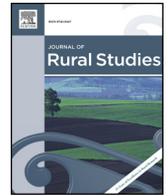




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## Bridging youth and gender studies to analyse rural young women and men's livelihood pathways in Central Uganda

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### ABSTRACT

Many development countries are currently undergoing major demographic shifts as the percentage of young people of the total population rapidly increases. This shift is associated with high rates of migration, unemployment and instability. In policy discourses, engaging youth in commercial agriculture is often presented as a measure to control or even counter these trends. In Uganda, a country with one of the youngest populations in the world, we investigated whether young people themselves see a career in farming as an option. We studied the livelihood pathways of rural-born young men and women from Central Uganda and in particular; 1) their aspirations, 2) the extent to which these aspirations are associated with agriculture, and 3) the importance of gender in shaping their opportunity spaces. Data consisted of in-depth interviews with 8 young men and 8 young women originating from the same rural community in Central Uganda (2017) and was supported by three additional datasets collected between 2010 and 2014; one qualitative case-study conducted in the same site (2014) and two survey datasets collected in three rural sites in Central Uganda in 2010 (N = 199) and 2012 (N = 54). Our findings suggest a large proportion of youth out-migrating from the rural communities, with young women migrating more often than young men. Farming was seldom an aspiration but irrespective of sex or residence most young men and women did remain engaged in agriculture in some way. The nature of the engagement was different for men and women though, with young women specifically refraining from commercial agriculture. By analyzing the opportunity space of young men and women, we uncovered how their livelihood pathways were linked to a set of normative and structural constraints maintaining gender inequality. Examples were young women's weaker resource base (land) and gender norms which discourage young women's independent commercial (agricultural) activities. To advance the engagement of young men and especially women in commercial agriculture, it is important to acknowledge these patterns and their underlying structural gender differences.

### 1. Introduction

Numbers of young people, both in terms of percentage of the population and in absolute numbers, have been steadily increasing in most of Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) since the 1950s and this is not expected to tail off until the 2050s (Canning et al., 2015). This unprecedented increase of the youth cohort in SSA has attracted the attention of many national governments and international organizations in recent years (FAO/CTA/IFAD, 2014; Popfacts, 2015; OXFAM briefing paper, 2016; DFID, 2016; CTA blog). Governments are presenting these increasing numbers of young people both as a great opportunity to boost national economies because high numbers of young people are associated with

high productivity, innovation and development, and as a potential threat to national security and stability because young people are easily mobilized by political factions against governments and can turn against the political establishment especially when unemployed and poor (Anyidoho et al., 2012a; Sumberg et al., 2012; Berckmoes and White, 2014; Yeboah et al., 2016).

There seems to be a widespread belief amongst governments and NGOs that the 'youth issue' warrants specific policies, strategies and programs aiming to integrate (more) youth in the working force, as exemplified by the increase of SSA countries with national youth policies and strategies (Youthmap Uganda, 2011). In Uganda, which in 2019 had the second youngest population in the world (World

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Population review, 2019) a multitude of youth programs and policies exists. Many of these programs focus on youth in rural areas and on agriculture. This is not surprising since the majority of young people live in rural areas (Uganda Bureau of Statistics, 2016) and agriculture is still the main occupation of nearly 70% of the Ugandan population (Uganda Bureau of Statistics, 2016). As Ripoll et al. (2017) write, more youth involvement in commercial agriculture or agri-business is often seen as the solution to ‘youth problems’ by fighting the high rates of unemployment and migration and also in the meantime reducing food insecurity and poverty through raising agricultural production and thus boosting rural and national economies (Ripoll et al., 2017; Sumberg and Okali, 2013).

An assessment of youth programs related to agriculture and agri-business in Central Uganda by Turolla et al. (2016) revealed that most of these programs have limited efficacy mainly due to the lack in knowledge of young people's diverse needs and constraints. Sumberg et al. (2012) and Ripoll et al. (2017) highlighted that youth policy and programs are often based on weak empirical evidence. Their largest concerns for ‘youth in agriculture’ policies and programs are that 1) young people's own aspirations for their future and livelihood are often not considered; 2) constraints for young men and women are not separated from structural constraints which affect most or all people in rural areas, and 3) the youth is often approached as a homogenous group, ignoring the large diversity within this group in terms of gender, education and ethnicity. Elias et al. (2018) highlighted the importance of addressing the diversity among youth based on observed large differences between aspirations of young men compared to those of women as well as gender-specific constraints in pursuing these aspirations (also see Bossenbroek et al., 2015).

The objective of this article is to investigate the aspirations of young men and women in relation to their livelihoods, in order to better understand 1) their range of aspirations, 2) the extent to which and how these aspirations are associated or linked to agriculture, and 3) the importance of gender and the (dis)enabling environment of young women and men in realizing these aspirations.

We focus on young men and women from three communities in Central Uganda and especially concentrate on one of these communities in Kiboga district. In Section 2 we introduce the conceptual framework which links youth and gender studies. In the methods (Section 3) we present four data-sets: 1) Project baseline survey (2010); 2) Survey with sub-sample of the baseline respondents (parents with child(ren) above 18 years old) (2012); 3) Qualitative community case-study on gender norms and agency in relation to agricultural innovation (2014); and 4) In-depth interviews with young men and women originating from the same rural community who either live there or elsewhere (2017). In the fourth and fifth section we present and discuss our results. We end with a discussion (Section 6) and suggestions for policies and research to further elaborate on.

## 2. Conceptual framework

### 2.1. Why study youth and gender in agriculture together?

Anyidoho et al. (2012a) argue that most policy narratives about ‘youth in agriculture’ emphasize two broad themes: ‘Marginalization’ and ‘Mobilization’. Marginalization refers to the tendency of young people being excluded from spheres of power. Mobilization illustrates the response to this; dissatisfied youth are a fertile recruiting ground for various political projects and as such instruments to disrupt socio-political stability and national security (Cooper, 2009). Simultaneously ‘the youth’ are pictured as instruments to be mobilized as agents for development and to contribute to build the future of the nation.

This framing bears resemblances with the ways that ‘women in agriculture’ are framed in policy and development discourses. When it comes to being excluded from ‘spheres of power’ for example, youth and women as social categories are both presented as marginalized and

disadvantaged groups (Sumberg and Okali, 2013). Ripoll et al. (2017) state that ‘being young’ usually implies a higher likelihood of having fewer assets, less status and less access to or less entitlement to productive resources. The same is generally concluded for women in rural areas in SSA (Quisumbing et al., 2015; Doss and Morris, 2001). What is often not clear though is how, to what degree and in relation to who or what youth and/or women are disadvantaged. Also the large heterogeneity within these groups is often ignored which hinders seeing the vast range of diversity in capacities, aspirations, constraints and opportunities that people have. With regards to mobilization, women alike youth, are branded as agents of development. The World Bank for instance, promotes investments in women's empowerment as ‘smart economics’; a sensible economic strategy to achieving development outcomes (World Bank, 2007, p. 145).

