

Researching livelihoods and
services affected by conflict

The mental landscape of post-conflict life in northern Uganda

Part 4: Rethinking inclusion
and fairness

Working Paper 91

Suleiman Amanela, Tracy Flora Ayee, Stephanie Buell,
Alice Escande, Tony Quinlan, Anouk S. Rigterink,
Mareike Schomerus, Samuel Sharp, Sarah Swanson

July 2020



Written by

**Suleiman Amanela, Tracy Flora Ayee,
Stephanie Buell, Alice Escande,
Tony Quinlan, Anouk S. Rigterink,
Mareike Schomerus, Samuel Sharp,
Sarah Swanson**

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

Disclaimer: The views presented in this publication are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the UK Government's official policies or represent the views of Irish Aid, the EC, SLRC or our partners. ©SLRC 2020.

Readers are encouraged to quote or reproduce material from SLRC for their own publications. As copyright holder SLRC requests due acknowledgement.

Secure Livelihoods Research Consortium

Overseas Development Institute (ODI)
203 Blackfriars Road
London SE1 8NJ
United Kingdom

T +44 (0)20 3817 0031
F +44 (0)20 7922 0399
E slrc@odi.org.uk
www.securelivelihoods.org
[@SLRCtweet](https://twitter.com/SLRCtweet)

Cover photo: Mareike Schomerus.
Madi Opei, Uganda's border with South Sudan.

About us



The **Secure Livelihoods Research Consortium (SLRC)** is a global research programme exploring basic services and social protection in fragile and conflict-affected situations. Funded by UK Aid from the UK Government (DFID), with complementary funding from Irish Aid and the European Commission (EC), SLRC was established in 2011 with the aim of strengthening the evidence base and informing policy and practice around livelihoods and services in conflict.

The Overseas Development Institute (ODI) is the lead organisation. SLRC partners include: Centre for Poverty Analysis (CEPA), Feinstein International Center (FIC, Tufts University), Focus1000, Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit (AREU), Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI), Wageningen University (WUR), Nepal Centre for Contemporary Research (NCCR), Busara Center for Behavioral Economics, Nepal Institute for Social and Environmental Research (NISER), Narrate, Social Scientists' Association of Sri Lanka (SSA), Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), Women and Rural Development Network (WORUDET), Claremont Graduate University (CGU), Institute of Development Policy (IOB, University of Antwerp) and the International Institute of Social Studies (ISS, Erasmus University of Rotterdam).

SLRC's research can be separated into two phases. Our first phase of research (2011–2017) was based on three research questions, developed over the course of an intensive one-year inception phase:

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

Guided by our original research questions on state legitimacy, state capacity and livelihoods, the second phase of SLRC research (2017–2019) delves into questions that still remain, organised into three themes of research. In addition to these themes, SLRC II also has a programme component exploring power and everyday politics in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). For more information on our work, visit: www.securelivelihoods.org/what-we-do

Acknowledgements and author contribution statement



Our biggest thanks go to the many people who gave us their time and their insights by participating in our research. Thank you.

Thanks to the many hands that helped conduct the fieldwork in Uganda, particularly Ochi Abdala, Charles Taban and Baker Abdu.

Particular thanks go to Henni Alava and Steve Commins for their helpful reviews of the report series.

This type of deeply integrated multi-method research requires many people with different skills and contributions, working at different times. None of us could have done our job without the others, yet we all did slightly different things, which we list right.

Conception, design and planning of the research

Mareike Schomerus, Stephanie Buell, Alice Escande, Tony Quinlan, Anouk S. Rigterink, Sarah Swanson

Implementation of experiments

Suleiman Amanela, Alice Escande, Sarah Swanson

Implementation of micronarratives research

Tony Quinlan

Implementation of qualitative research

Tracy Flora Ayee, Mareike Schomerus, Samuel Sharp

Data analysis and framing of argument

Tracy Flora Ayee, Stephanie Buell, Alice Escande, Tony Quinlan, Anouk S. Rigterink, Mareike Schomerus, Samuel Sharp, Sarah Swanson

Principal writing of the manuscript

Mareike Schomerus

Contribution to manuscript

Stephanie Buell, Alice Escande, Tony Quinlan, Anouk S. Rigterink, Samuel Sharp, Sarah Swanson

Contents



Executive summary	iv	Tables	
1 Northern Uganda’s mental landscape of inclusion	1	1 Table 1: Explanations for why something bad happens to respondent	9
1.1 The aim of this report series	1		
1.2 The mental landscape and fairness and inclusion	2		
1.3 Methods and data used for this report series	3	Figures	
2 Standards of fairness: why are they higher for people in the conflict mindset?	4	Figure 1: Amount proposed in ultimatum game as a function of priming	4
3 Outcomes, processes, luck and broken promises	6	Figure 2: Amount accepted by responders in ultimatum game as a function of priming	5
3.1 Outcome-based experiences of unfairness and exclusion	7		
3.2 The lucky ones: good outcomes as a fluke	8	Figure 3: Perception of the legality of the electoral process	10
3.3 Broken promises: the expiry of fairness and inclusion	9		
4 Communal versus individual inclusion	12		
4.1 Communal fairness	12		
4.2 Identity-based fairness and inclusion	13		
4.3 Experience of (un)fairness in behavioural games	15		
5 Conclusion and implications	16		
References	18		

Executive summary



The violent conflict in northern Uganda between the government and the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) ended well over a decade ago. Life today in northern Uganda has a huge number of challenges but is without question better than when attacks were common and most of the population lived in internal displacement camps. Yet, for many, the idea of a post-conflict 'recovery' is illusory. Northern Ugandans continue to live with a sense of loss, injustice, neglect and a widespread sentiment that post-conflict life has not lived up to its promise.

These perceptions are deeply important, both intrinsically and through their potential influence on behaviour. Unfortunately, this research indicates that it is particularly challenging for individuals in post-conflict settings ever to feel and perceive improvements happening. We explain this through what we call the 'mental landscape of post-conflict recovery'. In northern Uganda, this landscape has developed from experiencing life as a series of challenges, injustices and dead-ends, combined with a communal identity marked by having been at the receiving end of a war without clear closure or resolution.

This report series explores this mental landscape: how people perceive, interpret and experience their circumstances today, and how this is shaped by legacies of the war. To do so, it uses a unique multi-method research design, combining experimental, quantitative and different types of qualitative work. Those developing programmes to aid post-conflict recovery have to grapple with this mental landscape. And this involves rethinking several concepts inherent to such programmes.

Rethinking collaboration and good behaviour

Notions of what is considered good and bad behaviour loom over many aspects of post-conflict life. It is a widespread belief in northern Uganda that the war has influenced people's behaviour, making people and communities selfish and less collaborative.

However, the collective impression that the war has created 'bad' selfish behaviour is not reflected in how

individual people actually behave. In our behavioural experiments, we found the opposite. Just recalling the conflict measurably influenced people to collaborate – those who had recalled the conflict were more altruistic with real money.

But this shift towards altruism is implicit and lacks visibility. And perhaps as a result it does not create a more positive community view of community members. This disconnect between perceived and actual behaviour points to a broader post-conflict dilemma: collective recovery might be hindered by individual perception. Changing perceptions of a group situation through supporting individual behaviour change (as many development programmes seek to do) could be an uphill struggle.

Rethinking inclusion and fairness

Inclusion and fairness are the presumed cornerstones of functioning peaceful societies. But fairness and inclusion are experienced, acted upon and understood in diverse ways by different people. A post-conflict setting can make operationalising inclusion and fairness particularly challenging.

