



Is Oil and Gas Discovery a Generational Curse? The Plight of Children in Land Compensation Dispossession in Uganda

Specioza Twinamasiko, Cleophas Clare Karooma,** Novatus Nyemara,*** and Justus Asasira*****

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Abstract

It is estimated globally that a total number of 44,000,400 are internally displaced persons, with women and children constituting over 70% of this. However, limited focus has been put on the growing generation of children that are affected by oil and gas development projects which leave both family and public property dispossessed. The main goal of this paper is to examine the plight of children in a displaced and resettled situation who are partly impacted by the mother's loss of livelihood, and how this predicts the status of the future generation. A phenomenological research design was used to acquire the lived experiences of the women, mothers and children. Focus group discussions, in-depth interviews, and direct observation methods were employed to collect data; the research was guided by the principle of confidentiality. It is concretized that when forced dispossession, compensation and resettlement occur, the plight of the children in the form of a normal process of social, natural, and psychological growth becomes aversive. This implies that the future of these children is consequently antagonized by the severe situation of undesirable actions. We recommend designing a policy that considers the plight of these children through comprehensive compensation where reasonable percentages of the benefits are allocated to mothers and other women caretakers. Additionally, ensure resettling all the former infrastructure that benefits children and the entire society, as well as granting children's proper choices of continuity in the resettlement conditions.

Keywords

Compensation, Generational curse, Resettlement, Oil development activities

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Author's Institutional Affiliation and Correspondence

* Department of Community Engagement and Service Learning, Faculty of Interdisciplinary Studies, Mbarara University of Science and Technology, Uganda. Email: specioza@must.ac.ug.

** Department of Planning and Community Development, Faculty of Interdisciplinary Studies, Mbarara University of Science and Technology, Uganda. Email: ckarooma@must.ac.ug.

*** Psychiatry Department, Faculty of Medicine, Mbarara University of Science and Technology, Uganda. Email: nnyemara@must.ac.ug.

**** Department of Community Engagement and Service Learning, Faculty of Interdisciplinary Studies, Mbarara University of Science and Technology, Uganda. Email: jasasira@must.ac.ug

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Introduction

Rising incidents of land compensation, dispossession, and resettlement due to development programs are accumulating concerns of increasing the number of internally displaced persons in the world (IDMC, 2020; Cernea & Maldonado, 2018). Globally, it is estimated that a total number of 44,000,300 are internally displaced persons, within which women and children constitute over 70% (Owoaje et al, 2016; Uzoma et al, 2020). Such a state of affairs has a connotation with the levels of ensuring fair benefit-sharing from resource-distributing companies to the affected persons to secure better services, mitigate civil strife, proper allocation of revenues, and ease chronic poverty (FIMMM Mulinga, 2021). In 2018, more than 8,000 people were displaced by gazetting of land for oil development activities in Uganda (Burke, 2020). The mining and exploration development projects have therefore resulted in positive accomplishments such as the transformation of national economies and ensuring sustainable development standards (Caron et al, 2016). However, the mining and exploration projects have negatively influenced policies leading to an increase in extraction costs including the costs of land dispossession. This was experienced in the preliminary stages of oil development, where the key resource impacted is mainly land, which is at the same time the major source of livelihood for most rural settlers (Cernea & Maldonado, 2018).

In Africa, loss of land due to development projects is still a leading fundamental risk among the causes of impoverishment to vulnerable people because of the nature of land tenure systems (Gizachew, 2017). The land tenure system in sub-Saharan Africa puts women at a disadvantage in terms of access to and control of land (Tsikata, 2016) thereby promoting inequality in land use and decision-making. Therefore, the setbacks to women's livelihoods in the household that result from gendered land tenure systems consequently impact the defendants' socio-economic, health and psychological aspects of development in the household (Ramaswamy & Seshadri, 2020). It is also clear in many developing countries that children are beneficiaries of land in rural settings through the ownership status of parents, and this is so in other land transactions such as compensation and the attached benefits. However, these further positions a child in an exposed state of vulnerability (Familusi, 2012). Therefore, fair and equal compensation of property on which the children depend has a positive impact on the children's growth and development. According to Hampton, (2014), children at any stage of development are found to be some of the most neglected groups of the population among Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs), especially by development projects across the world. They are often neglected by compensation decisions about both their essential and basic needs of life, they are unacknowledged and bundled under their parents and caretakers' packages (Lawrence et al, 2022). However, this does not suggest compensating children but rather, the fact that land expropriation takes away the foundation on which their basic livelihood systems are constructed, compensating direct caregivers appropriately advances their wellbeing (Boyden et al, 2019). For instance, when the livelihood systems are not replaced elsewhere, the consequences lead to the impoverishment of the vulnerable groups directly and indirectly thus affecting the dependent generation (Devereux, 2016; Vanclay, 2017).