These narratives are problematic for multiple reasons: They have the tendency to ‘fix’ women and youth problems at the individual level without considering gender and generational interrelations, or structural constraints in society at large. Secondly, they often instrumentalise women and youth “to fix the world” (Chant and Sweetman, 2012) or ‘save the future’ without giving much attention to women's and youth's own aspirations. Thirdly, the often-ignored heterogeneity within ‘youth’ and ‘women’ categories does not only ignore differences according to class, age (generation), ethnicity, education, household position and other social dimensions but also ignores how the ensemble of intersecting social dimensions shapes social hierarchies. Kabeer (2014, 2015) argued that the highest levels of inequality occur at the intersection of multiple inequalities. This suggests for instance that young women, coupling gendered and age-based marginality, risk being particularly disadvantaged (Samara, 2010; White, 2015). One of the implications is that taking women and youth as specific target groups in isolation should be rejected in favor of focusing on gender and generation (age) as dimensions of inequalities (Berckmoes and White, 2014; White, 2015).

Discourses on youth and women in relation to agriculture show many parallels which suggests that research methods as well as theoretical and conceptual underpinnings of one research or policy domain might offer relevance to the other. Jackson (1999) for instance argues that gender analysis could promote understanding of exclusionary processes and practices as it inherently questions assumptions on power and agency and the meaning of marginality in a particular context. In addition, age or generation is a social dimension that shapes the degree and the modes in which women and men are affected by gender inequalities over the course of their life (van Eerdewijk et al., 2017) and vice versa. Therefore, we explicitly differentiate between young men and young women in this article.

### 2.2. From ‘youth and gender’ to ‘gender and generation’ in rural contexts

Beyond addressing youth by gender studies approaches that address how gender intersects with other social dimensions, such as age/generation or wealth, we introduce below several concepts that allow integrating gender into a generational focus.

#### 2.2.1. Livelihood pathways and opportunity space: rural contexts

Scoones (1998) defines a livelihood pathway as the result of a series of livelihood choices over time, which entail both the result of a set of conscious and planned choices or the unintended consequences of those or of external influences. This approach includes unforeseen and unintended turns beyond the liberal idea of a free-willed person that can direct and control his or her own life. It is also a dynamic approach by looking beyond just the here and now, which is important as Sumberg et al. (2012, p.3) indicate: “decisions about employment and place of residence are seldom once and for all”. We build on this in our study to understand the dynamics of changes in young people's engagement in different sectors and the way they sequence the three livelihood strategies that are generally considered as available to people with farming

backgrounds living in rural areas, for building or improving their livelihoods. These three livelihood strategies are: 1) investment in farming through processes of agricultural intensification (increasing output per unit of land) or extensification (increasing land under cultivation); 2) livelihood diversification through increasing the share of off-farm income and 3) out-migration to seek opportunities elsewhere (Scoones, 1998).

Because livelihood pathways cannot be understood without considering context, we introduce the concept of ‘opportunity space’ which refers to the constraints and opportunities associated with the socio-institutional and agro-ecological environment of the individual which affect one’s agency. We define agency as ‘the capacity to make important life choices and to act upon them’ (Kabeer, 1999 p. 438). Understanding the opportunity space allows to illuminate and explain the range of options which specific young people have and experience as having at their disposal to establish an independent life (Sumberg and Okali, 2013; Leavy and Hossain, 2014). These options can broadly be categorized according to the three main livelihood strategies detailed above. Sumberg and Okali (2013) identify two sets of factors that shape or determine the opportunity space in rural surroundings. The first captures the physical and more tangible specifics of the rural location in terms of availability and quality of market access, land, and natural resource-base – elements widely considered as the basis of farmers’ livelihood strategies (Scoones, 1998). The second set of factors captures the social and relational specifics such as norms, of the opportunity space.

Knight and Ensminger (1998) state that social norms are the foundation of social life since they guide day-to-day behavior, promote continuity over generations, and structure social interaction and the distribution of benefits and resources. We postulate that norms also influence individuals’ opportunity spaces and thus their livelihood pathways. Gender norms are part of social norms and refer to the differential expectations that ‘society’ has for men and women (Jamali, 2009). We stress that gender norms operate within hierarchies based on intersecting social dimensions. When for instance intersecting with generation, gender norms are differentiated by gender as well as by generation; meaning they prescribe different behaviors for men and women depending on their age. Gender norms are often ingrained in value systems that attribute qualities and characteristics to women that are valued less and often seen as inferior to those associated with men. Through processes of internalization and normalization, gender norms shape the way men and women act, and affect societal acceptance and value attribution to specific behaviors and ways of ‘being’ (Kabeer, 1999; Petesh et al., 2018b), and as such they shape individual perceptions and interactions (Petesh et al., 2018c). Kabeer (2014) argues that internalizing one’s own perceived ‘inferiority’ can affect one’s capacity to respond to available opportunities.

### 2.2.2. Aspirations next to ambition in relation to rural opportunity space

Aligned with Leavy and Smith (2010), this paper understands aspirations of young people to mean ‘what they would like to become’. These can both encompass expectations of future achievements as well as their dreams and hopes. The authors signal though, that it is important to realize that aspirations as such are limited, also for young people, by what “they know or can imagine” (Bajema et al., 2002, p62). Although aspirations are not necessarily coinciding with what one can realistically achieve, for which the appropriate term is ambition, it does not mean that aspirations are not grounded in the individual’s reality. Both Leavy and Hossain (2014) and Elias et al. (2018) argue that aspirations are embedded within the individual’s opportunity space, and reflect personal interests, capacities and expectations as well as the physical and social characteristics that constitute the opportunity space. Encounters (e.g. through media, visits) with other livelihoods can trigger one to reach beyond what is currently possible or socially acceptable. When these ideas gain momentum and following, they can contribute to re-defining what is ‘socially acceptable’ and can co-shape

shifts in gender and generational norms and thus opportunity spaces. Even if aspirations might not always be realistic given one’s opportunity space, the resulting aspiration-attainment gap (Leavy and Smith, 2010; Elias et al., 2018) potentially provides relevant information for policy-makers about the various personal and structural constraints young men and women face in rural areas.

### 2.2.3. Inequalities caused by economic deprivation and identity-based discrimination

The perceived marginality of vast social groups such as women or youth is often an incentive for targeting these groups for specific studies and policies. The ‘mechanics’ of inequality differ though; both the basis for and the effects of inequality can take many forms. To understand better why and how some groups are marginalized, inequality can be studied both from the perspective of economic deprivation and from the perspective of identity-based discrimination (Kabeer, 2014, 2015). Making this distinction matters because it has implications for the kind of potential remedies; economic deprivation tends to be ‘solved’ at an individual level whereas identity-based discrimination inherently requires action geared towards the ‘collective’ (Cornwall, 2016). In this paper we aim at assessing how the resource base of individuals is related to gender and age/generation and how this intersect with inequalities as for instance associated with gender norms, especially in rural contexts.

## 3. Methods

Data was collected in three sites in the Central region of Uganda, in several phases between 2010 and 2017 (Fig. 1). We briefly describe the three study sites where quantitative data was collected and zoom in on the site where we conducted more in-depth studies. Following on this we describe research methodology for all phases of the research.

