

Gender Differences in Labour Market Participation During Conflict: Evidence from Displaced People's Camps in Northern Uganda*

Agulu odiyo otac. - Acholi proverb
The pot is putting pressure on the grass stand.

Kim Lehrer

University of British Columbia

Job Market Paper

November 11, 2008

Abstract

This paper uses a unique data set and the exogenous nature of the conflict and resulting displacement in Northern Uganda to examine their impacts on labour market participation. I find that the longer the existence of the camp to which people moved, the less men work. In contrast, women's labour market decisions are not influenced by the age of the Internally Displaced People's camp in which they live. I argue that these responses result from the development of gender-specific social norms regarding idleness and not from a lack of opportunities. A decline in the percentage of men working in a camp leads to a reduction in the probability that a given man works of the same magnitude. I provide evidence of social interactions in male labour market participation. Moreover, I show the diffusion of norms using variation in the date of camp formation.

*The Department of Economics, University of British Columbia, 997 - 1873 East Mall, Vancouver, BC, V6T 1Z1; klehrer@interchange.ubc.ca. I gratefully acknowledge financial support for the data collection from the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI), the World Food Programme, the World Bank, UNICEF, and the SSHRC of Canada. The data was collected in collaboration with IFPRI and the Makerere University School of Public Health. I would like to thank Siwan Anderson, Nicole Fortin, Thomas Lemieux, and the participants of the UBC development seminar series for helpful comments. All remaining errors are my own.