This paper presents a range of issues and conditions facing children after land compensation and displacement of their households, due to oil and gas development activities in

Uganda. We analyze the adverse effects of mothers' land dispossession on the welfare of their children. Lastly, the paper's results are examined to predict the likely future status of the affected children's generation in Uganda. Therefore, the ensuing research questions that guide this paper are:

- (i) What are the adverse indicators and effects on the children after the land compensation deal in Albertine Graben?
- (ii) How does the prevailing adversative nature of the children predict their future wellbeing?

Following Duflo (2012), it is specified that parents' wellbeing or vice versa may be reflective of children's future proceeds, similarly to the services required in the process of their growth. For instance, the availability of schools for education determines the future growth of children regarding their success in the job. Indeed, it is appreciated by psychologists that ensuring proper implementation of childhood development for a better future has a strong relationship with the prevailing conditions of the parents. Many of the effects on the future of the children encompass aspects of nurturing care including parenting support, social protection, and early learning opportunities provided within or out of the home environment (Masten & Barnes, 2018). Children's access to services and required skills provide a high chance of reducing risks of developmental outcomes, and there could be a possibility of substantially improving their lives based on the level of social growth (Britto et al, 2017). Therefore, this paper is paramount in examining the role of land compensation, displacement, and resettlement in the plight of children as a trace of the spillovers of women, mother caregivers, and other indicators.

Scholars have asserted that there are many instances other than displacement and resettlement that incapacitate children's wellbeing in society (Zigler, 2017). For instance, the impacts of the closure of schools during the COVID-19 pandemic (Burgess & Sievertsen, 2020) that extended time out of school potentially caused short-term and long-term effects. Note, every event that disrupts the normal progress of the child causes severe impacts on the child, and the possibility of generating trauma-related complications (Downey & Crummy, 2022). Extensive writings about the plight of children in war zones, resource-based armed conflicts, and natural disasters are published. However, limited scholarly attention has been given to the children's adverse effects on the compensated, displaced, and resettled communities due to development projects.

The ongoing scholarly work on oil development projects in Albertine Graben has put much focus on the socio-economic impacts of the affected community, local resource curse, the role of local content, risks, and vulnerabilities (Byaruhanga and Langer, 2020; Twinamasiko et al, 2019; Ogwang & Vanclay, 2019). However, limited focus has been put on the growing generation of children that are affected by the oil refinery development project which left both families and public property dispossessed. The main goal of this paper is to examine the plight of children in a displaced and resettled situation as impacted by women and mothers' loss of livelihoods and how this predicts the status of the future generation. This paper is inspired by the ongoing debates on Uganda's new oil wealth and the expected dilemmas in the socio-economic development of the affected communities.

Therefore, the central focus of the authors is to shift the argument towards oil development activities, as proper compensation governance is particularly important to the ongoing discourse on Uganda's future oil wealth and development. As recommended by Internal Displacement

Monitoring Centre (IDMC), the unseen cost of internal displacement determines the cases for an increase in the focus on prevention and providing durable solutions (IDMC, 2020).

Understanding patriarchal customary and land tenure system in Uganda

Patriarchy is a form of male domination based on the powerful role of the father as head of the household and can be expressed as multidimensional (Coward, 2022). Patriarchy in Uganda has multifaceted characteristics and is defined by males owning more powers to inherit and own property - mainly land, taking lead in decision-making, and management of the household in a customary aspect. Although the amended Land Act (2010) provides guidelines on how land tenure, particularly the customary system can be secured (Ashukem, 2020), the Land Act (1998) seeks to eliminate all discrimination against women by ensuring rules and procedures relating to succession do not impede the transmission of the land to women and children and educating and sensitizing the public on discrimination against women and children concerning access, use, and ownership of land. However, limited efforts have been observed during implementation.

Further, the authority of property distribution, as well as control, are vested in the hands of the clan heads and the chiefs who are strictly males, although the Constitution of Uganda regularizes the individual ownership under custom by attaining the certificate of registration (Alli, 2019). Moreover, as it was arranged during colonialism, customary land rights continue to be dominated by men, the heads of the family, and women remain subjects of access and putting it into use based on kinship (Caron, 2021). This continues to limit women in attaining legal certificates because of a lack of orientation in decision-making traditionally. Therefore, the main role of men is encompassed in the powers to control, manage and make decisions about family land, while women do domestic work, food production, reproduction duties, and take care of the children. Whereas the 1998 Land Act Cap 227 ensures full integration of women's decision-making structures in access to and use of land, and restoration of the consent clause to protect children below 18 years and those aged above 68 years, the customary tenure systems continue to favor men and grant women rights primarily through the heir, father, husband, brother, or son (Djurfeldt, 2020). It is on this basis that the researchers predicted high chances of the compensation process among other factors being influenced by patriarchal customary systems, thus antagonizing the wellbeing of the children in the whole process.