### 3.1. Study sites

Quantitative data was collected in one site in each of the following three districts: Nakaseke, Kiboga and Sembabule (Fig. 2) all located in rural areas of Central Uganda. The Central region of Uganda largely overlaps with the kingdom of Buganda and its people, the Baganda, form the largest ethnic group in Uganda whose language, Luganda, is the most commonly spoken after English. The central region houses the capital Kampala and borders Lake Victoria to the south. The area is characterized by a bimodal rainfall pattern, with precipitation concentrated in two periods from March to June and from August to December. Annual precipitation for 2012 was 651 mm for Nakaseke, 1096 mm for Kiboga and 1043 mm for Sembabule. Mean temperature, similar for all sites, ranged from 15 °C to 30 °C. The landscape is characterized by rolling hills and broad valleys with swamps. Both swamps and grasslands are reducing as land is increasingly converted to cropland.

We conducted additional qualitative studies in the study site in Kiboga district, in a parish consisting of several villages situated 3 km away from a small trading center along the national Kampala-Hoima road. Since the tarmacking of this main road two decades ago, connection to urban areas has considerably improved. The parish is home to people from at least four ethnicities next to the Baganda majority. Most migrants settled after the war (1986) but others came from as far as Burundi in the 1950–60s. Most people belong to various Christian faiths such as Catholicism, Anglicanism or Pentecostal, there is also a Muslim minority.

The area is situated in a zone called the ‘cattle-corridor’ which stretches from Southwest to Northeast Uganda. This zone has many characteristics of semi-arid regions such as high rainfall variability and proneness to droughts and a historical reliance on pastoralism (McGahey and Visser, 2015).

Mixed farming is the main occupancy in the community with the

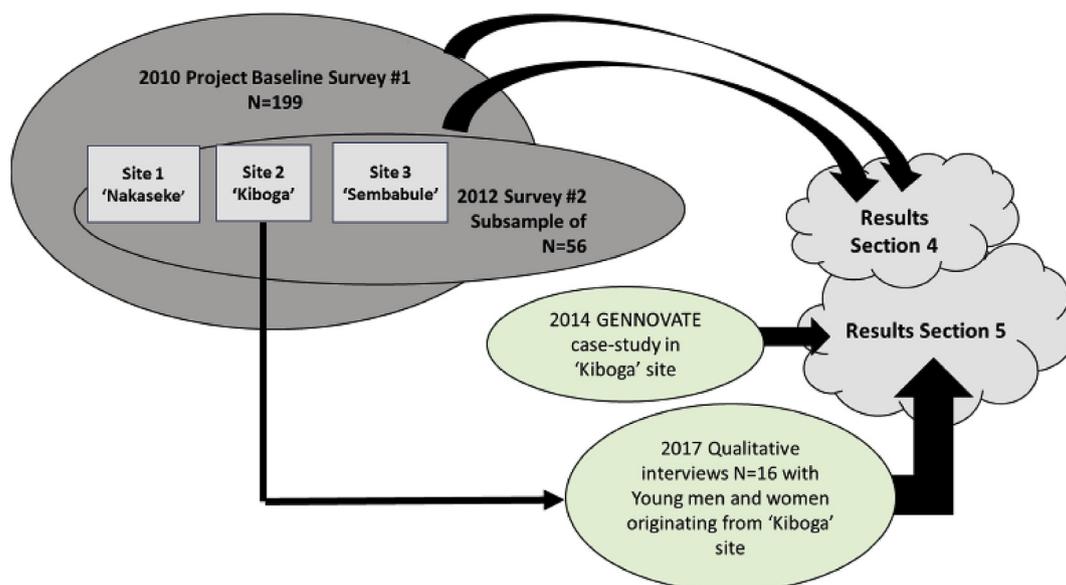


Fig. 1. Overview of different data-sets and how these fed into result section 4 and 5.

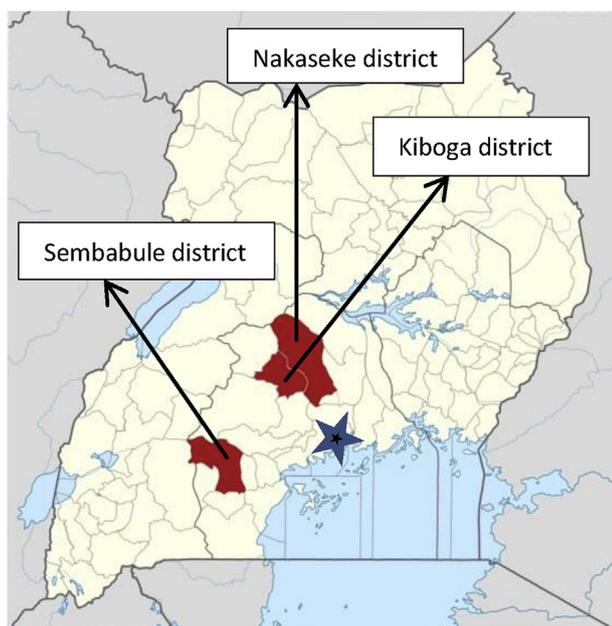


Fig. 2. The three study sites in the Central region of Uganda and capital Kampala (star).

largest area dedicated to coffee followed by maize and bananas (both cooking and juice types) as key-crops. Often these crops are all intercropped with food crops such as beans and sweet potatoes, in the same field. Maize can increasingly be found cultivated as monoculture. Brewing of banana beverages, once the main source of income for many households, is slowly losing importance (Rietveld et al., 2014).

### 3.2. Data collection

#### 3.2.1. Quantitative data collection

A baseline survey (Survey #1) with a total sample size of 199 households (Nakaseke (n = 54), Kiboga (n = 89) and Sembabule (n = 56)) was conducted in 2010 by Bioversity International in collaboration with the National Agricultural Research Organization (NARO) of Uganda. Forty-five percent of the respondents were women and 25% of the total households in the sample were headed by women.

Households were selected via random sampling from a list containing all households in the sites compiled by local administrators. The survey consisted of pre-tested questions on diverse aspects of the household and farm system (Mpiira et al., 2013).

Additional data was collected in 2012 (Survey #2) from a subsample of the baseline respondents of Survey #1, namely those that had adult children aged  $\geq 18$  years. Thirty-three fathers and 23 mothers (Kiboga n = 20, Sembabule n = 20 and Nakaseke n = 16) were interviewed. These 56 parents discussed 173 adult children (89 men and 84 women) between 18 and 30 years old. The fact that this survey collected indirect data, parents talking about their children, poses some limitations with regards to the nature of questions and possibly the accuracy of the answers.

#### 3.2.2. Qualitative data collection

In 2014 a case-study about gender norms and agency in relation to agricultural innovation was conducted in Kiboga district. The case-study was part of the CGIAR GENNOVATE project, a comparative and collaborative research project addressing the relationships between gender norms, agency, and agricultural innovation and natural resource management through contextually embedded qualitative analyses (Badstue et al., 2018). The GENNOVATE methodology is a “medium-n” qualitative methodology which features 15 data collection activities for each community/case-study consisting of focus group discussions (FGDs) targeted at different gender, age and wealth groups, individual interviews and group interviews (Petesh et al., 2018a).