In our behavioural experiments, people's standards of what is considered fair increase when they are reminded of the experience of violent conflict. Moreover, the experience of fairness and inclusion in northern Uganda is greatly influenced by loss and suffering, and hence expectations of reparations. When people discussed fairness, they emphasised that the outcome of an experience is what makes it fair and that a beneficial personal outcome trumps an inclusive and fair collective process. Combined with higher fairness standards, this compounds the difficulty of designing post-conflict programming that is experienced as fair and inclusive, especially when the outcome cannot always be to everyone's liking.

Furthermore, a legacy of perceived broken promises (from both government and non-government organisations (NGOs)) creates a limited window of opportunity within which these outcomes need to be delivered in order to be

experienced as fair. Respondents have a high tolerance when it comes to waiting for fair treatment. Yet, at some point, the expectation of inclusive treatment turns into a broken promise; and the experience of this as unfair and exclusive becomes the more powerful perception.

Rethinking idleness, risk-taking and agency

In northern Uganda, people often attribute a lack of improvement to idleness, particularly among the young. Our research suggests it is helpful to reinterpret this idleness, however, as not a character flaw but an expression of agency. Given the options, experiences and perceptions of people, being idle can be a sensible choice for an individual, while still posing a challenge at the level of broader recovery.

Investing in the future involves a certain degree of risk. Participants in our research expressed that Acholi people in general should take more risks to build a future. But in our experiments, appetite for risk-taking is low, and even lower when people are reminded of the conflict. Although

people might collectively agree that *someone* should take risks, they may not be the one willing or able actually to take these risks.

The experience of life in camps and the post-conflict landscape could have generated such risk aversion and patience. People have experienced that big risks do not automatically bring improvement. Waiting for action from the local authorities or NGOs is a major part of everyday life for most. And previously, in internal displacement camps, waiting was indeed the only option available. During the war, people were often able to express agency only by joining the rebels, so expecting proactive agency to drive development today is particularly controversial.

Yet many post-conflict development programmes revolve around the need for individuals to take on monetary risk (such as accessing credit or spending time and money on a new business venture) or social risk (showing agency by going against established expectations of behaviour). A culturally and contextually appropriate attitude to risk is needed.

1 Northern Uganda's mental landscape of inclusion



A region that has experienced decades of violent conflict and international NGO presence connected to the active conflict and its aftermath is well-versed in prominent NGO language. Expecting a process, meeting, negotiation or development programme to be inclusive is a common sentiment in northern Uganda. And yet, what such inclusion might practically look like is a profound question. What makes someone experience a process, meeting, negotiation or development programme as inclusive?

Inclusion and fairness are the presumed cornerstones of functioning peaceful societies, peacebuilding and conflict prevention. It is now an axiom that peacebuilding or programme implementation more generally will fail if people or groups feel treated unfairly or excluded, and that inclusion is key to conflict prevention (World Bank / United Nations, 2018; Paffenholz, 2014). Yet, supporting fairness and inclusion comes with an operational challenge: fairness and inclusion are experienced, acted upon and understood in diverse ways by different people.

In northern Uganda, people readily talk about inclusion, exclusion, fairness or marginalisation, which are the terms most closely associated with how many people in the region frame the reasons for the war. However, when pressed to be more specific, often when people talk about what inclusion means to them, they are describing a process or a mindset. One respondent, for example, said: 'Inclusion is a good relationship among people.'¹ Being a victim of crime or gossip – with no recourse or way to defend oneself – was an experience of unfairness.² Others were more focused on whether fairness meant that sharing of resources included everyone equally; in this view, inclusion was experienced as very similar to fairness.

1.1 The aim of this report series

This report series uses behavioural insights to think differently about what we call the mental landscape of post-conflict life. The series seeks to fill a research and policy gap in understanding the mechanisms that connect perceptions, decisions and behaviour as they relate to situations of violent conflict.³ Understanding these mechanisms is an important starting point for policy discussions, which are currently focused on the need for programming that supports inclusion, community building and investment in the future (Nixon and Mallet, 2017).

¹ Male respondent 12.

² Male respondent 9; female respondent 5.

³ This gap has been duly noted regarding behaviour in other contexts. See, for example: Sniehotta *et al.* (2014).

Yet, how to define and achieve all of these in a 'post-conflict' environment is under-researched (MacGinty and Richmond, 2016; Sow, 2015; Ejumudo, 2014; Stahn, 2012; Bos *et al.*, 1998), and evidence on the lived experience of these contexts can help to promote more effective, sustainable policy and programming strategies.

Our starting point is that the experience of lives after violence is deeply shaped by what we call the mental landscape: the combination of how people experience their lives after violence, how they perceive and make sense of their current situation, the tools they use to interpret the challenges they face, and how they connect their experiences today to legacies and memories of the war. This mental landscape shapes people's decisions, behaviour, and experience of their everyday lives. Looking at how the mental landscape directly influences people's behaviour is a way to show that perceptions do indeed matter.

1.2 The mental landscape and fairness and inclusion

In this report – the fourth in the series, *The mental landscape of post-conflict life in northern Uganda* – we argue that finding ways to operationalise inclusion and fairness in a post-conflict setting is made more difficult by the experience of conflict, yet is often presumed to be easier because of the perceived improvement of a situation (from conflict to post-conflict). The difficulty of achieving a lived experience of fairness and inclusion in post-conflict life is explained by three main factors: standards of fairness; outcomes, processes, luck and broken promises; and communal versus individual inclusion. Each of these is outlined here, and then considered in more detail in Sections 2, 3 and 4 of this report.

First, standards of what is considered fair increase when people are reminded of the experience of violent conflict. This points towards a compound challenge when seeking to establish processes experienced as fair and inclusive.

Second, experiencing a situation as inclusive and fair seems to be largely dependent on whether the outcome is beneficial. In addition, even a good outcome has an expiry date, meaning it is experienced as good within a certain time frame. If something has been promised as an outcome and is not delivered within a given time, people's perceptions of this being unfair grow stronger. The trust that is damaged by the broken promise is very difficult to recoup in a next project stage. With each

broken project promise, the next project is less likely to be successful because people are less willing to engage with it. If a good outcome for a particular person or community is achieved, however, this is not automatically seen as the result of a fair process, which might allow development programmes to reap some points. Instead, even if the process might have been designed to be fair and inclusive, it is a challenge to create a situation that is perceived as such, since positive changes are often attributed to luck.

Third, because identities are multi-layered and changeable, an individual experience of a process can be very unfair (possibly because there was no individual benefit), even if the individual acknowledges that her or his group has been treated fairly. The experience of a fair and inclusive process is thus located at the individual level, but a process is often designed with a communal experience of inclusion and fairness in mind. An operational emphasis on fair processes might thus be ineffective – and yet, for most post-conflict programming, developing processes that are meant to be inclusive of groups is a crucial part of providing fair access to resources and benefits.

1.3 Methods and data used for this report series

This paper is part of a series of reports using qualitative, quantitative and experimental behavioural research. This includes:

- 1** more than 100 open-ended interviews with authorities, citizens and NGO staff
- 2** systematic collecting of individual stories using the SenseMaker[®] tool
- 3** three rounds of the SLRC large-n structured survey on livelihoods, access to and experience of basic services, exposure to shocks and coping strategies and peoples' perceptions of governance, conducted in northern Uganda in the Lango and Acholi sub-regions in 2013, 2015 and 2018
- 4** a 'lab in the field' set up to conduct experimental behavioural games with 700 participants.

A detailed description of all methods used and the research design can be found in 'Part 1: Research on behaviour and post-conflict life in northern Uganda – the research design' (Amanela *et al.*, 2020).

