date	Name	Age	Gender
01	16/09	Ambrose	19	M
02	16/09	Steven	23	M
03	16/09	Eunice	c. 30	F
04	16/09	Nancy	c. 30	F
05	17/09	Ronald	23	M
06	17/09	Francis	22	M
07	17/09	Moses	20	M
08	17/09	Mercy	24	F
09	17/09	Lucy	24	F
10	17/09	Linda	18	F
11	17/09	Zainabu	16	F
12	17/09	Ruth	28	F
13	18/09	Paul	25	M
14	18/09	Tonny	28	M
15	18/09	Brenda	21	F
16	18/09	Stella	19	F
17	18/09	Lucky	28	F
18	18/09	Anifa	21	F
19	19/09	Roland	23	M
20	19/09	Jimmy	25	M
21	19/09	Bosco	25	M
22	19/09	Colleen	32	F
23	19/09	Jane	25	F
24	21/09	Lucy (Chairperson of savings group)	-	F
25	21/09	Akora Bua (LC1)	-	M
26	21/09	Francis Okello (Senior Community Development Officer, Lira District)	-	M
27	22/09	Kawinya Paddi (Youth representative for Lango Cultural Institution)	-	M
28	23/09	Francis Otto (Police constable)	-	M
29	23/09	DJ (Police constable)	-	M

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