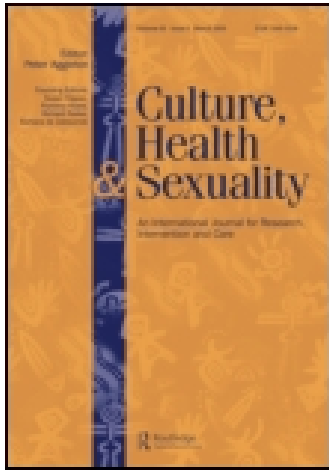


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### Money, men and markets: Economic and sexual empowerment of market women in southwestern Uganda

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ORIGINAL ARTICLE

## Money, men and markets: Economic and sexual empowerment of market women in southwestern Uganda

BARBARA NYANZI, STELLA NYANZI, BRENT WOLFF, &  
JAMES WHITWORTH

### Abstract

Market trading requires access to cash, independent decision-making, mobility and social interaction. This study sought to explore whether market work empowers women with respect to spending decisions and negotiation over sex and condom-use. A semi-structured questionnaire was administered to 212 market women; and 12 focus group discussions and 52 in-depths interviews were conducted among market women in southwestern Uganda. Market women reported high levels of independence, mobility, assertiveness and social interaction. Access to cash was not synonymous with control over it, however. Spending decisions were limited by men's ability to selectively withdraw finances for expenditures central to women's concerns including household and children's needs. Trading in markets earns women masculine labels such as *kiwagi*, characterized variously as independent, rebellious and insubordinate. Earning money does not change expectations of correct behaviour for wives, making it difficult for women to initiate, deny sex or ask for condoms. Independence and income from market work may make it easier for women to enter and exit new sexual relationships. However, unable to protect themselves within partnerships, HIV risk may increase as a result.

### Introduction

Economic dependence on men has been identified as a key structural factor at the root of women's vulnerability to poverty, sexual violence, unwanted childbirth, sexually transmitted infections, and a range of other negative outcomes (Bassett and Mhloyi 1991, Ulin 1992, de Zoysa *et al.* 1996, Heise and Ellsberg 2001). Whether improving women's access to, and control over, financial resources alone will be sufficient to address any or all of these remains a subject of continuing debate. Some studies have shown that access to cash income gives women more decision-making power within the household and increases their demand for formal health care (Tibandebage 1995, Nanda 1999). Other

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studies have shown that cash income for women does not always lead to greater decision-making power in the household or in wider society (Chitsike 2000, Endley 2001).

Definitions of power and the identification of its sources are the subject of continuing debate in the social sciences. In absolute terms, power can be defined simply as ‘the capacity to have an impact or produce an effect’ (Radtke and Stam 1994). Empowerment is, however, often understood in relative terms depending on the sources of power and the finite limits of power itself. The most common interpretation of empowerment has been ‘power over’, implying a zero-sum model in which empowerment of women comes at the expense of men (Rowlands 1998). This logic is echoed in Mason’s (1994) definition of women’s status as power, prestige, and access to and control over socially valued resources *vis-à-vis* men. Notions of women’s empowerment as a relative concept, on the other hand, played a prominent role in women in development initiatives from the 1970s (Chowdhry 1995). Subsequent gender and development approaches took a more diverse view of empowerment to include ‘power to’, ‘power with’ and ‘power from within’ that do not necessarily come at the expense of men, and broadened that focus to cover a range of economic and non-economic activities including, among other things, sexual relations (Rowlands 1998).

Another distinction is between practical and strategic empowerment (Molyneux 1985, Moser 1989). The former involves improvements in women’s ability to act and achieve ends within their commonly accepted domains of influence without necessarily challenging the basis of gender relations, or expanding decision-making authority to traditionally male dominated domains. Strategic empowerment on the other hand involves challenging the gender *status quo* in some way.