Conceptual framework

This paper deals with several concepts in the discussion of interlinked children's plight - mainly diverse impacts with those of the affected mothers in displacement and resettlement states. Specifically, the term compensation is looked at as a fair reward in equivalent or better terms of cash and in-kind based on fair assessment, and standard market price for both public and individual property. For instance, replacing what was deprived of the beneficiaries - particularly land, houses, crops, trees, and social services/public infrastructure. The act enables quick recovery of the affected persons from the shock of dispossession in the short run and also facilitates sustainable positive social-economic development in the long run (Hahn, 2015). The generational curse represents the predicted future derived from the prevailing severe outcomes of the consistent diverse impacts experienced throughout childhood. Diverse outcomes are those that are interlinked with limited rights to access and benefit from the key source of livelihoods and other essential property. They include social wellbeing and psychological and economic productivity, impacts which eventually determine adulthood behaviors, actions, and general quality of life. As specified in Carstensen et al, (2011) emotional wellbeing improves from early childhood to early adulthood and then to old age. Therefore, any impediments in the process of growth suffocate the desirable

direction, thus creating detrimental effects on the individual child or groups of individuals and the society where the actions and behaviors may be fierce in nature and economically impending (Sethi et al, 2013).

The paper considers affected young children up to eighteen years in general who are under the parent’s care and at the same time the independent minors whose status of welfare would be determined by the parent’s, especially mother’s wellbeing. This is unlike the concept of the natural resource curse that describes characteristics of countries that are rich in oil and gas to be susceptible to evil effects on the citizens such as corruption and civil strife. Rather, the existence of rent-seeking and poor citizens in a predictable period supports the concept of a generational curse in this paper. This tends to mean that the children’s current adverse effects caused by oil development projects cannot be outgrown over time by the affected person, impacting their adulthood social, economic, and psychological stability, and the general basic standard of living. This is where a person may lack the capacity to develop and apply basic skills, live with no/ limited innovation attitude, and offer limited economic contribution to the development of the country.

To inform long-lasting interventions, it is imperative to identify indicators, causes, obstacles, and durable solutions for both mothers and children in attaining sustainable reconstruction. Notable challenges may include among others compensation guidelines that limit children from accessing rights to homes, education, health, land, family, and food as well as other basic and essential needs of life. Failure to acquire such basics of life is against the 1998 United Nations guiding principles on internal displacement. Therefore, the application of the interlinked children’s diverse impacts with those of the affected mothers and caretakers, presents a holistic perspective that focuses on drivers and outcomes regardless of the type of compensation the children’s household belonged to. Though compensation guidelines were meant for the owners of the property who are dominant heads of the families, there is still no clarity on the provisions for the children’s plight in terms of resource allocation indirectly and directly. The insights generated from this paper will be useful in informing the existing children-focused non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and civil society organizations, compensation policy-making organs, and the policies that are being amended.

Methodology

Selected study area

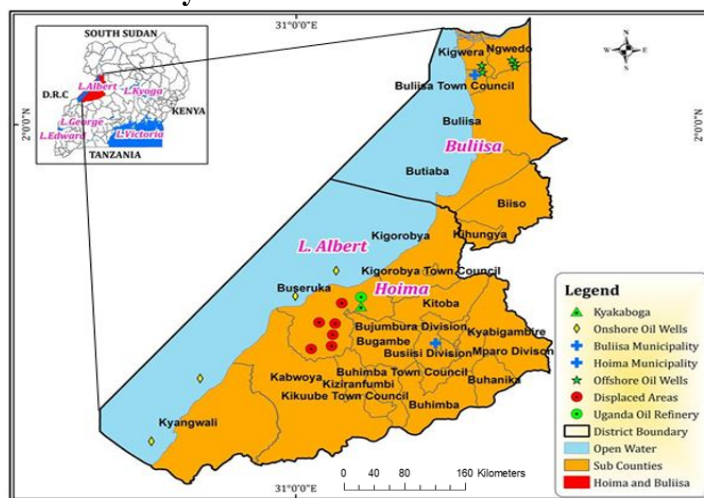


Figure 1: Location of the planned oil refinery for offshore and onshore oil wells, and the resettlement area. (Source: ArcGIS 10.5)

This paper is informed by empirical data which was concluded in 2018. The first phase was done in 2015 in the middle of land compensation and displacement in Kabaale, and in 2018 after the process of resettlement in Kyakaboga, Buseruka sub-county, Hoima district. Kabaale Parish was originally the place where the resettled persons resided. We specifically consider the affected 29 square kilometers of land that hosted thirteen villages in Kabaale where the oil refinery was established, and where the international airport was to be constructed. The plight of children in this paper was measured within a period of nine years from 2009 (the time of land valuation) to 2018 (the time of full compensation and resettlement).

A phenomenology research design was applied to obtain the lived experiences of the displaced, compensated, and resettled persons focusing on women's dispossession and children's adverse experiences. In-depth interviews were conducted among women who were above 18 years of age. We interviewed three groups of women: 9 women whose households were cash compensated, and 8 of those that were awaiting compensation. Additionally, 10 women were neither resettled nor cash compensated, with another 16 women whose households opted for the resettlement type of compensation. The last category was further divided into two subcategories: 7 women whose households were resettled with houses and land, and 9 women whose households were resettled without houses but with the land. The sample size here was determined by saturation point. Women were selected because they played a big role in caring for the children before and after compensation. There was also a need to find out whether the impact on women themselves and their children differed in any form.