In 2017, in-depth interviews with 8 men and 8 women, aged between 18 and 30 years, were conducted with respondents originating from our study parish in Kiboga district. These young men and women were primarily selected from the list of children provided by parents participating in the survey of 2012. We re-visited (most of) these parents to re-list their adult children. Then we purposefully selected potential interviewees from this list on basis of sex, age-group (18–24 or 25–30 years) and a binary current residence status: ‘stayer’ when still living in the study parish or ‘migrant’ if they moved out. To increase the level of diversity, we used snowball sampling to find additional potential interviewees from poorer backgrounds. All potential interviewees were contacted either by phone or directly and invited to participate in the interview. Our final sample included 8 ‘stayers’ and 8 ‘migrants’ with equal numbers of women and men for each of the two age-groups. The interview itself was semi-structured and was loosely based on the ‘life-history’ interview guideline of the GENNOVATE

**Table 1**  
Percentage of young household heads in the districts Nakaseke, Kiboga and Sembabule, Uganda, in 2010 (Survey #1) and national population census of Uganda of 2014 (Uganda Bureau of Statistics, 2016).

Age-group household heads	UBOS data for 2014	Baseline survey 2010
< 18 years	0.4%	0
18–24 years	8.9%	3.6%
25–34 years	27.5%	15.4%
Total	36.8%	19.0%

methodology (Petesh et al., 2018a). It contained questions about the respondent's background, childhood and adolescence before focusing on occupational history, current occupation, aspirations for the future, interest and engagement in agriculture, and challenges in realizing aspirations. By virtue of the selection process, migrants who broke off ties with the parish were not included in our sample. The interview data was coded in Nvivo 10 based on a coding tree developed by the first author. The names used in this paper are fictitious to protect respondents' privacy.

#### 4. Gender differences in migration, occupation and resources

##### 4.1. Gender differences in migration and motives for changing residence

The percentage of young (< 35 years) household heads was lower in Survey #1 than in national statistics (Uganda Bureau of Statistics, 2016) (Table 1). Overall, 12.5% of all household members listed in survey #1 fell in the 18–30 years age bracket. (Uganda Bureau of Statistics, 2016).

The majority (63%) of 173 adult children of 18–30 years had moved away from their parent's communities and this was more common for women than for men (Survey #2, Table 2). Most of the young men and women who had migrated lived in Kampala metropole (capital plus suburbs).

As reasons to leave their parents' compound (according to parents), marriage or 'starting a family' was mentioned most for female children (49%) but was also an important incentive for male children (21%). Men mostly migrated (50%) because of work-related reasons but also for women (36%) work was the second commonest reason to move out. A third important reason for young men (16%) to leave was that they 'had grown up'.

##### 4.2. Gender differences in occupation and resource base of 'stayers' and 'migrants'

Survey #2 respondents were able to indicate the primary occupation for a total of 155 out of 173 adult children of age 18–30 years (Table 3). Agriculture was the most common occupation for both sexes. Few young men and women were studying and the number of male

**Table 2**  
Residence of young adult children (18–30 years) at the time of the interview according to their parents interviewed in 2012.

	Living-in with parents <sup>a</sup>	Independent in birth parish <sup>a</sup>	Kampala incl. suburbs	District city <sup>b</sup>	Trading center <sup>b</sup>
Male	18 (20%)	25 (28%)	30 (34%)	10 (11%)	6 (7%)
Female	8 (10%)	13 (15%)	43 (51%)	12 (14%)	8 (10%)
Both sexes	26 (15%)	38 (22%)	73 (42%)	22 (13%)	14 (8%)
	64 (37%)		109 (63%)		

<sup>a</sup> The actual location of residence was in one of the study-sites in one of the three districts (Nakaseke, Kiboga and Sembabule, see Fig. 2).

<sup>b</sup> Main city of the District and/or the specific trading center were located in one of the three districts (Nakaseke, Kiboga and Sembabule, see Fig. 2).

students was 3 times higher than that of women. Young men and women who had out-migrated mostly had occupations categorized as 'other'. Jobs included in this category for both sexes were; teaching, hairstyling, soldier and casual labor. For men construction and mechanics were common and for women being a nurse or house-wife. Only three men and two women had 'white-collar' jobs working in public administration.

Slightly under one-third of the young men and women owned land and this was mostly owned by youth who had out-migrated (Table 4). A larger percentage of young men (33%) than young women (26%) owned land. Land owned was situated both within the study sites and elsewhere. About 30% of the land-owning youth had received land as a gift from either their parents or other relatives. Young men were much more likely than young women to have bought land whereas young women had mostly inherited or received land as a gift. Nearly 45% of both young men and young women not living with their parents supported their parents financially.

#### 5. Gender differences in livelihood pathways

##### 5.1. Description Interviewees (2017 in-depth interviews)

In 2017 we interviewed four young adult men and four young adult women who we classified as 'migrants' because they lived outside of the parish of birth. Two women lived in the nearby town center and one man lived in the district's main town. The other two women and three men interviewed had moved to Kampala metropolis. Only one of the young women lived in a peri-urban setting, all the others lived in urban centers. Of the eight interviews we conducted with 'stayers', i.e. young people currently living in the study parish, the two youngest men (18 and 20 years old) lived in their parents' house; one was renting a single room in the center of the parish and one lived in his brother's house while he was constructing his own house. Of the women, one young woman of 25 years old had married and lived in a house owned by her family-in-law. The other three young women (22, 24, 29 years old) had all returned to live with their parents (mothers) again.

##### 5.2. Motivations to migrate

From both the FGDs (2014) and interviews (2017) it was apparent that young men and women considered migration as a recurring and ordinary element of life and also as an inevitable strategy to both formulate and achieve one's aspirations. The young men and women often provided a mix of reasons to migrate, usually consisting of one or a combination of the following reasons:

- 1) **The promise of a better life through education and training** is an important motivation behind migration. Already in adolescence (12–18 years) seven young people out of 16 interviewees had moved away from the parish to follow secondary education or vocational training (mostly informal as apprentice of a craftsman/woman). Two more have migrated in their youth for vocational training and another two cherish hopes to complete secondary advanced levels or do a vocational training in the near future.
- 2) **The quest for economic opportunity** is another important motive for migration. The city is generally conceived as a place where someone can make money. Both women and men tend to only leave the parish though, when a concrete economic opportunity presents itself. Usually when a family-member or friend already living in the specific location has a job lined up for him/her.
- 3) **Marriage and family formation** as reason to migrate is only mentioned by women. Women expressed a strong preference to marry outside of the parish. They link this to a feeling of shame towards men they know and who are familiar with the abusive behavior of their father against their mother. Several women also mentioned that men 'you would want to marry' are not found in the

**Table 3**  
Occupation of young men and women according to their parents interviewed in 2012.

Occupation	Living in the community		Out-migrated		Total
	Young men	Young women	Young men	Young women	
Farming	20	7	7	10	44 (28%)
Student	8	3	1	0	12 (8%)
Trade & merchandise	5	4	8	9	26 (17%)
White collar	3	2	0	0	5 (3%)
None	2	1	1	4	8 (5%)
Other	6	2	25	27	60 (39%)
Total youth	44	19	42	50	155 (100%)

**Table 4**  
Land ownership and financial support to parents of young men and women according to their parents interviewed in 2012.