#### *Gender roles in the economic domain*

Unlike West Africa with its long history of pre-colonial urban centres and thriving market trade dominated by women, women’s participation in the money economy in East Africa is a relatively new phenomenon (Robertson 1995). In Uganda, 80% of the population continue to live in rural areas (Uganda Bureau of Statistics and ORC Macro 2001). Ugandan women have been reported as providing 70% of agricultural labour, while owning only 5% of the land (Snyder 2000). In a recent national survey, almost all rural women reported working activity in the last year, but nearly nine out of ten were involved in agriculture, and the large majority of those worked on family land (Uganda Bureau of Statistics and ORC Macro 2001). It is not uncommon for women to earn money from agricultural work—slightly over half of women working in agriculture reported doing so—but in most cases this reflects a mix of in-kind and cash payments where women grow food for their own families and sell off any remaining surplus. Independent work in the cash economy outside the home for women in Uganda is a relatively new phenomenon.

Women’s involvement in the cash sector has increased sharply in the last three decades in Uganda as in other East African countries, but less as the result of political assertion of women’s right to work than from economic necessity (Obbo 1991, Robertson 1995, Tripp 1997, Snyder 2000). Sharp economic decline through the 1970s and the combined effects of war and structural adjustment policies that reduced the number of government and para-statal jobs in the 1980s and 1990s, resulted in the contraction of the formal economy and its ability to provide jobs for a rapidly growing population. Wages in the remaining formal sector jobs often failed to keep pace with inflation. The average urban

wage in Uganda in 1980 fell to 6% of its real money value in 1972, sometimes equivalent to the cost of a few days of food in a month (Obbo 1991). As the formal economy declined, the informal economy increased in urban areas to fill the void and women were drawn into paid work to help meet the household needs. In Uganda, women's entry into the cash economy in the south and central regions has been accelerated by general economic recovery and the expansion of micro-credit programmes, many of which specifically target loans for women (Snyder 2000).

Increasing women's participation in the cash economy has not yet challenged basic patrilineal patterns of land ownership and inheritance, or men's assumed cultural authority over the domains of money and spending. Women surveyed in a recent national study reported that male partners were more likely to have the final say over household expenditures in all domains except what food to cook and personal health care (UBOS and ORC/Macro 2001). When women did paid work, about half of rural women and nearly 90% of urban women report that they alone decided how their money was spent. However, the more women contributed to the household economy, the less they reported autonomous control over spending decisions.<sup>1</sup>

#### *Gender roles in the sexual domain*

Social norms for sexual behaviour in Uganda have been well documented (Kisekka 1973, Larson 1989, McGrath *et al.* 1992, Heald 1995, Blanc *et al.* 1996, Wolff *et al.* 2000a). Research points to the importance of the informal system of sexual education in Baganda culture, provided by the paternal aunt known as *ssenga* (plural *ssengas*). *Ssengas* are expected to play the key role in educating girls from the time of menstruation to marriage about role expectations within marriage in general and sexual roles in particular. Girls are typically taught to have deference to their husbands, to avoid marital conflict by suppressing anger or disagreement and generally to expect and endure the hardships that come in marriage. They are chiefly responsible for teaching girls how to satisfy their partners sexually, which is considered to be an essential part of being a good wife. Instruction typically includes elongation of the *labia minora* from the time of puberty to enhance male sexual satisfaction, advice never to deny their husbands sex and never to ask for sex directly.

The tradition of sex education by *ssengas* is undergoing strains from competition from schools, mass media and peers, increasing mobility and class division within families (Blanc *et al.* 1996). At the same time, the oral nature of this tradition cannot be entirely insulated against contemporary cultural and political debates about the role of women in family and society or responses to the HIV epidemic (see Tripp 2000). Nevertheless the teachings of *ssengas* and their emphasis on male authority in the sexual domain continue to emerge as a point of reference for expected behaviour, in research on sexual behaviour in this setting.