We selected members for focus group discussions based on the categories of women identified in the area. Two focus group discussions were held among resettled women (the resettled without houses and the resettled with both land and houses), one for cash compensation and, one for those that were awaiting compensation in Hoima. Triangulating focus group discussions was not only important in harmonizing data from in-depth interviews but also unveiled a shared understanding of the lived experiences of women in land compensation dispossession (Dilshad & Latiff, 2013). Each group had a minimum of eight women meant to ensure orderly discussion with the help of an interview guide. Focus group discussions reinforced the information gathered from in-depth interviews and direct observation.

Direct observation was effective in capturing the unexpressed information such as the existing accommodation for the affected women and children, public infrastructure in the resettlement area, daily activities of the children in the resettlement area, the nature of resettled resources, the general conditions in the resettlement camp, and those that were awaiting compensation. Data was also collected from key informants, including six male heads of the families from different types of compensation, two community development officers, and one district education officer. These were vital in providing information about the compensation and land dispossession process. Also, four independent minors¹ were interviewed, and they included two-child mothers² (15 and 16 years), and two boys (16 and 17 years) who were already living on their own or participating in selling casual labor in a neighboring area.

Data was analyzed using the inductive method (Creswell, 2014), sometimes called the 'bottom-up approach.' The themes were built after extensive interrelationships between theoretical and the existing reviewing of field data notes and personal observations. The major themes that developed out of these methods are explored in this paper to make sense of the interlinked adverse effects of mothers with the ones of affected children, and those that affected children directly.

¹ The constitution of Uganda defines a child as all those below 18 years of age.

² Young girls heading families (they were not resettled with their mothers).

Ethical procedures were done on a bigger study where this article's empirical data is generated. Ethical approval was obtained from Mbarara University Research Ethics Committee. Clearance to conduct the study was obtained from the Uganda National Council for Science and Technology and the Research Secretariat in the President's Office (Approval Number; SS147ES). Informed consent for respondents preceded interviews, and consent to take photos of the minors and the children were sought and signed by the parents and guardians during different interviews and at different times. The research was guided by the principle of confidentiality.

Table 1. Socio-economic and demographic characteristics of women respondents in Hoima

Marital Status	Hoima District	
	Frequency (N=44)	Percentage
Married	9	20.4
Married (polygamous)	6	13.6
Separated before compensation	5	11.3
Separated after compensation	8	18.1
Emancipated minors	2	5
Single	6	13.6
Widowed	8	18.1
Age bracket		
15-17	2	5
18-25	3	6.8
26-39	6	13.6
40-49	14	31.8
50-59	11	29.5
60+	8	18.2
Education		
P1-P7	38	84
S.1-S4	5	11.4
S5-S6	1	2.4
Occupation		
Peasant/Farmer	42	95.5
Businesswomen	2	4.5
Land ownership		
Jointly owned	4	9.1
Owned personally	3	6.8
Inherited land	5	13.6
Owned by male partners/husbands	32	72.7

Source: Primary data, 2018

The oil development activities and compensation process in Albertine Graben

As the government of Uganda prepares to begin extracting oil and gas in 2025 it is obliged to play several roles, among which are control of oil resources, and management and distribution of the required resources for its development under the Ministry of Energy and Mineral Development (MEMD). Additional roles include: drafting policy and legal frameworks, acquisition of land for oil activities, and contracting companies for exploration, extraction, and compensation. Strategic Friends International (SFI) is one company that took charge of compensation in Hoima district in Albertine Graben. The compensation process began with the land valuation in 2009, cash

compensation started in 2012, and ended with resettlement in 2018. The whole process was preceded by large land acquisitions, mainly the construction of an oil refinery and an international airport in Kabaale, Hoima district. However, the compensation process was earmarked with under-valuing property such as land. For instance, one acre of land was valued at 3,500,000UGX (\$972USD) which was half the cost price, indicating possibilities of impoverishing the affected persons or worse to the vulnerable persons.

According to RAP 1 (2018) 29 Square kilometers of land which was earmarked for an oil refinery in Kabaale parish, Hoima, left 2,615 households displaced. In addition, the Ministry of Energy and Mineral Development (MEMD), illustrates that for most of the Project Affected Persons (PAP) 88% of them opted for cash compensation, while 12% was compensation by resettlement (MEMD, 2017). Equally so, the government of Uganda – through Strategic Friends International (SFI) - revealed that by the year 2017, 1,871 out of 2,615 of the affected households were fully cash compensated. However, empirically an estimated number of more than 670 households were disoriented by awaiting compensation, and an approximation of more than a quarter of households that received cash compensation had confirmed failure to acquire alternative property (PAP, 2018).