	Living in the community		Out-migrated		Total
	Young men	Young women	Young men	Young women	
Owns Land	0 (N = 18)	1 (N = 8)	23 (N = 51)	17 (N = 60)	41 (30%) N = 137 Women 26% Men 33%
Financially supports parents	5 (N = 30)	0 (N = 10)	32 (N = 57)	33 (N = 63)	70 (44%) N = 160 Women 45% Men 43%

parish.

- 4) **'Orientation' or personal development through visits or short stays** at family members' in the specific destination. The idea of 'opening up one's mind' by leaving the native parish without a direct economic or educational objective in mind, and traveling elsewhere, is frequently mentioned.
- 5) **A preference for urban life versus life in the rural area** is linked to 4). Urban life is described as 'good and soft life' where one does not need 'to hustle all the time' and is inspired by all the people, leisure options and opportunities around. This is juxtaposed with rural or village life where there is no electricity nor running water, where diets are monotonous, everybody knows you and your family, and 'digging' is the only livelihood possible.

Although we differentiated between migrants and stayers in our selection, this distinction only refers to the moment in time the interviews were conducted. All so-called stayers had migrated at one point in their lives. For both categories and both genders the native parish often remained the safe haven where one returns to when job or businesses fail, money is finished or relations end. Whatever the reason to migrate was, the destination was usually determined by where one had friends or relatives originating from the parish. Notwithstanding the importance and status attached to secondary schooling, only four of (16) young men (2) and women (2) interviewed had completed the basic (O) level of secondary school. And, likely as a result of this, professional aspirations were mostly geared towards informal sectors and low-skill jobs, sometimes supported by vocational courses or training.

### 5.3. Interest and actual engagement; aspirations in farming?

Whether currently living in rural or urban settings, man or woman, the majority of interviewees were engaged in agriculture in one way or another (See Boxes 1-4). We distinguished four categories with different degrees of engagement and interest in agriculture on a continuum scale from 'no interest in farming at all' to considering farming as the 'preferred livelihood'.

#### 1) Farming? No!

In this category we find the only two young people from our sample of 16 whom were neither interested nor engaged in farming. Siifa manages her husband's boutique in the nearby small town and Francis lives in Kampala where he acts as a janitor for an apartment complex in exchange for food and living. Both express a personal dislike for farming itself, describing it as labor-intensive and dirty, and for rural living conditions in general, which are poor and inferior to urban conditions. Both would have access to farm land through their relatives, who are successful at farming.

#### 2) Reluctant farmers

This category is where interest and actual engagement in farming are most diverging; three young women and one young man, all living in the study parish, farm without ambition to farm. They prefer to do something else but (perhaps temporarily) see no alternative to farming. What they have in common is the way farming is framed in their narratives: as a dead-end rather than a viable livelihood. All of them do not individually own land, are (partially) dependent on their parents and they feel limited and deprived of their agency. The circumstances are very different though for the one young man, Richard (Box 1), and the three women in this category. Isa (Box 2), Macalata (30 years) and Brenda (22 years) are single mothers who moved back in with their parents after their marriage ended (Isa and Macalata) or following an unplanned, undesired pregnancy (Brenda). They farm for food on their parents' land or rent land to feed themselves and their children. Small revenues obtained from crop sales are used for livelihood necessities rather than for (re-) investment in agriculture. All three breastfed a child at the time of the interview and all indicated that their situation was expected to change when the child ceases to breastfeed, opening up new opportunities.

#### 3) Farming as part of diversification strategies

The attitudes of four young women and four young men following a diversification strategy were considerably more positive towards farming than in the former two categories. Both the respondents classified as 'migrant' and as 'stayer' framed farming as an important contribution to livelihoods but one that should be practiced together with other activities.

**Box 1**

Richard (male, 18 years), who just dropped out of secondary school because of lack of finances, aspired to complete secondary school and to continue with vocational education in mechanics. For his school fees however he was dependent on his father. Although his father has a lot of land and a retail shop and is thus relatively wealthy, he also has 3 younger children with his second wife. These children are all in boarding schools and paying their school fees has been given priority. His father has told Richard to be patient for a year and farm with him on the 3-4 days / week he goes to his fields. In addition, Richard has to assist his mother with brewing of banana-gin. Richard also grows maize for himself on his father's land but acknowledges that his father often 'borrows' the harvest and does not pay back. He does not have control over the income he generates and is fully depended on his father for upkeep. He is eager to leave this life which he considers to be 'on hold' and start his 'real' life either by continuing his education or by moving to the city

Although there were equal numbers of women and men in this category, their narratives about the position of agriculture in their diversified livelihood and the value of their livelihood as a whole in terms of income, varied considerably. While for women, like in the former category, farming was geared towards providing food to the household, for men farming was primarily commercial and geared towards optimizing income and reducing risks. For women in this category, versus the former, the main difference was that they had additional livelihood activities which generated income. In addition, they seemed more long-term engaged and more content with farming than the women in the former category. The married women who farmed on their husbands' land also identified their income-generating activity as insurance in case their marriage ends. Susan (24 years) who was training to become a tailor, said for instance: *"Wives always have to be ready for anything, in case he kicks me out, I can be ready to support myself"*.

Two of the women in this category, Cissé (27 years) and Deborah (25 years), disqualified commercial agriculture as an activity for women even if land is available through their husbands. They considered commercial agriculture as too strenuous for women, especially when there is no support from their husband for either labor provision or cash investment. In addition, they considered themselves too busy with their reproductive tasks. Both earn some money through tailoring and Deborah also runs a small stall with food items on market days. Only one of the women in this category, Esther (box 3), has made a conscious choice to invest off-farm income in agriculture.