While women may be taught to play subordinate roles in the domain of sex, they are not completely powerless in this respect. Women can, and do, refuse sex in specific conditions even with married partners, including failure to provide sufficient economic support (McGrath *et al.* 1992, Wolff *et al.* 2000a). Evidence of whether women's access to money increases their influence over sex is mixed at best. Snyder (2000) asserts that women's involvement in paid work in Uganda has reduced their vulnerability to rape and other sexual violence. In a multivariate analysis of survey data from two districts in Uganda, women who controlled their own income showed significantly more influence over sex with

their partner and more ability to refuse sex in the low bride wealth (Baganda) setting, but less influence over the same outcomes in the high bride wealth (Lango) setting (Wolff *et al.* 2000b). These findings reinforce the need for careful, situated ethnographic research on the topic of sexual negotiation.

In this study, we address the question of whether and how empowerment in an economic sense translates into sexual empowerment. These focus on a group of women with unparalleled independent access to cash for this setting: namely women involved in market work.

## Methods

The study was conducted in markets in urban, peri-urban and rural sites in southwestern Uganda.<sup>2</sup> A semi-structured questionnaire was administered to a convenience sample of 212 market women at their market stalls (rural site=50, urban site=95 and peri-urban site=67). Four focus group discussions, with approximately 14 women in each, were conducted in each site involving selected survey respondents. A total of 52 individual in-depth interviews were conducted among survey respondents to follow up on issues arising from focus group discussions. Field notes were made to capture what was seen during the visits made to the markets. Finally, question and answer sessions in three interactive workshops with study participants following the study were recorded and transcribed for analysis. Survey data were entered and analysed using Microsoft Access 97. Focus group discussions, in-depth interviews, and interactive workshops were audio taped, transcribed verbatim, translated from Luganda to English and analysed using the ATLAS.ti 4.1 textual analysis software package.

## Results

Survey data from the convenience sample of market women in the three market sites was generally representative of women in this region, with some important exceptions and differences between sites. Respondents ranged from 16–64 years, with a median of 30 and interquartile range between 23–39 years. They were predominantly Roman Catholic, Baganda, and generally poorly educated, with 72% reporting primary education or less. In these respects, the sample matches the general Masaka district population profile for women in this age range fairly closely (Uganda Bureau of Statistics, 2001).

Unusually for women in this age range, however, only 43% reported being married or cohabiting at the time of the survey. Single never-married women accounted for 21% of the sample while the rest were either widowed or separated. Figure 1 shows the key socio-economic characteristics of sampled market women according to town, peri-urban and rural sites. Rural market women had a notably older age distribution than either town or peri-urban sites, and were almost twice as likely to be married or cohabiting compared to town or peri-urban women. Only half of urban women reported being in a current sexual relationship compared with 63% and 76% of peri-urban and rural respondents, respectively. Urban women appeared to be slightly better educated than their peri-urban counterparts, but differences in education levels between sites were generally small and, unlike age and relationship characteristics, were not statistically significant.