The crucial method that allows us to contribute to the knowledge on how the experience of violence shapes people's choices is a combination of storytelling and

experimental games. We asked people about the stories and experiences that are important to them, using these stories and the experience of telling them as a prime. To do this in an experimental set-up, we asked half the people to tell us a story of importance to them from the time of the conflict; the other half was asked to tell a story that had happened very recently. Qualitative interviews with participants in the games and with others allowed us to contextualise our experimental findings.

To study behaviour in relation to fairness and inclusion, we ran the 'ultimatum game' (Güth *et al.*, 1982), used to test for fairness preferences and fairness standards.

In this game, the 'proposer' is given a fixed amount of money to divide with another player ('the responder'). If the responder accepts the share, then both receive the money, but if the responder rejects the share, then neither player receives anything. Therefore, the responder's choice to reject low offers is an indication of that player's willingness to sacrifice earnings in order to punish unfair behaviour.

To understand better why people experience the experimental games and their lives in this way, we also asked how individuals felt about the outcome of the game and how they made their decisions while playing.

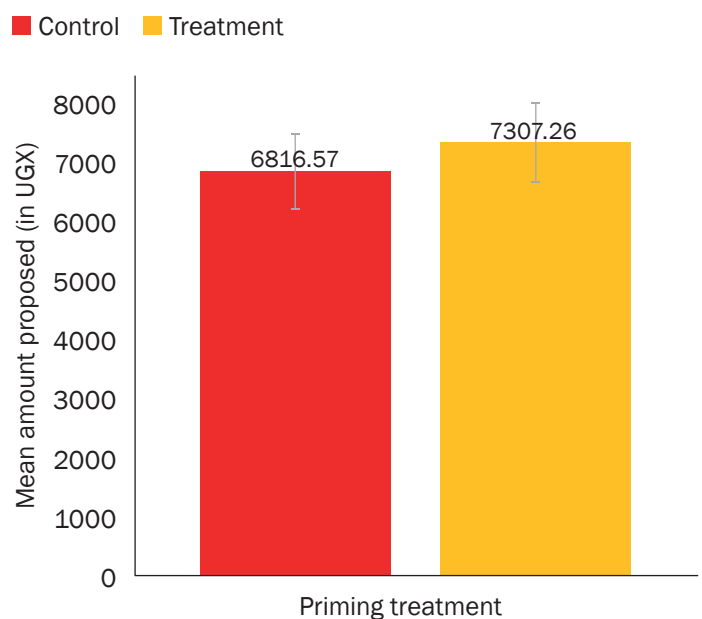
2 Standards of fairness: why are they higher for people in the conflict mindset?

Our first insight comes from our behavioural experiment. Our findings indicate that those who have just recalled an experience from the times of the conflict before playing the ultimatum game – those in the ‘conflict mindset’ – have a different standard of what they consider to be fair than those who spoke of a more recent experience.

We find that people in the conflict mindset differed considerably in the amount of money they were willing to accept compared to those in the control group (who were not in the conflict mindset). In other words, people in the treatment group were more likely to punish unfair offers, which means their standards of fairness were higher. They also made higher offers when sharing money with their fellow players (Figure 1). The offers they accepted in return, meaning those they considered high enough to be ‘fair’, were also higher. The conflict mindset is thus linked to higher standards on what people consider fair to give and fair to receive.⁴

Specifically, participants in the conflict mindset rejected higher offers than participants in the control group. On average they rejected offers below 31 per cent of the total endowment while participants in the control group – who had spoken about a recent experience –

Figure 1: Amount proposed in ultimatum game as a function of priming⁴



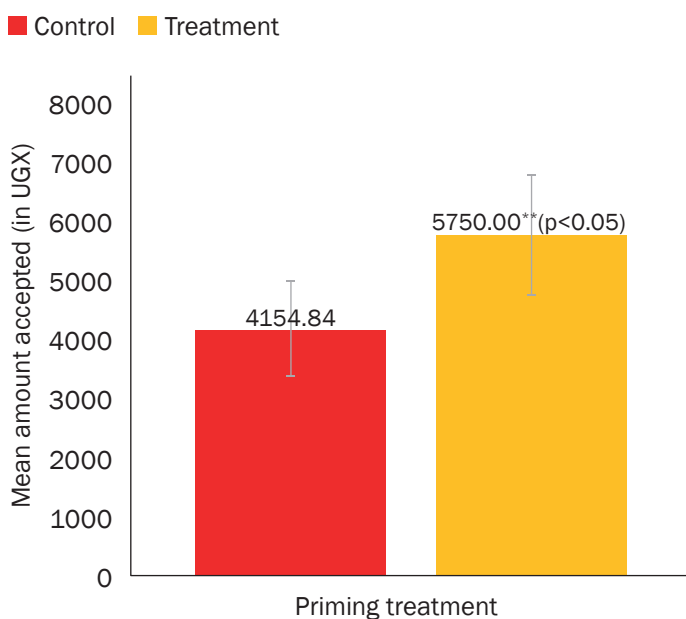
⁴ This effect is not statistically significant.

on average rejected offers below 20 per cent of the total endowment (significant at $p < 0.01$). Participants in the conflict mindset offered slightly more money to their partner (7 percentage points more) than participants made to recall recent stories (the control group) in the fairness exercise.⁵ We call this higher fairness standards (standards referring to what is considered fair to receive) and higher preferences (preferences referring to what people consider fair to give).

What we see is that a participant's higher standard of fairness means that they lost out on real money (Figure 2). Punishing unfair offers is costly because you are willing to sacrifice your endowment to punish the unfair behaviour. This raises the question of how the propensities to engage in these behaviours evolved. A simple explanation might be that those being reminded of a past in which they experienced a conflict (that one can assume was experienced as 'unfair') makes people want to act more fairly.

Our results suggesting that a post-conflict setting creates higher standards of fairness resonate with the only other study we are aware of to have used the ultimatum game in the context of post-conflict recovery research.

Figure 2: Amount accepted by responders in ultimatum game as a function of priming



Gneezy and Fessler (2012) used experiments conducted before, during and after the 2006 Israel–Hezbollah war. They found that during wartime people are more willing to pay costs – meaning they are willing to put resources to this – to punish non-cooperative group members and reward cooperative group members. When playing the ultimatum game, wartime participants were more likely to reject higher proposals and more willing to incur a cost in order to punish unfair proposals than participants in the control group. In this case, the authors interpret the ultimatum game as indicating punishment of un-cooperative or selfish individuals (within the in-group), rather than being about perception of fairness. They argue that 'If intergroup conflict played an important role in the evolution of human cooperation, then it is possible that such conflict elicits conditional changes in individuals' behaviour that enhance cooperation within the group', thus presenting fairness as a strategy to achieve a 'prosocial' outcome for the in-group (ibid: 219).

Another explanation could be that recalling an experience that happened to them during the time of the conflict also reminds participants of unfair situations and how challenging they have found them. When participants in the treatment group classified the stories they told in response to the prime, they rarely classified their experience as fair. This might mean that, since people remembered few stories of importance they considered as fair, people are seeking to compensate for this void by being more fair in the ultimatum game.

This is partly because people's expectation of fairness is shaped by the *lack* of fairness, from the perspective of previous loss and suffering. This is thus likely to be an acute quality in post-conflict settings. Because loss and suffering inform the experience of fairness and inclusion, the crucial marker of experiencing something as fair is an outcome that is considered beneficial, with less emphasis on a process that was seen as fair.

⁵ However, this effect is not statistically significant.