Even though the process of resettlement seemed streamlined, only 43 out of 74 households were resettled in 2017, and the rest of the households in 2018 were on 532 acres of land (MEMD, 2019). In this type of compensation, 59% of the households benefitted by being resettled fully with houses and land *inter alia* as per the memorandum of understanding, whereas 41% were left deprived by being resettled with fewer benefits including resettled without houses and related benefits, such as homestead facilities and utilities. From the above exhibition, it is therefore estimated that more than 125 were women whose households belonged to compensation by resettlement where 45/125 were resettled without houses, while an estimated number of more than 30 women belonged to polygamous marriages and were left unsettled³. Consequently, the long-term process of compensation together with the dynamics in discriminatory compensation did not only cause direct but also indirect impacts on every member of the households, especially the vulnerable mothers and children. Therefore, it is on the above-construed background that the basis of this paper positions.

The plight of children in land compensation dispossession

The children in this context are those that derive their growth and development as well as their wellbeing from the families which are normally defined according to their structure. Like any other part of Uganda, the family structures in Albertine Graben are culture and religion specific (Uddin, 2009). Culturally, families are inclusive and extended in nature; the core unit is composed of the head(father/heir), biological children, and relatives in the same lineage. The extended family also includes members of polygamous households who are stepmothers, stepsisters, daughters, and in most cases their close and distant relatives. However, there are some families whose structure is defined according to religious values. For instance, most Muslim families are built on the religious values of polygamy. The major aim of inclusive and extended living is to keep long-lasting family and cultural ties (Gabielli & Impicciatore, 2022), despite changes brought by compensation and displacement for oil and gas development.

³ These results are based on the estimates discovered during interviews which indicated that out of five households in the resettlement at least two to three of them were polygamous. This was also confirmed by the male heads of the families together with local leaders interviewed.

Notwithstanding, all types of family structures have their basis in the customs of the society, among others only men are recognized as heads of the families, and they own the power to make decisions. Although decision-making remains multidimensional in terms of men's roles, men have the power to decide how many women to marry, and on decisions to distribute or undistribute property among the members of the family - without a wife's contribution or opposition. Therefore, it is on this basis that the need to examine the plight of children as linked to mothers during and after compensation is deemed necessary.

Even though the dynamics of the compensation process and the oil development projects give hope for the growth of the economy and other direct and indirect developments of the country, the practice of dispossession and displacement that deprive beneficiaries of property rights to decisions on what suits them, makes the interpretation of economic growth and development a bit complex. Moreover, oil resource abundance is one of the facilitators of the standards of living, though with long-term impacts on vulnerable groups, and especially children affected by land dispossession directly and indirectly. This section, therefore, presents a range of social, economic, and psychological adverse effects in the form of spillovers - spillovers which expedite the process of future growth and development of the children. The spillovers described here are those that transmit impacts from mothers to children and those that are diffused directly to the children. Empirically, it is hypothesized that through these spillovers, most of the affected children's psychological growth and quality of life to a large extent are adversely impacted.

Adverse effects of compensation on children through women's loss of livelihoods spillovers

Loss of land by some women that belonged to households that were compensated at different levels portrayed limited chances of continuous caring for their children and entire families as it was before. The land resource is the main source of livelihood for most women in the areas affected by oil development programs in Hoima district, home to multiple farming activities. It also has a host of other socio-economic and non-farm activities such as small-scale trade businesses. These activities are further enhanced by the existence of household and community property which are categorized as natural and physical capital⁴. Therefore, loss of land mainly for women who belonged to households that were cash compensated and did not acquire alternative land meant that they were deprived of their capacity and capability to sustain their means of survival. The commonly affected women were those that were abandoned by their partners and husbands after receiving cash, and those that were under the support of the bigger extended families that disintegrated in the process of relocating. This is because they lost soil, water, and other natural capital livelihoods where agriculture is mostly hosted and dependent. Loss of land meant loss of food and sources of income, and disempowerment from the former responsibilities such as taking care of the children and the entire household. As indicated in a focus group discussion by most women:

...Most of us when our husbands decided to use compensated money for other things instead of acquiring alternative land. Our contributions to the families stopped because our main source of livelihood is land, we have ever since become helpless; no gardening no food. Our children have become malnourished, hunger and poverty are part of us. That is why most of us decided to release our children for casual labor so that they can

⁴ Natural capital is the stocks of resources that are naturally occurring such as soil and water and used as inputs to generate economic benefits that support livelihoods where agriculture is dependent (Planning Commission, 2012; Cammack, 2017)

support us in contributing to food and other basic needs (Focus group discussion, Kyapoloni, Hoima, 2018).