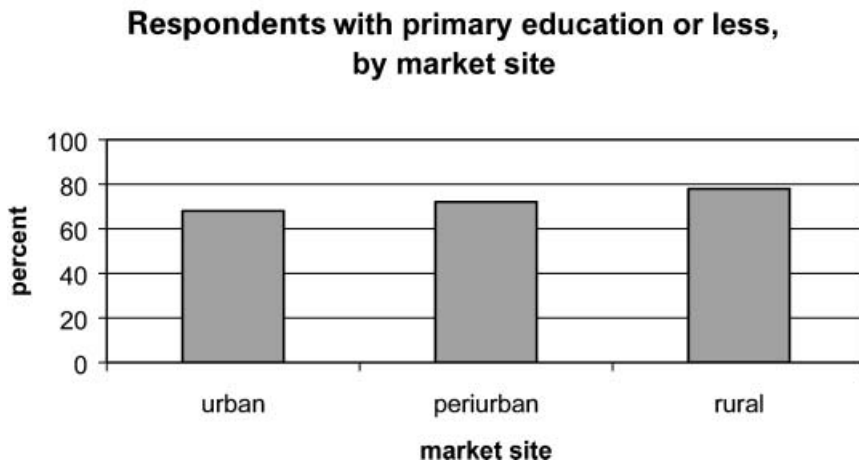
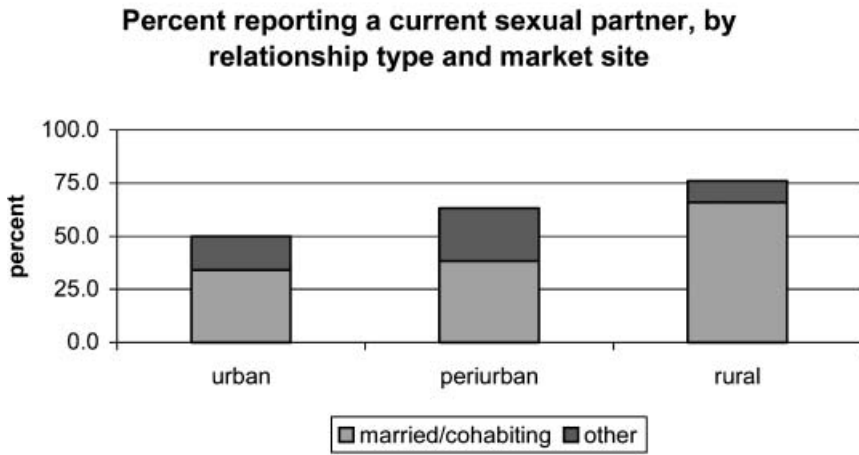
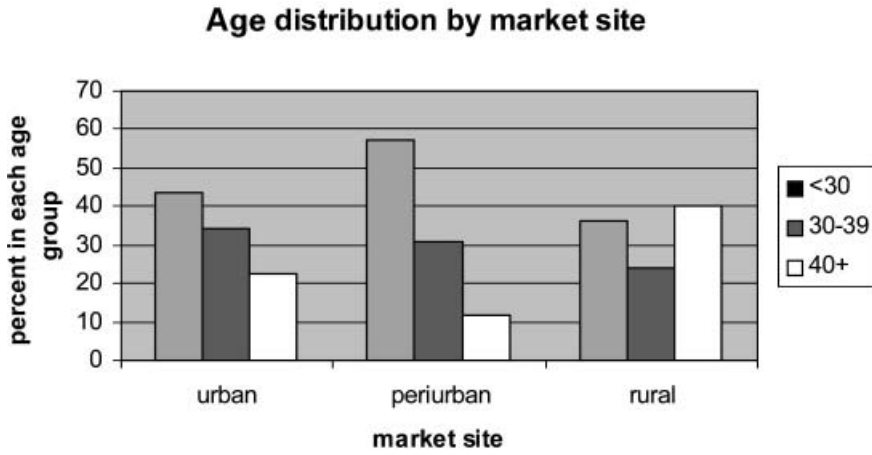


Figure 1.

### Median daily income reported from market work, by market site

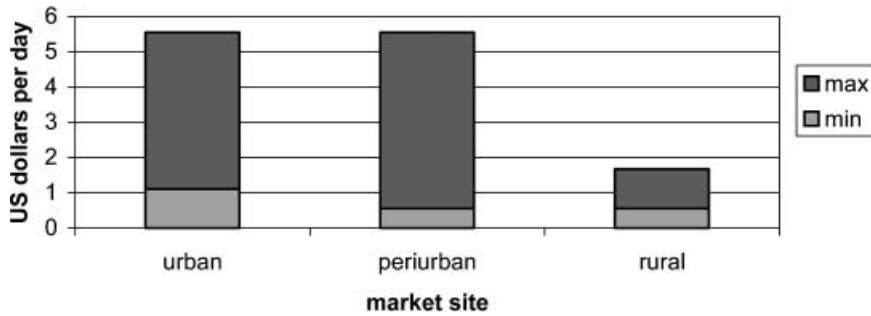


Figure 1. (Continued.) Graphs showing the percentage distribution of market women sample per site by age, marital status, attainment of primary education or less, and reported median daily income.