3 Outcomes, processes, luck and broken promises



When people were discussing fairness, we found that the emphasis on what makes an experience fair was often the outcome. Participation in a *consultative* process of decision-making to reach a certain outcome was less important *than a result*. A beneficial personal outcome trumps an inclusive and fair collective process anytime.

When we asked people directly about an experience they considered fair and inclusive, examples were often about having been included in the distribution of resources and directly benefiting from programmes. This might be because a good outcome was viewed as a certain entitlement, particularly in situations where an expected outcome was material. In those cases, the feeling of entitlement was generally based on having lost something due to the war, such as cattle. A good outcome was thus simply receiving back something that had been unfairly taken; a bad outcome was a perpetuation of a hugely unfair and exclusive system. However, respondents also were very aware that distributive fairness (meaning resources would be distributed fairly) could not simply mean that resources would be increased to give everyone a good outcome. They recognised that someone would always lose. Yet, this insight does not lessen the impact of the dilemma that a process seems to be perceived as fair when the outcome is right.

We thus asked participants in the behavioural games how they would have distributed participation in the game fairly – in other words, how would they have operationalised a fair selection process? The answers are multifaceted, ranging from a simple ‘everyone should be included’ to suggesting that people ought to have to show that they would spend the money they earned in the game wisely. Suggestions were made to exclude those who had a track record of not doing so,⁶ particularly those who had a track record of drinking, which points to an aspect of communality in distributional decision-making.⁷

Other suggestions were to allow only those who were computer literate to play.⁸ Youth who had been seen to be self-motivated in real life were considered worthy of participation.⁹ It was framed as a fair approach to choose those to play who had shown agency in their life in other ways, with descriptions like ‘having the right attitude’ or being self-driven.¹⁰ Some suggested that those who had a track record of begging ought to be excluded, and those who would find ways of turning the

⁶ Male respondent 18.

⁷ Male respondent 23.

⁸ Male respondent 23.

⁹ Male respondent 23.

¹⁰ Female respondent 6.

money won into a profit prioritised.¹¹ The right attitude in this context also meant that they would have a positive view of the experimental game-play.¹²

Others suggested that it should not be individuals who get chosen, but those who come as part of a group, as this would suggest better ownership over the game-playing.¹³ One participant suggested quite simply – but maybe profoundly reflecting assumptions of many programmes in search of beneficiaries – that ‘the first thing: you have to select someone who is interested in that game’.¹⁴ Others proposed that, rather than using the game to find out if people were fair, they ought to be tested beforehand and only those who had proven themselves to be fair would be allowed to play.¹⁵

One way to avoid selecting unfairly was to not offer resources unless there was enough for everyone to receive the same thing.¹⁶ However, if there was no way to decide within the community how to distribute resources, chance could be brought in: ‘Roll a dice’.¹⁷

Other participants said that inclusion and fairness could be achieved only once the process had led to the desired outcome – *essentially arguing that perceptions of fairness of a process would be retro-engineered according to the outcome*. Since what makes a good outcome is both a communal and individual experience, it is possible that even what are perceived to be good outcomes by some might not be experienced as such by others in the community. Some felt that clear categorisation might address this dilemma, meaning that, if selection criteria had been clear, the feeling of missing out on something was easier. But finding consensus on what those criteria are poses a challenge.

3.1 Outcome-based experiences of unfairness and exclusion

We learned from the behavioural experiments that those acting with refreshed memories of the conflict have higher standards of what they consider to be fair. This might point towards a broader situation in northern Uganda, where the experience of conflict makes a lack of reconstruction even more acutely felt as unfair and exclusive, regardless of whether this reconstruction was expected to come from NGOs or national policies aimed at fairer distribution of resources. One respondent

explained that the people of northern Uganda felt broadly excluded since what was on offer for the region’s reconstruction was below what people considered acceptable (or, in other words, what might have been fair). This framing chimes with the behaviour we have seen in games: that the view that something is unfair was more conducive to people withdrawing altogether.

What is here is something like eight people for one ox-plough. This is not sensible. If it was a good project, then it would be welcomed but nothing good. So people are not interested and others are walking out of the groups.¹⁸

The experience of how fair a good outcome is, or how exclusive a bad outcome is, also depends on the point of departure. One woman explained how being fair to ‘those with HIV, women, girl child, the formerly abducted the orphan and then the orphans’ and not giving much to ‘the abled’ was good, but came at a price: ‘To me giving something to members of those [groups] was fair because they really need more than the rest’. But she continued that this left others with few options: ‘So, the young man who also needs something needs to go and rob’.¹⁹

Some interpreted distributive fairness on a very personal level that hinted at how they understood the need for collaboration and ‘pay back’ in the community:

It is important that I give back to the people who have given to me. I have to give to them because of what they have given to me. That is why I have to appreciate them and really I have to do my best to make sure the little the government give here we have to use it correctly, so maybe I should get wealth in a few months or a few years. It is important that people are equal. We have the same blood and we have to distribute resource equally.²⁰

Process-based unfairness

Respondents gave striking example of situations they perceived as fair because an outcome had been good, even if the process had not been. A woman in her early seventies who had worked as a midwife, when asked if she could recall a situation in which she was treated fairly, gave the following story:

¹¹ Female respondent 8.

¹² Female respondent 6.

¹³ Male respondent 14.

¹⁴ Female respondent 13.

¹⁵ Male respondent 17.

¹⁶ Male respondent 24.

¹⁷ Male respondent 25.

¹⁸ Focus group 1 (conducted in Acholi): Oriang village.

¹⁹ Female respondent

²⁰ Acholi leader 2.

When [Idi] Amin took over [in 1971], I was in Gulu and was pregnant and I had an accident, on my leg. Then my second boy when they were playing, he swallowed a peanut and he was unconscious, but he was breathing. So, we were taken with ambulance from Gulu to Mulago. We met the people of Amin. They were coming to kill the northerners who were supporting Obote. So, they shot the ambulance and the tyre burst and the ambulance turned over. Then they came to beat us, even though I was pregnant, and they removed the oxygen from my child. Fortunately, that boy survived, they took him to the theatre and removed the peanut.²¹

While broadly we are unable to say conclusively that procedural fairness trumps a good outcome, there were a number of situations of procedural unfairness and exclusion mentioned that seemed to have a particularly damaging effect on the experience of fairness. Being treated badly in a job – because of a dismissal without much warning, being treated unfairly by a boss or being owed pay – caused particularly deep distress for people, often preoccupying them from pursuing other options.²²

Outcome and process-based fairness in the behavioural experiment

When we asked participants in the behavioural games about how they thought about fairness, some talked about the fairness of decision-making within the game. Others found the whole set-up of the game unfair because people could walk away from it with different results, without clear criteria why that would be the case.²³

The experience of fairness in the behavioural experiment was turned on its head by some participants: some found it very difficult to accept high sums of money because they felt that it was a patronising act from someone who could afford to give a lot. On the other hand, having an offer rejected caused hurt: ‘When they rejected the money it felt unfair because I give you something from my heart, if they reject it felt unkind.’²⁴

The striking aspect of the behavioural game is that refusing an offer means everyone loses out – but that does not mean that every offer is acceptable. This is one of the few areas where we do not see so clearly that outcome

trumps process: the principle of fairness is important, too. People were willing to sacrifice an outcome such as money because that outcome was not good enough compared to what they considered fair. One respondent explained that she located her agency in her ability to accept or reject a gift, even if that meant she was losing out:

For the first time I gave [money to the person with whom I was playing] she has refused, so both of us remained with nothing. It should be that person to accept my decision. If you make your own decision to give me something, that one is a free gift, so I will make my own decision to accept this gift.²⁵

Some respondents felt aggrieved at having been treated unfairly and were uncomfortable with the lack of possibility to address this grievance. That meant that they wanted to know after the game against whom they had been playing – to, as it was described, first ‘become friends’ with them and then ‘maybe outside the computer’ tell that person ‘you have been cheating me a lot’. People said they ‘wanted to confront’.²⁶ When asked for explanations of why some people would act unfairly towards others, one respondent said:

That one depends on how someone is feeling; how someone used to treat people, whether they are used to treating people fairly. Just can't be fair if you are used to not treating people equally. It depends on how that person is friendly to someone. When you are friendly to someone you have to share equally. Even if you could think of having more.