Additionally, the compensation guidelines recommended resettling one man and one wife from a polygamous marriage. The guidelines on polygamous marriage affected only those that opted for resettlement with no limit on the men as heads of the families on which wife to choose or leave out. For instance, the onus was on the men to select any number in the order of marriage; whether one of the wives is the official wife or not, she stands a chance to be resettled as long as she is officially registered for resettlement. The situation of women being discriminated against according to the compensation guidelines did not only affect women and mothers in the same category, but also both biological children and foster children under their care. It was observed that in some villages and trading centers in Kabaale that were not affected by the oil refinery project and remained with its occupants - such as Nyamasoga, and some parts of Kyakaboga - resettlement areas became dwelling areas of landless and homeless women and their children who belonged to polygamous marriages during the compensation process. Although women were observed to be troubled by the major landless risks and vulnerabilities, much impact was transferred to the growth, care, and, general wellbeing of the children. Voices captured indicate the reactions of the women, mothers, and caretakers:

...I am the second wife of three, after denying me resettlement status I had no alternative option other than taking my three children 8, 11, and 13 years old to go and stay with relatives as I look for where to go with the two young ones (Interview, Nyamasoga Hoima, 2018).

This was a common approach for the most affected women and this was against both children's and relatives' will. The act of child marriage was another form of reaction by mothers from polygamous marriages that were denied official resettlement. It was confirmed that more than a quarter of young girls (12-17 years of age) whose mothers were not granted alternative homes during and after resettlement were secretly forced into marriage by their mothers and relatives (Civil servants in charge of Nyamasoga sub-county). This was a result of the need by mothers and other caretakers to be relieved of the uncared for children. Another mother of six narrated:

Although I am the official wife and the first one for my husband, I was not selected for resettlement privileges, I have 6 children. To reduce the children to manage the young ones better, I encouraged my daughter to get married at 15 years as a second wife (Interview, Kyakaboga resettlement, Hoima, 2018).

Once women were deprived of their livelihood base (a home), they were not able to perform their auxiliary responsibilities such as managing the household's essential needs and taking care of their children. As they were deprived of parental care, resettled children became more susceptible to adopting adverse behaviors as compared to children who were not resettled.

Another issue of concern is limited access to community property that is created for public works activities and public usage. For instance, loss of water points and health services due to un-resettled similar infrastructure obstructed women's responsibility to children. Water sources such as springs and tap water were not erected in the new areas of settlement such as Kyakaboga. The available source of water was a borehole installed at a four-kilometer distance in the neighboring

village of Kakindo, causing children to spend most of their time making trips to fetch water. The redundancy, coupled with the uncontrolled movements of the children and long waits at the water point, increased children's vulnerability in terms of indulgence in risky behaviors such as smoking, unwanted sexual practices, and truancy. Ultimately this, joined with the high cost of time and caloric loss specifically during a prolonged drought affects the children's quality of life (Algur, Patel, & Chauhan, 2021). It was pointed out that in a period of eight years of the displacement process, more than ten cases of defiling children were registered (Police officer, Nyamasoga, Hoima, 2018)

Furthermore, the demolition of health centers and failure to provide new ones in the new resettlements incapacitated women's role in the care of children with uncontrollable and untreated diseases. Empirically, at least six out of the 10 women interviewed confessed to having lost a child or to producing one with malformed features, allegedly resulting from untreated malaria that the mothers suffered while pregnant. In addition, we observed the commonly mentioned high birth rate resulting from limited family planning services in the process of displacement and resettlement. These auxiliary services enhance women's potential in children's growth and development where their future too is dependent. The absence of such auxiliary services not only affected the direct users - especially the mothers - but also the emotional and general wellbeing of the children under their care. This finding is in agreement with Stevenson (2018) who posited that children respond to the prevailing environment, which has an influence on their emotional and mental development.

Concerning the above situation that dominated in most observations of the development practitioners and researchers, several women were successful with more compensation benefits that transmitted their full parenting responsibilities than those that did not. Specifically, those that were not affected by the guidelines and a large percentage of those that belonged to households that were cash compensated and were able to acquire alternative land. Living other factors constantly such as this put their families and the children in a better position of enjoying future socio-economic and psychological wellbeing. Conversely, other women who were resettled officially could not be far better than those that were left out because of the lag between the time of land dispossession to the time of resettlement, which was more than 8 years of non-production and limited access to all services, including schools.

However, it is important to note is that the government programs to resettle households according to the guidelines were successful as mentioned earlier in this paper. For example, 59% and 41% of the households resettled with land and houses, and with land but without houses respectively. Nevertheless, the implication of considering only households, not individual members in the household in the progress reports, continues to leave out women identified for further consideration. Furthermore, the implications are not only attached to the women per se but also religion, as the values and rules of the Muslim religion were also abandoned in the compensation guidelines. There were no special considerations for Muslims and non-Muslims, and they were combined under the principle of 'one man one wife.' Therefore, in principle, the segregated nature of the compensation process by the government and responsible companies left women divided into groups and subgroups of those with rights to live within religious values, access land, and other household property, and those without rights at all. As a result, the effects of these segregative acts on women and mothers continue to trickle down to the dependents, who are in majority children as presented in the next sections.