Of the four men who pursue diverse businesses for their livelihood, three live in urban centers, while one resides in the study parish. This latter one was Christopher (30 years) who has benefitted from the fact that his father is a large, well-off land-owner in the parish. Already at adolescence he received land from his father to cultivate and at 19 years he had established his own coffee and banana plantations and built his own house. He briefly worked at a piggery in peri-urban Wakiso but returned when he realized he could make more money from farming for himself. At the time of the interview he was combining trade in coffee and other crops with livestock rearing and coffee and banana cultivation. Although his businesses were all related to agriculture, he

**Box 2**

Isa (female, 24 years old) from a large polygamous family, was forced to drop out of secondary school when she was 15 years old because there was no money for her fees. She then started living with her paternal aunt in urban Nansana, because she wanted to experience 'city life'. Since there was little money in the polygamous household of her aunt, she assisted with metal scrap collection on the street for two years. When her aunt divorced, she decided to leave and look for a husband. She found a room in Nansana and a job as a bookshop keeper through a male friend who also topped up her meagre salary. When she refused to have sex with him though, he stopped giving her money and she was forced to seek other options. Another man asked her to move in with him, which she did, and they started a relationship and lived in Wakiso town. After one year she conceived of a child. She does not work in this time because the boyfriend earned enough money with his job at a supermarket. When she conceived a second child, he lost his job and she took out a loan to start a retail shop. She did not manage to make the retail profitable and simultaneously pay off her debt however and the relationship deteriorated because of lack of money. 21 years old and pregnant she went back to the study parish with her child. Currently she rents a room next to her mother's place in the parish trading center; her mother runs a bar where she sells local brew. Isa makes a living by selling bottled soda's and beers in her mother's bar and she also conducts casual farm work and farms on both her father's land for food crops and rents land where she planted maize. She managed to pay off her loan by brewing gin. She dislikes life in the parish; the digging and serving drunk people in the bar, and hopes that one day she can open-up a retail shop in town.

considered himself a business man rather than a farmer.

The other three men in this category, Miracle (Box 4), Patrick (20 years) and Sunday (29 years), had to struggle more to acquire land and build their livelihoods. All three had steady income from respectively metalwork, managing a hardware store and construction. Their specific occupations were more the result of a chain of events and random opportunities than of a purposively chosen career (e.g. Miracle, Box 4). Patrick completed secondary school and Miracle and Sunday both invested in vocational training on the job. Although at the time of the interview all three lived outside the study parish, they engaged in farming in the parish and neighboring areas on both purchased and rented land. Miracle and Sunday both owned banana/coffee plantations in the parish which they attended to regularly. Sunday also rented land for cultivation of annual crops. Patrick was engaged in maize farming on rented land together with his father. They all emphasized that commercial agriculture could be very good if a person can make investments and they are not solely dependent on it, but their ambitions were geared towards non-farm activities. Miracle and Patrick wanted to own their own (work)shop, Sunday dreamt of being the first one in Kiboga district able to build multi-storied buildings. All four men received support from their family in the form of fees for education and/or in the form of access to land.

#### 4) Farming? It's my dream and future

There were only two young men in this category and both lived in the study parish. What these two had in common but what set them apart from the others was that they not only considered agriculture as potentially profitable, they also aspired farming as a full-time profession or career. In other respects they were very different from each other. Ambrose (26 years) is from a very poor land-less household with both parents' parents having come from Burundi to settle in nearby Mpiigi. Ambrose did not manage to complete primary school; he has pursued many different jobs and businesses in and outside of agriculture since the age of 12 when he started working as servant and herding boy on a large commercial farm. He has migrated back and

## Box 3

Esther (female, 25 years) has moved places from a young age after her parents divorced when she was a toddler. She initially lived with her maternal grandmother in the study parish and then moved to Nansana together with her grandmother. She would spend school holidays with her uncle in the study parish again and when she was 16 she met a boy, started a secret relationship and conceived. Back in Nansana she informed her boyfriend who told her to come back to the study parish. Her uncle found her, had the boy arrested and imprisoned for defilement for one year. She continued living with her uncle where she gave birth. When the baby's father was released, they started living together and had two more children in three years time. Esther would farm and rear pigs but her partner controlled all income. He was often violent and one day after a severe beating she left him and went to her grandmother in Nansana with her youngest child. She had her brother pick up the two elder children and bring them to her mother's house in the study parish where they still live. Esther's aunt, a nun, found her a live-in position as cook in the seminary in Kampala. Although the job was convenient, the salary was low and not enough to send all her children to school. Esther has invested in pigs and goats which her mother was rearing on her land back in the study parish. Esther is now debating on whether to either go back to the study parish and expand her livestock activities or to invest in retail of clothing in the nearby small town or a combination of both. In any case, she is looking for ways to be together with her children and earn money. She was afraid people would talk about her in the parish and, before, she was expecting that her mother and the children's father would urge her to go back to him. She heard though that he left the parish, so feels more comfortable moving back. Esther doesn't like living in the parish because *"it is hard to develop while there. It's hard to make money from there. However, if the city fails you, what can you do? You go back home"*. If she does move back she will also engage in crop farming again because: *"You cannot live in the village and not farm"*.

forth between the study parish, the nearby small town, Mpiigi and other district towns in Central Uganda with one main goal: saving money to buy land in his parish of birth to establish a banana plantation large enough to sustain him and his future family. He has already obtained a small plot but foresees needing another decade of casual work and saving before he will be able to buy the land he needs to realize his dream. 20 year old Gerald comes from a much more privileged background than Ambrose; his father is a reverend who has funded his primary and secondary education up to now. At the time of the interview Gerald was farming on his parents' land but wanted to complete his advanced levels of secondary school and continue to university to study 'agriculture', to become both a modern farmer himself and an agricultural extension officer.

### 5.3.1. Gender and other social differences

None of the young women were represented in the category that considered farming as their future dream. In all data sources used in this study there was a broad consensus (norm) that commercial or serious farming could be suitable for men but much less for women. Stated reasons in the interviews were that women lack 'male physical strength', which is often mentioned as a prerequisite, and have limited access to land, little interest and conflicting obligations. Christopher (category 3) bluntly asked the rhetorical question: *"When would women get time to farm for themselves?!"* It was supposedly obvious that women have no time next to their responsibilities in the household's reproductive work and their obligation to help their husband with his crops.

Another reason why women would avoid commercial farming is the

possibility that husbands claim the resulting revenues. Esther (box 3) argued for instance that *"husbands in the village take all money which women earn with farming"*. She also indicated that if she would have been a boy, she would have received more support to build her livelihood in the parish because boys are expected to work hard – do manual farm labor – more than girls. It is common for girls to rather receive support and encouragement from their family to engage in 'soft' feminine jobs like tailoring and hairdressing. The flip-side of this is that girls and young women tend to invest less in farming and rural livelihoods than their male counterparts.

The majority of interviewees came from families with large land holdings, from which considerable income was generated from primarily coffee and banana production and brewing. This however did not automatically translate into higher educational status of the interviewee or more (financial) support. Mainly because most of these families were polygamous and/or had many children from several mothers (12 of 16 interviewees had over 10 (half-)siblings of whom 5 had over 20 (half-)siblings). Young men and women from families with large landholdings did tend to have better access to land though, compared to those from families with little or no land, although especially for girls this did not mean they could farm autonomously.