Others made clear that they felt that unfair behaviour would eventually be judged: ‘I came to understand that the person who was giving me little money they all have to fear God. It is fair to them but to me it is unfair.’²⁷

3.2 The lucky ones: good outcomes as a fluke

Perception of fairness was not necessarily influenced by programme design explicitly meant to be inclusive, or even one’s own actions and agency. Something could be understood as fair even if not shaped by the respondents’ own actions or a ‘fair process’ but ultimately by simple luck that the outcome had gone the right way. Luck is a popular explanation of why things happen (as is bad luck

²¹ Female respondent 3

²² Female lab participant 3; male respondent 13.

²³ Male respondent 14.

²⁴ Female lab participant 3.

²⁵ Male lab participant 5.

²⁶ Female lab participant 34.

²⁷ Male lab participant 6.

for bad things), which of course might mask a number of other beliefs and perceptions or might serve as a manageable coping strategy to avoid feeling treated unfairly. When we asked people how they explained to themselves when something bad happens, by far the most popular answer was ‘bad luck’, among both people who described themselves as having been displaced and those who did not (Table 1).

To understand better why people experience the experimental games and their lives as not impacted so much by process, we also asked how individuals felt about the outcome of the game and the choices they themselves made. We find that receiving a good outcome is understood in many different ways: prominently, it is experienced as a thing of luck with nothing that an individual can do about it.

Does that mean that feeling included is mostly viewed as a matter of luck? We encountered people who expressed that they had been defeated by bad luck and had not been able to gain anything – and there was nothing they could do about it. This emphasis on luck as a driver of outcomes is a challenge to programmes seeking to empower groups of people to take initiative and find ways of improving their situation. If inclusion and getting a good outcome is largely experienced as a matter of luck, what is envisioned as an empowering programmatic step might not be as empowering as assumed.

Our research thus far suggested that remembering violent conflict raises standards on what is fair, and that fairness is primarily experienced by outcomes.

The emphasis on luck presents a further challenge to post-conflict programming. Our research thus far suggested that remembering violent conflict raises standards on what is fair, and that fairness is primarily experienced by outcomes. This makes it difficult for programmes to be experienced as ‘fair’ in a post-conflict environment.

It is an added challenge if any beneficial – and thus ‘fair’ – outcomes are attributed to luck rather than programming: this makes it difficult for programmes to project that post-war life can be fair.

Table 1: Explanations for why something bad happens to respondent

For each of the following, say yes if you feel they are true: When something bad happens to me, I think it is:	Not displaced %	Displaced %
Because of bad luck	58.47	54.43
Because of God	42.38	48.82
Because I don't have money / I'm poor	24.22	21.93
Because of where I live	18.83	13.43
Because of my age	15.52	9.62
Because I am a man / woman	15.47	13.67
I don't think anything bad will happen	14.93	11.29
Because of my education	14.54	11.86
Because of my ethnicity	14.49	9.39
Because of the government	13.37	9.05
Because people want to harm me	13.34	18.62
Because of my experience in the Government of Uganda/LRA conflict	9.81	9.8
Because of who I know	8.76	5.69
Don't know	3.24	6.17
Other	3.16	2.94
Don't want to say	0.58	0.99

3.3 Broken promises: the expiry of fairness and inclusion

Experiencing fairness and inclusion has a window of opportunity in which a good outcome needs to occur. Respondents have a high tolerance for waiting when it comes to expecting fair treatment, particularly when promised through inclusively designed NGO projects. Yet, at some point, the expectation of fair and inclusive treatment turns into a broken promise when a ‘good outcome’ does not present itself: unmet expectations of programmes; deals that have not been followed through; commitments to paying school fees that were not kept. The experience of this as unfair and exclusive is powerful and difficult to repair in future engagement. And the memories of these broken promises are long.

Details matter – both of bad projects that overpromised and underdelivered or of those good ones that stuck to what they had set out to do. These were remembered particularly fondly when the effects were still felt today:

The mental landscape of post-conflict life in northern Uganda
Part 4: Rethinking inclusion and fairness

I can remember a situation in 2012, in this year Oxfam they treat us fair. They have given a lot of material for construction of latrine. They also constructed the dam for us as a community, and they also brought some fish and put them in the dam. So up to this present, these fish they have put there, sometimes the community go and collect them. As the community they can also after cashing that one they come to the market, then they sell it and they maintain the money for the community. That is a good project.²⁸

The government was a common source of broken promises, especially during electoral campaigns:

‘Political leaders only show respect and love for people at the time of their campaigns but once they are done they become something else. They only want our votes.’²⁹

This perception that government was not concerned about fairness, but about getting votes was strongly confirmed in our structured survey, where more than half of respondents said that voters are offered money for votes often or all the time (Figure 3).

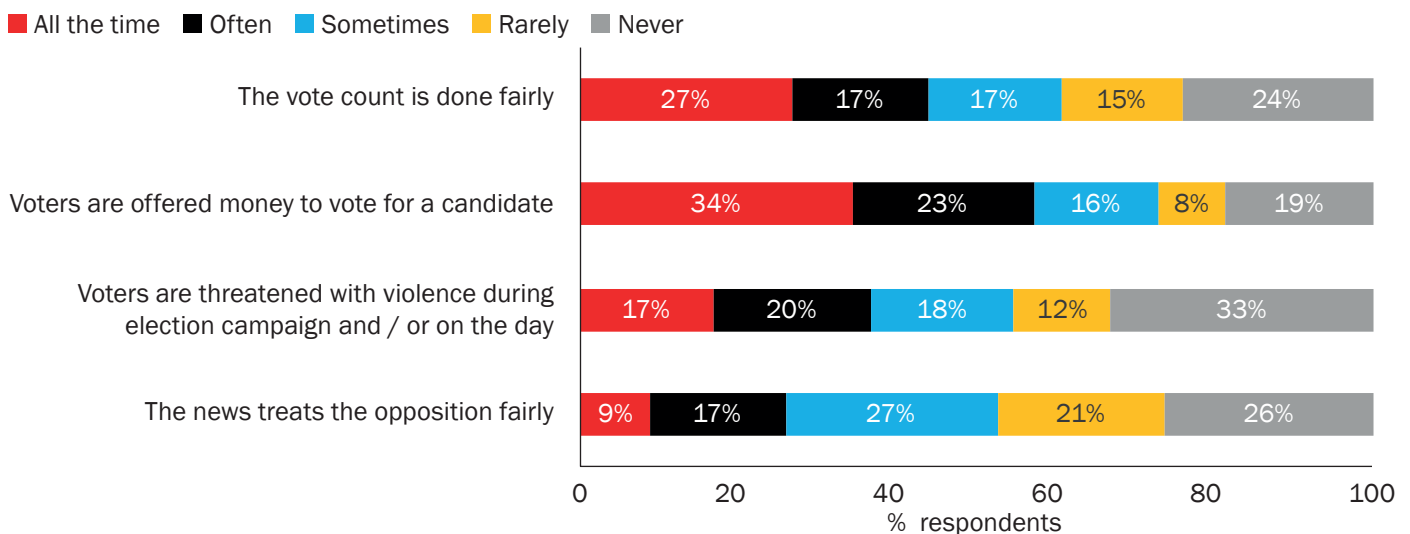
Lack of consultation and collaboration by the government was perceived as very unfair, for example with regard to parliament voting to abolish age limits for public office:

In the community, when there is any problem in the community, we gather together, and we contribute, we come to the compromise and we solve the problem. But normally in the parliament, even if we talk from here, they go there and make their decision, and they come back and just confirm, whether it is positive to me or negative to me. Sometimes they bring the positive and sometimes the negative, like the age limit for the government. The law was to stay for five year, but then they extend to seven years. When they come to ask the opinion, everybody rejected, but then they passed.³⁰

Since the start of civil war in neighbouring South Sudan in 2013, northern Ugandans have watched humanitarian aid come in for South Sudanese refugees, which has fuelled the experience of being treated unfairly:

The government loves and cares about the [South] Sudanese more than us. Let a small war break out in [South] Sudan, they will not sleep two nights before the government is sending them transport. Yet for us we sleep in the bush; even the food being distributed in the camp, some cannot be picked and given to the vulnerable elders here. When this war started, [the South Sudanese] were rushed here [within] days and now everything is in abundance for them.³¹

Figure 3: Perception of the legality of the electoral process



²⁸ Male local authority 1.
²⁹ Male respondent 15.

³⁰ Female respondent 3.
³¹ Focus group 1 (conducted in Acholi): Oriang village.

The mental landscape of post-conflict life in northern Uganda
Part 4: Rethinking inclusion and fairness

One reason why the perceptions of South Sudanese refugees can be strained is that those who gave land to be used as camps were told that they would be employed in the camp, which seems to have largely not happened.³² This was experienced as just another example in a long history of broken promises.

The insight that fairness has a window of opportunity poses a challenge to programmes facing delays, or programmes that overpromise. The damage done in the long term is likely to make it more difficult each time to provide not just the offer of the programme, but the perception of fairness and improvement that comes with it.

³² Male respondent 16.

4 Communal versus individual inclusion

Unfairness – including that felt at a level of one’s identity – was experienced at both communal and individual levels. Being able to make one’s decision without interference was another personal experience of fairness. One example given was the last election, where voting had been secret, which people had experienced as very fair. Along the same lines, an open vote was experienced as very unfair. In an LC1 election,³³ for example, people wanted the election to be fair and thus asked for people to line up behind their candidate. However, one participant described how this turned out to be unfair since no one was willing to take the risk of supporting a losing candidate. So what was meant to be a fair process became unfair and disenfranchising, since people decided to not vote.³⁴ Another example of fairness was the option to participate in research only after signing a consent form:

*I remember that when this lady came for data collection, she also asked and gave us the form that if you are not comfortable with our decision, you cannot sign the form. So there I also feel I have been given my decision.*³⁵

4.1 Communal fairness

While fairness was often described as a personal experience, some viewed it as a more communal process. This also meant that events that individual respondents had experienced as positive did not automatically translate to a broader communal experience of procedural fairness, but that including the whole community required more effort. Respondents often implicitly requested that those delivering development programmes ought to spend more effort on working with the community, rather than seeking change through individuals. One respondent used a biblical analogy to make this point:

*Even Moses, who was chosen by God, did not live to see the promised land. He stood up a mountain and looked. You may convince me that you are only focused on what is good for the country, but there will come a time whereby you need to let your brother help you to take the generation forward.*³⁶

³³ LC1 is the smallest administrative unit in Uganda.

³⁴ Male lab participant 7.

³⁵ Male lab participant 7.

³⁶ Male respondent 11.

When fairness was delivered, however, the benefits to the community were highlighted:

Being fair brings a lot of things to the community. Being fair to someone will join people together. People can cooperate... If you are unfair to someone, there is no way that person can then treat you fairly.³⁷

To understand how people link personal experience and communal benefits, we gain insights from some of the interviews conducted after the behavioural games. A strong sentiment was that of uncertainty. When trying to figure out what they themselves considered acceptable behaviour in the game, respondents talked about how they were focusing on their expectations of others. Were others going to play 'fairly' in the same way that respondents understood their own actions as fair – which most of the time just meant sharing money equally?³⁸

4.2 Identity-based fairness and inclusion

Fairness and identity are tightly linked together in how people experience situations in which they feel treated unfairly or excluded. Some felt, for example, that the root of unfairness in the behavioural games lay in the selection process, arguing that, had the selection not been computerised and they had been allowed to choose who to play with, the outcome would have been fairer.³⁹ Others felt that the machine selection made the process fairer.⁴⁰ One cannot help but link this experience of a selection process to the broader question of how selection of beneficiaries is experienced and whether an imposed selection process can ever be experienced as fair by a person if the outcome is not beneficial to them.

Selection is linked to categorisation of people and, in Acholiland, categorisation is deeply linked to questions of identity and with that, ethnicity. The following statement represents a common response: 'I hear that people still say that the Acholi are not treated as well and I'm feeling it myself. The Acholi are treated differently from those people.'⁴¹ Sometimes this different treatment was measured in lack of infrastructure, lack

of employment opportunities (particularly in government jobs), or access to services:

So people feel their government is not treating them [well], it is treating them differently. If you compare the school in northern Uganda and other government areas, from our side here scholarship is not there.⁴²

The Northern Uganda Social Action Fund (NUSAF) and the Peace, Recovery and Development Plan (PRDP) are two programmes explicitly designed to help the north after the war. Lack of tangible results from these has emphasised the notion that identity-based neglect continues: 'So you don't expect much to come from the government. Rather you fight for what you can. There is still that negligence from what I see.'⁴³

When asked how the experience of exclusion translated into an expectation of exclusion, respondents referred to a mindset of low expectations:

It is now the mindset of the Acholi people. They know for sure that if there is something good in the centre, that will never reach Acholi people. It is only from there [only accessible to people who are closer to power in the centre]. Like for example job opportunities. There are very many Acholi people who are now educated. They have degrees, they even have masters. Even if you apply you will not get it. We call it airtime – you have to buy for that job. There is no job in Uganda you can get on merit. You have to buy.⁴⁴

There were a number of examples of how people had to pay to get access to employment:

You call him, you struggle, you get his number and then you give him money and he says your name is now on the job list. I paid 800,000, I did not have that money and I was not called... The guy is here in town now and nobody can do anything but at last the project is taking from his office, after he made a mess. Still he has other projects, but to get a job you have to pay him.⁴⁵

³⁷ Male respondent 17.

³⁸ Male respondent 18.

³⁹ Female respondent 10.

⁴⁰ Male respondent 19.

⁴¹ Female local authority 2.

⁴² Female local authority 2.

⁴³ Male respondent 1.

⁴⁴ Acholi leader 1.

⁴⁵ Male lab participant 4.