#### *Access to cash*

Market work avails women with a wide range of daily income ranging from as little as US 25 cents for vegetable sellers to as much as US \$110 for second hand garment sellers. Interquartile ranges show the majority earn a maximum between \$2 and \$8 per day and a minimum between 50 cents and \$1.50. As seen in figure 1, income levels from market work in rural areas were half or less than those found in urban and peri-urban areas. Women expressed a sense of pride and independence from having a private source of income. In nearly every in-depth interview and focus group discussion, women across all sites expressed frustration over partners who did not contribute towards basic family needs. Most women reported spending most of their income on daily concerns such as transport, clothing, food, and cooking fuel, but many described paying for major expenses such as children's school fees and hospital bills, and a few managed to save enough to build houses or buy land.

*Janet:* Men no longer give us money. They left home responsibility in our hands. All he does is come home to sleep, but he cannot release a single coin! Now that we are working, they do not return home with any money so we end up buying the food, fuel, medicine and even pay the school fees. (FGD with women aged 21–35, peri-urban)

*Interviewer:* Do men give their partners less when their partners start working?

*Rebecca:* Yes they do. Whenever a woman goes to work, her partner gives her less money. He knows that I will buy the body oil I want in case he refuses to buy it for me. He knows that each time he leaves home without catering for food, I will not starve but use my money to buy food because I work and make money. (Urban woman, aged 25).

#### *Access to the public domain*

Another potential source of empowerment through market work is increased mobility and general access to the public domain. While Baganda culture does not place explicit restrictions on women's movement outside the home, responsibilities for producing food and caring for children effectively keep most women close to home most of the time. By

contrast, market work places women at the hub of social and economic activity in the community. Traders are exposed to the coming and going of a wide range of buyers, sellers, or passers-by who use markets as a place of social gathering and information exchange. Even women in stationary markets must sometimes work late hours and travel widely to buy goods in bulk at the cheapest prices to get the most profit from retail trade. Mobile markets obviously require the highest levels of mobility. In all the study sites, women involved in mobile market trade worked until after 10 o'clock at night, and often had to spend nights away from home. Older rural women were most likely to attend mobile markets. In this sample, 64% of rural women reported trading at mobile markets, compared to less than 5% of urban and peri-urban women. Among rural traders, 90% of those over 40 reported attending mobile markets, compared to 66% of women in their 30s and 33% of women below age 30.

### *Assertiveness in trade*

In contrast to the expectation of quiet, circumspect behaviour and public deference to men, market women must entice buyers to their stalls and be assertive in bargaining, whether with men, elders or social superiors. During visits to the markets, the women were seen calling buyers enticing names such as *bosi wange* (my master), *ofisa* (officer). Prices of goods in markets are not fixed, and traders have to be sharp in setting prices, depending on how much they think buyers can afford and rigorous in the ensuing bargaining process. Women reported that the more bargaining power and persuasion skill they developed, the greater the profit they made. The nature of market work demands a level of assertiveness and self-confidence in women that violates the standards of dignity and subservient behaviour women are expected to exhibit in the public domain.

Perhaps not surprisingly, adoption of masculine roles by women earned them the undesirable masculine label of being *kiwagi*, which can be translated variously as independent, obstinate, rebellious, insubordinate, self-reliant. Observation during fieldwork showed that *kiwagi* behaviour was apparent in all aspects of daily behaviour for market women, from the way they squat on the ground next to their goods, calling out loud to attract the attention of potential customers, climbing up on trucks in traditional dresses (*gomesi*) to loading and unloading supplies, bargaining aggressively, working and travelling at night, and a general sense of self-reliance and assertiveness evident when interviewing these women.