## 6. Discussion

### 6.1. Out-migration and farming are not mutually exclusive

Results from the project baseline Survey #1 presented in Section 4, clearly indicate an out-migration of young men and women from the

## Box 4

Miracle (male, 28 years old) was born as the 7th child of his mother. His father had two more wives and over 30 children and was a large, well-off coffee farmer, whose wives produced food crops. Miracle completed primary school, helped his mother with farming and his father with coffee harvest and drying after school. He started secondary school but had to give up in his second year because of lack of school fees. He worked as a casual laborer on other people's farms and got involved in coffee trade through a large local trader. He first traveled to Kampala at the age of 17 years, on the invitation of his uncle who had a job for him as a delivery boy for a bakery. He did this job for one year, earned well and loved it. But when the bakery closed, he lost his job and quickly ran out of money; after which he returned to the parish of birth. After some disappointing experiences as a boda-boda driver, Miracle was quite successful in building his livelihood back home. He traded in coffee, brewed banana-beer and gin, inherited land for farming, build a house, married and opened up a retail shop in the parish which was managed by his wife. Yet, when a friend approached him when he was 25 years old and informed him about an opportunity for training-on-the-job in a metal and welding workshop in Nansana near Kampala, he seized the opportunity and sold the shop to pay for his tuition and moved to Nansana together with his wife and their child. *"It is always good to learn a practical skill"* he says. He describes urban life as always having to think creatively and being exposed to many ideas. He is currently still working there, saving money to open up his own workshop in town and simultaneously invests in agriculture on his land in his birth parish. He has someone managing his coffee and banana plantation and while he goes back and forth for harvest, for weddings and burials, he considers moving back permanently as *'going back to zero'*.

three rural study sites; the total percentage of household members listed in the survey considered as 'youth' (18–30 years) was only 12.5% compared to 20.5% nationally (Uganda Bureau of Statistics, 2016). This realization was also what prompted rolling-out Survey #2 back in 2012 since we were curious to know why young people were missing both as respondents of the survey and in baseline listings of household members (see also Rietveld et al., 2012). From Survey #2 we learn that out-migration is very common. Similarly, to Schuyler et al. (2015) we used the term 'out-migration' to refer to moves in which the new residence is located outside of the research site. Of the 173 young men and women discussed by 56 parents, 63% had out-migrated. Young women had out-migrated more often than young men, for which we will provide an explanation later in this discussion. For both sexes the majority had moved to the urban area of the Kampala metropole. These findings are consistent with migration studies conducted for Uganda such as Herrin et al. (2009) who analyse data from the Uganda National Household Survey (UNHS 11) (all ages) and Schuyler et al. (2015) who conducted a large study in the Rakai district, also in the Central region of Uganda, for 15–24 years old youth. Results from Surveys #1 and #2 indicate that out-migration is an important theme for young men and women in Rural Central Uganda.

From survey #2 we learn that men mostly migrated (50%) because of work-related reasons which is also in line with what Herrin et al. (2009) found for men at a national scale for Uganda. Apart from marriage we identified 'men having grown up' as third most important reason to leave their parents' compound. Nyanzi et al. (2009) argue this is a euphemism for being sexually active and that becoming sexually active and leaving the parents' home is considered an important step for Baganda young man into 'manhood'. A similar reason for moving out is not mentioned for young women.

From our qualitative datasets focusing on only one of these sites in Central Uganda, we learn that 'the rural' in this case is not an isolated place. There is fluidity in what constitutes 'the rural' and 'the urban' space and how young men and women shape and form their livelihoods. Young men and women's livelihood pathways in Central Uganda literally treaded back and forth through the urban and the rural. If they had not made (extended) visits to other parts of the country and notably the city by themselves, these young men and women would have friends, siblings and other relatives who told them about it. This does inevitably influence their aspirations (see Bajema et al., 2002) and makes it easier to migrate at the same time. Migrating to where one knows people and has support is referred to as chain-migration; a well-known phenomenon in migration studies in Uganda (Barratt et al., 2012) and beyond (Andersson, 2001; Gugler, 2002). The economic opportunities to which the interviewees latched on and often migrated for, were often not immediately aligned with their aspirations though. They considered such 'chances' as potential steppingstones to something else more preferred. At the same time relations with the rural background were often maintained by migrants. This can be considered an indicator for the (financial) resource base of youth and of a continuing connection of the 'migrant' with their rural origins.

It also became clear that although the nature of these young men and women's engagement in agriculture often changed, the mere fact that they engaged in agriculture often did not change. This tendency amongst young people; to stay committed to farming notwithstanding the importance of other income generating activities, was also identified by Berckmoes and White (2014) in Burundi. This does not mean however that most young people aspire to farm. Many young men and women are critical about agriculture (Anyidoho et al., 2012a, 2012b; Leavy and Hossain, 2014; Sumberg et al., 2012, 2014) and we also found this in our study. We distinguished four categories of engagement and interest in agriculture; distaste for farming was expressed most profoundly in category one (Farming? No) and two (Reluctant farmers). It is important to realize this distaste consists of different elements. First, there is farming itself, which was associated with labor-intensive, dirty work for low returns. Second, there were the associations with the

place in which farming happens: The rural with no facilities; no electricity nor tap water, no good schools, no shops, no hospitals and no other employment options than farming. In addition, we support that young people, as Beuving (2010) calls it, often have 'a cultural preference' for urban life and the various social, economic and leisure opportunities it provides. Thirdly, farming seems not to be attractive or even feasible to young women specifically and therefore seldom the focus of their aspirations.

## 6.2. Gendered strategies, opportunity space and inequalities in rural contexts

The four categories we identified in relation to interest and actual engagement in farming seem to overlap largely with the three livelihood strategies available to rural dwellers of 1) Investment in- and intensification of farming, 2) Diversification through off-farm income generation, and 3) Migration (Scoones, 1998). From our data it becomes apparent though that the majority of young men and women temporary follow two or all three of these strategies at different times in their life depending on their opportunities, interests and capacities in that particular time period. It is also clear that these opportunities, interests and capacities are very different for young men and women, and two factors play an important role in shaping these: land and relations. These two factors both shed light on the inequality existing between men and women in Uganda and especially on the marginality of young women. We argued that the 'mechanics' of inequality differ and that both the sources and the effects of inequality can take multi-fold forms. To better understand why and how some groups are marginalized we applied the approach of Kabeer to study inequality from the perspective of both economic deprivation and identity-based discrimination (Kabeer, 2014, 2015).

### 6.2.1. Land

We found a large divergence between men and women with regards to access and rights to land. This gap is likely to increase amongst our respondents, when more and more young men will inherit land from their parents. Because, although Uganda's constitution grants equal rights to men and women, it also accepts the customary laws which favors male ownership of land and prescribes land should be inherited by male relatives (Bomuhangi et al., 2011; Rietveld et al., 2016). Even if women inherit land this is usually not on an individual basis and with full control. Instead, women in Uganda typically access land through their husbands, fathers and sons (Bomuhangi et al., 2011) which puts them in a vulnerable position vis-à-vis these men (GENNOVATE RTB-HT team, 2017). Women's reduced or insecure access to land as compared to men can be related to economic deprivation (USAID, 2016). Herrin et al. (2009) directly link this to a larger likelihood of women than men to migrate because without land they have less interest in staying. We too find that young people of both sexes consider it much harder for women to access land than for men, although it must be said that limited land availability in general is a problem in Uganda and the wider East-African region (e.g. Berckmoes and White, 2014) and world (FAO/CTA/IFAD, 2014). Kristensen and Birch-Thomsen (2013) generally attribute the large tendency of Uganda youth compared to Zambian youth to migrate to the lack of access to land in Uganda. So, there is a group of young people (1) who do not have access to land (nor control) because they are from families with little or no land (Ambrose is such an example), which can be considered as disadvantaged from a resource-base perspective. There is a group of young men (2) who might have access but not yet control over land but they are due to inherit land. And (3) there's a group of women with limited access to land who will never gain control over this land because of their identity as a woman. It can be argued that young men such as Ambrose, through jobs and savings ethics, can eventually overcome this disadvantage and purchase land. Women's opportunity space for following a similar path is much more restricted however, since not only do gender norms

discourage women's control over land, their access to income-generating activities is contested too.