A local leader put the lack of distributive fairness down to conscious political choice:

I have to be open here. Right now, we have a government and they take resources where they get votes and not where they don't get votes. Generally, in terms of distribution of resources, it is not equal. Because we tend to look at the political background of people which is NRA [National Resistance Army, former name for the political movement of President Museveni].⁴⁶

Such experiences of unequal access lead to open distrust and conspiracy theories. People talk about how a mosquito extermination spray seemed to have brought on more mosquitos. Nodding disease - an unexplained disease that saw a resurgence in the Kitgum area after 2009 – is still a puzzle supported by a number of conspiracy theories.⁴⁷ One religious leader explained that:

There is still this thinking that the bigger developments are being taken to other parts of the country. That kind of shapes their attitudes whereby even when government programmes are meant to uplift their standard of life, people are reluctant to participate because they think the government has done us a great disservice... So people are really reluctant, even when the programme is good. So they already have a negative perception, they are talking that this is the government they are benefiting, that gives the attitude where people are not willing to give themselves to some of the good government programmes that could have given them benefit.⁴⁸

Unfairness is also experienced along gender lines, with women describing how they were expected to tend to the gardens all year round until after harvest, when their husbands took the harvest to sell, with the wives rarely seeing the profits.⁴⁹ A 19-year-old woman with a child explained that she felt excluded from community decisions since 'community meetings are not for young girls, they don't view us as... it's not there'.⁵⁰ Exclusion is also often described along generations: with some programmes conducting needs assessment in villages, some youth argued that this excluded youth who had moved to town and benefited only the elderly.⁵¹

One Muslim leader explained that it took a lot of effort to separate religion and political leadership after the rule of Idi Amin Dada, who had tightly linked Islam to his rule, creating what this leader described as a lot of unfair behaviour towards Muslims.⁵²

A group of Rastafarians explained how they were excluded because of their beliefs and lifestyle:

Marijuana smokers are segregated upon not only at other services even in employment, for example, one cannot give you his motorcycle to handle as a boda-boda [taxi] which is unfair. They cannot also socialise with other people and chat freely with them because to them they have never seen any positive side of marijuana smokers.⁵³

Another of the group of self-declared marijuana smokers calling themselves the 'Jamaica group' argued that 'The same way alcoholics are given freedom of taking alcohol is the same way they should give to the marijuana smokers and equal treatment as well'.⁵⁴ It was also a matter of grievance that they were not treated in the health centre with the argument that they had brought on any illness themselves by smoking marijuana.⁵⁵ Further, because members of their group had been forced to cut off their hair when attending school, many had chosen not to go to school, making them excluded from education. Others felt that people making particular lifestyle choices – under which they included taking drugs or drinking – that did not represent accepted social behaviour ought to be excluded from any distribution.⁵⁶

How fairness is experienced can link to one's location, which is closely connected to how making a living is experienced. NGO presence was closely associated with a sense of fairness not just through their distribution, but through job opportunities which made pursuing an education worthwhile.⁵⁷ With fewer NGOs operating following the end of the conflict, 'the jobs we have cannot support people. The jobs in offices are scarce'.⁵⁸ One woman, who spoke frankly about physical and psychological abuse by her husband, explained how she had always felt treated extremely unfairly by him, but that her own experience of her life had changed with finding a more stable livelihood through a job in a government school'.⁵⁹

46 Acholi leader 2.
47 Male NGO worker 1.
48 Religious leader 1.
49 Female local authority 2.

50 Female respondents 11 and 12.
51 Male respondent 2.
52 Religious leader 3.
53 Male respondent 20.

54 Male respondent 21.
55 Male respondent 21.
56 Male respondent 18.
57 Male lab participant 2.

58 Male lab participant 7.
59 Female respondent 1.

The further away someone lived from access to government, the less likely it was that they thought it plausible that change might come. In areas where connections with government were weak, people proposing projects or asking for services were, as one respondent put it, 'always put on hold'.⁶⁰ How government efforts were perceived varied widely. Some people argued that the region was purposely neglected:

'When we look at the government programmes, mostly they feel neglected because of the equal development and it's different in the Acholi sub-region. So that mindset is still here.'⁶¹

4.3 Experience of (un)fairness in behavioural games

Some described the process of having to make a decision in the game as quite stressful and it helped to imagine that people were playing for money that had already been budgeted for a real purpose:

If people saw the figure, big figure, a bit small, you trade more, people will be – how do I describe? More nervous? On my own, I would still remain, but I don't know how other people feel. I feel free giving that money, if I understand of course you want the money for what, I give you. Because you might have a problem. If I don't have I feel sorry. You know people standard of living are different, so you give according to what? Your standard. So if I have a 1000 shilling, you have ten. If I have more again, I did not give you, you share that ten. So the other would be mine, I wait for the others, I share again. But it is not easy to share money if you don't feel ok... Because me as the owner, I have to remain with the larger amount. But how is the condition of the person I am giving? Am I giving it out to a lunatic who does not know money? Or am I giving as a statement to the community? That is the difference.⁶²

Despite this personal experience of fairness, the individual nature of the games was puzzling to some. One respondent was taken aback that it had been suggested that he was not allowed to ask what the

outcome of the games had been for his friends.⁶³ Others liked the individual experience, arguing that the outcome was fair since 'we did it for ourselves. There was no one to blame. If I had no money I wouldn't have blamed anybody. I was the one doing it for myself.'⁶⁴

Some respondents felt aggrieved when they did not receive back the same amount of money they had sent, locating the reasons for this in personalities: 'People are different, others want to keep big money.'⁶⁵ Others argued that what they experienced was less cheating, but more a display of character and that different people had different levels of what they considered fair:

It is according to how you think. Because of out of the whole thing I was also learning that not all people are equal and not all think equally. What I know about that person [who doesn't share equally], they really want to know bigger; they want to give little and just want big.⁶⁶

Some players adjusted their own behaviour after observing that others were sending less money to them, arguing that if others were not generous, neither would they be.⁶⁷

Some viewed those who played very successfully and walked away with lots of money with suspicion. There was a certain character judgement involved in being seen to be successful, and these players were described as 'not merciful', cheating and unfair.⁶⁸ Others described those who played for best result as 'competing', which again was considered unlikable behaviour.⁶⁹

Others located the level of fairness or unfairness in the level of computer literacy of participants, arguing that those with better computer skills had an advantage: 'For those who do not know how to press a computer, you may not know how to play so that was not fair. It should have been a real person to handle that money.'⁷⁰ Not being computer literate was considered by some the real unfairness: 'Those who do not know how to use computers should also get to know computer knowledge, so it should not only be for a short time. It was unfair that she knew so little.'⁷¹

60 Focus group 3 (conducted in Acholi): Dog Tangi.

61 Male local authority 3.

62 Male lab participant 3.

63 Male lab participant 7.

64 Female respondent 13.

65 Male respondent 22.

66 Male respondent 19.

67 Male respondent 23.

68 Female respondent 6.

69 Female respondent 8.

70 Female lab participant 34.

71 Female lab participant 35.

5 Conclusion and implications



Standards of what people experience as fair and inclusive are higher for those recalling their experience of conflict than those who spoke about a recent experience.

Therefore, it is more difficult to design a programme that people experience as fair in a post-conflict setting, especially if the outcome cannot always be to everyone's liking. Even in times of hardship, in times of recovering from a conflict and in times of need, not just *any* offering is an acceptable offering. In the same way that people rejected cash offers that they felt were unfair in the behavioural game, people described how they reject programmes because they are simply seen as not fair, often because they are shaped by the interests of those offering, and not for the needs of those receiving.

In addition, programming for groups to achieve change means taking a huge leap of faith as to how individuals experience such programmes. It assumes that individuals within a group feel included or treated fairly by virtue of being part of an (externally determined) category. Further, it starts from the idea that if a programme is set up with what is considered a fair process, it will be experienced as such by beneficiaries. This set-up assumes a tightly integrated and constructive interaction between a collective goal and the individual experience of working towards it. Having seen that standards of what is considered fair differ between those who had just recently been thinking of the conflict and those who were not primed to do so points towards a number of things.