Direct effects of compensation on Children

Although land compensation, dispossession, and resettlement are the concerns of parent owners of the property and the government, the practices affect children directly and indirectly. In this case, some of the properties and infrastructure that benefit children directly included schools, health centers, and roads. One of the direct challenges of the children was the demolition of schools in Kabaale at the beginning of the compensation process in 2012, and the failure to open up the existing primary school in the resettlement area during the first years of arrival (2017 and 2018). This was coupled with the absence of secondary school(s) in the resettlement area. Moreover, the time spent without schooling was a threat to the academic wellbeing of the children, while spending their school-going time in non-valuable activities or redundancy makes their situation complex. According to Waldfogel (2010), children not only need food and safe accommodation but also bases for cognitive development such as schools to enhance their training skills, generate knowledge, and know how to apply it. Therefore, when children's wellbeing aspects are positive, we all benefit, but society suffers when the conditions are reversed.

The unsafe conditions of the children in the resettlement area due to the lack of functioning schools exposed them to protection issues ranging from child and gender-based violence, sexual abuse, vulnerability to defilement and rape, increased child crime rates, and loss of deserved focus due to redundancy coupled with overcrowding⁵. Moreover, there were no other activities such as household chores like animal grazing⁶ that could keep them occupied as before the compensation process. According to local leaders in the sub-county and Uganda Monitor (Mutaizibwa, 2022), there was only one school - Nyaihara Primary school in Kabaale⁷. Before resettlement, the school accommodated more than 2,812 children. However, as part of the resettlement process, the school was demolished. Surprisingly, as a result of the demolition, only 118 joined other schools and were able to complete primary seven. Of these 118, only 48 children were able to join secondary schools. The nature of the children's education growth by skipping their normal order portends future uncertainties in terms of jobs, economic market competition, and personality functioning (Lopez Rodriguez, 2010). This is based on the fact that the full functioning of personality during adulthood can typically be based on the training one underwent in childhood (Bynner & Parsons, 2002).

Hopes for the resettled persons were revived upon learning that a new primary school was to be commissioned and named after their former demolished Nyaihara Primary school. However, the desperate conditions continued after learning the opening of the school office was to be utilized in the following year 2019. Even then there weren't any existing secondary schools in the area where the post-primary pupils would go to further their education. Regarding this, one male family head was quoted saying:

Since 2010 my family of six school-going children, my wife, and I started preparing for resettlement and we were resettled in February this year 2018. My children and the rest of the children of my fellow affected people last went to school 7 years ago. Now, tell me, which classes will they join if the schools are provided? What kind of generation is

⁵ This is because all houses for the resettled are nuclear in nature and almost every household has more than five children of school going age.

⁶ Due to long waits for resettlement without land, all domestic animals were sold off for survival - mainly those that were meant to be resettled

⁷ One of the schools that was demolished in 2012 at the beginning of the compensation process

Uganda grooming? What will happen to them when they grow up? I am so much worried”⁸ (Interview, Kyakaboga resettlement, Hoima, 2018)

A study by (Larkin, Shields, & Anda, 2012) specified that childhood adverse experiences affect life potentials such as academic achievement, employment, and wealth, all of which are linked to schooling and health outcomes. These effects further cause, and may have lasting impacts on, the already burdened socio-economic evolution of the nation.

Nonetheless, children remain the most vulnerable to sexual abuse and gender-based violence among displaced persons. The study established the existence of repeated occurrences of early child marriages, especially in homeless and landless families. Some parents contributed to the sexual abuse of their girls when they married their underage daughters as a form of obtaining bride wealth. In other instances, fines were slapped on men who were caught seducing and sexually abusing young girls. In an interview with one head of the clan, it was stated that “Adult men and young boys seducing girls into sex and raping, while others go ahead to marry them, are the dominating cases I handle almost every week” (Interview, Kyakaboga resettlement, Hoima 2018). However, these acts were perceived as a blessing in disguise for the affected parents. The fines charged and the bride wealth that was paid acted as a source of income and economic survival for the families, thereby putting the young girls into a more vulnerable situation. The tendency to earn income from the girls causes too much psychological torture and results in negative behavioral outcomes for the young girls.

Cases of child neglect were common among households that failed to access the compensated property to acquire alternative land and homes. This was two-sided for the households which were not officially resettled as per the resettlement policy of ‘one man one wife’, and those that belonged to the households that received cash compensation. In the resettlement, most children who were left in the hands of fathers and stepmothers experienced parental care characterized by both physical and psychological abuse. The stepchildren (who were of the non-compensated mothers) were considered intruders and so were denied a fair share of the acquired resources. For instance, everyone was resettled with a 3-room house which was not enough to accommodate one family of more than six people⁹. Similarly, some children whose households belonged to cash compensation ended up fending for themselves. In one of the interviews a child’s mother (independent minor) narrated that:

Although my mother was an official wife to my father, she was not resettled. She left us homeless in the process I became pregnant and, my 13-year-old sister and I, do casual labor to take care of our other two siblings and my baby (Interview, Nyamasoga, Hoima, 2018)

Homelessness was a common occurrence among the resettled households that did not access housing, and those that stayed waiting for a long time to be compensated. Children were abandoned as conditions of homelessness for most women and mothers kept worsening over time. The influx of the number of homeless children was observed between 2017 to 2018 and above within Hoima town, other trading centers, and in the resettlement area. Homelessness worsened the vulnerability of younger children in various ways, especially living unsafe lives characterized by sexual abuse,

⁹ As results indicate that at least every family had a minimum of 8 people in one household (Interviews, Kabaale Hoima, 2018).

and the street with its related criminality. As a result, the situation of children became unpredictable as they kept developing more detrimental habits.