### 6.2.2. Social relations

For young men, relations with women and having children seem to be have limited influence on their livelihood choices and opportunities. For young women this is quite different; their relations with men and the consequences of these relations – pregnancy, having children, domestic violence; financial dependency – usually feature prominently in their narratives. In women's narratives there is also often mention of men giving presents and financial support to women in exchange for sex and as basis for the relationship. In our sample this was common, and we saw this for instance in the case of Isa (Box 1) who seeks support from men in order to survive in town after support from her family has dried up. A phenomenon described by Samara (2010) as 'the norm' in Uganda (also see Bell, 2012 and Barratt et al., 2012) and referred to as 'something-for-something-love' (SFSL). Samara (2010) argues that SFSL can be coercive but is also commonly part of normal romantic relations and that the sex is not necessarily involuntary. Young women do tend to be less likely to negotiate condom-use if sex is part of a financial transaction (Samara, 2010). In a context in which men mostly shun condoms, the common 'SFSL' nature of heterosexual relationships might thus contribute to the large number of unplanned pregnancies amongst girls and young women. This is relevant as we see very clearly in our datasets how very often young women's aspirations and ambitions are deterred by unwelcome pregnancies and sexually transmitted diseases (e.g. Macalata in our sample is HIV +). The fathers often do not contribute to the upkeep of their children. This means that in addition to postponing or giving up their aspirations, young single mothers have the difficult task to provide for their children often before they have had a chance to build their own livelihood.

Another reason why it is relevant to think about SFSL-relationships are some of the possible underlying drivers or causes of this phenomenon. If young women need men for financial support, this implies they cannot easily access or generate sufficient income by themselves. And if they do, they can easily be denied control. We argue that this is linked to women's weaker resource base such as described above for land, to gender norms which discourage women's independent commercial activities especially in farming (Rietveld, 2017), and to normative expectations for women to 'find a husband, raise a family' and to be under the authority of their husband rather than aiming for professional/economic fulfillment. It can further be argued that, in this case, speaking of Scoones' (1998) three broad livelihood strategies is irrelevant for (these) young women. Because they rarely are able to intensify farming, and diversification, and possibly migration are mainly directed towards finding male economic support. The latter is also demonstrated when discussing 'reasons to migrate'; marriage and family formation came up as major motivations for specifically young women's out-migration both in parents' and young women's responses. Together these intersecting restrictions shape young women's opportunity space and make it understandable why young women do not aspire or engage in (commercial) agriculture. When young women do consider farming (as part of) their livelihood, they generally refer to subsistence farming of food crops, which is compatible with normative expectations and common land tenure arrangements (Rietveld and Farnworth, 2018).

The above shows that there is no easy-fix to engage more young men and especially women in commercial agriculture and agri-business. But we also show where possible ways out can be found and that these are likely to be different for young men and women. It also shows there are always exceptions: young men and women such as Ambrose and Esther (Box 3) who do see opportunity in commercial agriculture as primary or part of a diversified livelihood.

For the majority of youth, and particularly for young women, their limited investment and engagement in commercial agriculture can only be altered by addressing underlying structural constraints surfaced by this study. Without legal reforms and improved enforcement of existing

land policies it can hardly be expected that the gender gap with regards to access and control over land will be reduced. Also youth's engagement in agriculture needs to be connected to wider rural development concerns to improve rural life. For instance through better access and availability of health care, education, entrepreneurial support, transport, electricity and clean water.

We identified poor young single mothers farming for subsistence on family members' land as a particularly vulnerable group. They seem a liable target group for specific social programs aiming to promote commercial agriculture and to reduce constraints. Lastly, raising awareness about sex and reproductive health and promoting gender equality and women's empowerment in a systemic fashion could in the long run influence gender norms and reduce gender-based inequalities.

## 7. Conclusions

Our findings show large differences between different kinds of youth; apart from gender, other social dimensions such as wealth and family status (polygamous/divorced parents etc.) translate into inequalities and (dis)advantages amongst young men and women co-shaping their opportunity spaces and their aspirations. These and possibly other dimensions such as ethnicity and religion need to be integrated in future studies on youth.

Although aspirations tend to be high across the sample, achieving these seems to be difficult. Many young people, men and women, follow their aspiration to a livelihood in urban centers. Many also return, either permanently or temporary, when they fail to fulfill their aspirations or simply when they run out of means to support their urban lifestyles. Out-migration as such, is common amongst young people in rural Central Uganda, and especially many young women move away. We show that young women's restricted access to land and higher need for financial support as compared to young men are causes for women's higher likelihood to migrate.

Few young people, men and women, aspire to make farming their primary livelihood, yet many are engaged in farming in one way or another. For some young men farming or agriculture at large is considered a viable strategy to complement or optimize income. For women on the contrary, farming is seldom considered to be a viable livelihood strategy. When women (eventually) do farm this is geared towards food provision to the household which is presented as an intrinsic part of (married) rural women's role in the household. Especially single mother farmers with no or limited control over land or other resources, commonly feel deprived of agency and trapped in agriculture.

The analysis of inequalities such as in the individual resource base (land and social relations), intersecting with inequalities as associated with identity (e.g. gender norms), demonstrated how these influenced the opportunity space for the young generation in general but for young men and women differently as well. The results showed that access to land is generally an issue for most young people, but this is aggravated for those youth from families with little land and for women. Moreover, social relations structured young women's opportunity space differently than that of young men. Gender norms which discourage women's independent and autonomous life-styles and limit their ability to employ commercial activities, coupled with women's biological role to conceive and feed babies, make women vulnerable in their relations with men. When young men were constraint, generational relations were more prominent as was for instance the case for Richard (box 1) whose father denied him the income of his farming activities.

Due to their restricted opportunity space, and despite the fluidity of their livelihood pathways, young men and especially young women only occasionally manage to attain a life-style to which they aspire, often they lack the means to sustainably consolidate their efforts into secure livelihoods.

## CRedit authorship contribution statement

**A.M. Rietveld (Anne):** Conceptualization, Methodology, Formal analysis, Investigation, Resources, Data curation, Writing - original draft, Writing - review & editing, Visualization, Supervision, Project administration, Funding acquisition. **M. van der Burg (Margreet):** Conceptualization, Resources, Writing - review & editing, Supervision. **J.C.J. Groot (Jeroen):** Conceptualization, Resources, Writing - review & editing, Supervision.

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