First, it indicates that thinking about the conflict changes standards of what is considered fair. Second, we see that high standards of fairness exist; however, what informs those standards is a challenging question to explore. It is difficult to extract from the amorphous experience of inclusion and fairness something that can programmatically establish the experience more reliably.

While received wisdom seems to suggest that fairness is important for programmes to be inclusive and to be perceived as beneficial, the notion of how individuals experience such fairness is underexplored. There are continuing questions about whether the main ingredient for experiencing fairness is a good result or a good process, and whether a process can be experienced as fair even if the result is less than satisfactory. But what does it mean if a process is perceived as positive, with people feeling part of a collaborative effort, even with a meagre result? How is the experience of fairness linked to feeling included? And to what extent does the experience of a violent conflict make it harder for people to develop the kind of agency that post-conflict programming often assumes?

We observed that in cases of a good outcome, this is not automatically experienced as a result of a process that was designed to be inclusive and fair. Good outcomes are often considered as fulfilling an entitlement based on what is expected, as a higher fairness standard. In addition, these good outcomes seem to have an expiry date or a particular window of opportunity. Respondents have a high tolerance when it comes to expecting fair treatment, particularly when promised through inclusive NGO projects. Yet, at some point, the expectation of fair and inclusive treatment turns into a broken promise; the experience of this as unfair and exclusive becomes more powerful than the expectation of fairness and inclusion. A situation in which outcomes matter more than process – but good outcomes are not necessarily seen as having been shaped by a good process, as opposed to luck, and need to be delivered on a certain timeline – creates a particular challenge for post-conflict programming that seeks to establish fair and inclusive ways of working, but might not be able to deliver noticeable results quickly.

Our findings have a number of implications. Standards and preferences of fairness are important for policy-makers and practitioners, as fairness (or lack thereof) is a common narrative of why certain post-conflict programmes fail and / or are not well received by the communities that they target.

However, as the treatment group in the behavioural games expressed higher standards and preferences for fairness, this would indicate that the bar is set higher when it comes to designing programmes that target post-conflict communities. Essentially, feelings of unfairness are more likely to occur or will be more acutely felt.

The answer to this could therefore be to focus on ensuring that a particular process is deemed fair, and known to be so (for example, setting clear vulnerability criteria in deciding who gets what in a distribution programme). However, the fact that the qualitative

interviews seem to suggest that fairness is often related to a narrow outcome of inclusion (i.e., outcome fairness instead of procedural fairness) leads us to ask several other questions about how one can execute fairness in programming. To begin, one must recognise that, when it comes to policy-making and the design and implementation of programmes, there will be those who are happy (with the benefits from said programmes / policies) and those who are not. In recognition of this fact, development actors often expend considerable resources on making sure that the process is fair (with mixed results). Firstly, it is very possible that the type of fairness implemented – through selection processes and targeting criteria – is not of a level that is satisfactory to communities, and secondly, it is possible that people are not aware of the fact that there was a process to start with, so thus judge fairness based only on the outcome.

Making a distribution process or programme set-up more accessible to communities will help align them with expectations of fairness on behalf of targeted communities and provide a certain sense of agency over the potential outcomes of this programme or process. This is by no means a ‘cure-all’ in helping to make communities feel that a particular post-conflict programme was designed more fairly, but it does begin to deconstruct the links between agency, inclusion and fairness, and the difference between personal and communal experiences. In addition, in order to minimise the chances of beginning a vicious cycle of broken promises and fuelling perceptions of unfairness, it might be worthwhile for programmes to explore setting up ‘small wins’ first – delivering services or goods desired by the community at the start of the programme (perhaps even at a reduced scale) to establish a sense of trust, inclusion and fairness. These quick wins will then help in establishing trust and sense of fairness before promising anything bigger, with a higher risk of delays / underachievement.

This increased knowledge around preferences and standards of fairness on the part of post-conflict societies can help design better inclusive programmes and policies with people having a meaningful level of say about their involvement in and benefits from post-conflict programming. At the same time, those implementing programmes must recognise the risk associated with underdelivering and the reality that ‘good outcomes’ for all will not always be achievable. Any harm from this must be mitigated.

Standards and preferences of fairness are important for policy-makers and practitioners, as fairness (or lack thereof) is a common narrative of why certain post-conflict programmes fail.

References



- Amanela, Suleiman, Ayele, Tracy Flora, Buell, Stephanie, Escande, Alice, Quinlan, Tony, Rigterink, Anouk S., Schomerus, Mareike, Sharp, Sam and Swanson, Sarah (2020) 'The mental landscape of post-conflict life in northern Uganda: Part 1: Research on behaviour and post-conflict life in northern Uganda – the research design'. London: Secure Livelihoods Research Consortium.
- Bos, Kees van den, Wilke, Henk A.M. and Lind, E. Allan (1998) 'When do we need procedural fairness? The role of trust in authority'. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 75, 1449–1458.
- Ejumudo, Kelly Bryan Ovie (2014) 'Youth restiveness in the Niger Delta: a critical discourse'. *SAGE Open*, January–March(2), 1–12.
- Gneezy, Ayelet and Fessler, Daniel M. T. (2012) 'Conflict, sticks and carrots: war increases prosocial punishments and rewards'. *Proceedings of the Royal Society*, 279, 219–223.
- Güth, Werner, Schmittberger, Rolf and Schwarze, Bernd (1982) 'An experimental analysis of ultimatum bargaining'. *Journal of Economic Behavior and Organization*, 3(4), 367–388.
- MacGinty, Roger and Richmond, Oliver (2016) 'The fallacy of constructing hybrid political orders: a reappraisal of the hybrid turn in peacebuilding'. *International Peacekeeping*, 23, 219–239.
- Nixon, Hamish and Mallet, Richard (2017) 'Service delivery, public perceptions and state legitimacy: findings from the Secure Livelihoods Research Consortium'. London: Secure Livelihoods Research Consortium.
- Paffenholz, Thania (2014) 'Civil society and peace negotiations: beyond the inclusion–exclusion dichotomy'. *Negotiation Journal*, 30(1), 69–91.
- Sniehotta, Falko F., Presseau, Justin and Araújo-Soares, Vera (2014) 'Time to retire the theory of planned behaviour'. *Health Psychology Review*, 8(1), 1–7.
- Sow, Aminata (2015) 'Peacebuilding: a review of the policy literature'. *White Paper Series 14*. Geneva: Geneva Peacebuilding Platform.
- Stahn, Carsten (2012) 'Editorial: Between "faith" and "facts": by what standards should we assess international criminal justice?'. *Leiden Journal of International Law*, 25(2), 251–282.
- World Bank / United Nations (2018) *Pathways for Peace: Inclusive Approaches to Preventing Violent Conflict*. Washington, DC: World Bank.



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

Disclaimer: The views presented in this publication are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the UK Government's official policies or represent the views of Irish Aid, the EC, SLRC or our partners. ©SLRC 2020.

Readers are encouraged to quote or reproduce material from SLRC for their own publications. As copyright holder SLRC requests due acknowledgement.

Secure Livelihoods Research Consortium
Overseas Development Institute (ODI)
203 Blackfriars Road
London SE1 8NJ
United Kingdom

T +44 (0)20 3817 0031
F +44 (0)20 7922 0399
E slrc@odi.org.uk
www.securelivelihoods.org
[@SLRCtweet](https://twitter.com/SLRCtweet)

Cover photo: Mareike Schomerus.
Madi Opei, Uganda's border with South Sudan.