The empirical results in this paper challenge the work by the World Bank about the principles of land compensation worldwide which state that compensation and resettlement focus on benefiting the affected individuals, the environment, yielding more socio-economic benefits, and that displaced persons should be assisted in their efforts to improve their livelihoods and standards of living (Mahalingam & Vyas, 2011:100).

Much as there exists several legal and security offices throughout Uganda, a continuous manifestation of injustice against abused children was discovered among all the categories of compensation (both cash and resettlement compensation). Limited legal actions were observed among the resettled persons. The internal intervention - mainly by clan and community leaders - took charge as gatekeepers of community cases. Culturally, their roles and responsibilities are to keep a harmonious community despite the crime committed. One mother narrated how her 12-year-old eloped and the case ended in favor of the perpetrator:

When my daughter disappeared from home, I reported the matter to our community head. His team was gathered only to convince me to keep it a secret and save the perpetrator's name. My daughter and I ended up in shame. Later she started behaving violently, she is not yet well" (Interview, Kyakaboga resettlement, Hoima, 2022)

It was perceived that when children leave their homes without the consent of their parents, they do so in search of safety. It is agreed that displacement exposed them to various additional distressing and dangerous dealings that rendered them more susceptible to physical, health, and psychological risks. Moreover, it is well understood that a large number of displaced and resettled families within the Buseruka sub-county were living on the verge of extreme poverty because of reduced social amenities such as schools in the area. Such conditions caused severe adverse impacts on the young and adolescents by producing more independent minors. This further resulted in subsequent psychological problems observed in the present, thus predicting the future of the affected (Platz & Arellano, 2011).

Conclusions

This article articulates the plight of children in land compensation, displacement, and resettlement due to oil development activities in Uganda through two channels of spillovers. The first channel examines the adverse effects of spillovers upon women, mothers, and caretakers. The second channel analyses those adverse effects contributed by compensation authority to the children directly. It is concretized that when forced dispossession, compensation, and resettlement occur, the plight of the children concerning a normal process of social, natural, and psychological growth becomes adversative. This happens especially when it involves depriving mothers of the sources of livelihood that are used to support the growth and development of their children. Subsequently, children experience altered socio-economic effects, such as surviving on limited or no resources, and continuously experiencing various forms of abuse. The compensation policy has deprived mothers of their parenting and caring role for their children, while the cultural patriarchal norms denied children the right to depend on their parents for livelihood. The undesirable actions that characterized the process of land deprivation and dispossession caused psychological and socioeconomic impacts on the welfare of children.

In addition to depriving mothers of the social and economic strength that they needed to care for their children, the process of resettlement and land deprivation was also characterized by limited public infrastructures such as schools, water points, and health centers, putting the nation at a high risk of experiencing a generational curse. Such deprivation left the people in economic uncertainty marked by limited options for sources of income, and a toll on mental and psychological outcomes including trauma and deteriorating quality of life. Although there is evidence that the government of Uganda delivered compensation to almost all the affected families, this paper argues that Uganda can only escape the severe generational curse if the plight of the children is efficiently addressed.

Since Uganda is continuing to gazette land for oil development activities that are expected to cause more displacements, a clear policy that considers impacts of the adverse effects on the children, and thus a generational curse, should be designed. For instance, we recommend designing a policy that considers the plight of the children through comprehensive compensation where significant percentages of the benefits are allocated to mothers. Additionally, we propose that in the compensation and resettlement process, all the former infrastructure that benefits children and the entire society should be considered. As long as the plight of children is considered, then we shall avoid creating a generation divided between halves¹⁰ and have nots in the country. Rather, such a proposal supports women who are custodians of the children's growth and development. There is a need to ensure the basic natural and physical capital necessities for immediate and continuous survival, and unity of the core family which is a strong pillar of unwavering society. The government may also need to put more effort into the reconstruction of the already affected generation of children by providing homes to the homeless and land to landless mothers, hence reconstructing the wellbeing of the children. Also ensuring skills training to the children that are already beyond the normal school routine by empowering them with self-reliance expertise for future employment. Nonetheless, there is a need for continuous research that focuses on the follow-up of the affected children to inform the intervention organizations such as local and international nongovernmental organizations, as well as the compensation policies under amendment by the government of Uganda.

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¹⁰ Especially those who were not affected by oil development activities as compared to those who were affected negatively - the have nots.

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