### *Market work and sexual influence*

Does the relative financial independence afforded by market work give women more control over sexual relations with male partners? Market women were asked about initiating and refusing sex, negotiating condom use, histories and experience of multiple partnerships. Through intensive social contacts in the market setting, travel and extended working hours, market women have numerous opportunities for making new sexual contacts as well as money. Nevertheless participants reported repeated requests for sex from men who come to markets to work or shop, though few admitted taking up such advances.

*Interviewer:* Does he ever visit you at home?

*Brenda:* No he does not. He only comes to tell me of the appointments. I am rarely at home. I spend most time at work.

*Interviewer:* Doesn't he ever visit you at home after work?

*Brenda:* No he does not. He comes to the market stall and asks the girl I work with for me. Since not many ask for me, I am sure that he is the only one that has called by. (Peri-urban woman, aged 30)

*Interviewer:* Would you have the same number of partners as you do today if you were not working in the market and seated at home?

*Rita:* No, I would not. Working in the market has exposed me to many men. It would have been different if I were seated at home. We get to meet very many men, many men. (Urban woman, aged 46)

Surprisingly, rather than being threatened by the prospect of women working the market, most women reported that men actually preferred partners who worked, precisely because it reduced their potential financial support obligations.

*Joyce:* Ever since I started working once you get a partner there is no way you can get rid of a man. When you are working most of them insist on you, knowing that you will not bother them with any expenses. That is why they like working women so much. (Urban woman, aged 44)

*Betty:* ...men prefer those ones who are working, for they will not have to provide everything. So it is better when you are working and he only adds on to what you already have.

*Interviewer:* Do you have more men suggesting to you now that you are working?

*Betty:* Oh yes, because they know I am working. (Urban woman, aged 25)

Respondents expressed a degree of independence not only from men, but also from the institution of marriage which places pressure on women to remain faithful to their partners. A difference emerged between urban and rural informants in this respect. Rural market women continued to emphasize the importance of being married to a woman's sense of 'dignity', and most expressed willingness to remain in marriages regardless of men's infidelity or lack of financial support. Urban women, by contrast, were more likely to express clear limits on how much misbehaviour they would tolerate before asking their partner to leave.

Given the high proportion of women in this study who were unmarried, perhaps such independent attitudes should not be surprising. Information was not collected on whether market work preceded or followed marital breakdown, so it is impossible to cause and effect. Whether by choice or chance, the unmarried status of most market women reinforced their position outside traditional role boundaries in a way that provided greater latitude in partner selection and partner change. The study found that women had limited ability to openly propose sex or condom use within relationships. Behaviour within regular relationships appeared to be less dependent on relative earning power of the partners than on social expectations about the roles of husbands and wives.

Neither did a regular income free women from expectations to have sex whenever their male partner likes. Women in a number of focus groups cited the proverb, *omussajja taziirwa, buli lwayoya nga ojula emmere!* ('it is taboo to deny a man sex! Serve him 'food' whenever he wishes!')—in fact, most women in in-depth interviews claimed they could refuse to have sex, but only on isolated occasions and usually by lying about illness or monthly periods, and occasionally more openly when they were not in the mood, or when men had failed to provide the expected level of support. A number of women said that denying their partners sex would trigger verbal insults, the withdrawal of financial support,

or even beatings or rape. The more formal the relationship, the more difficult it was for women to withhold sex.

*Tabitha:* If each time he comes home I refuse to have sex with him, in the end he would stop giving me all the salt and sugar that he used to bring. Remember, he also struggles to get the sugar and salt. He would conclude that I have another partner who meets my needs in his absences. The marriage would then split. (Urban woman, aged 39)

*Tendo:* Remember I would be living in his home and he wants to have sex even when I am not interested. In such cases the man ends up fighting me and beating me. In order to avoid all that trouble, I would tell him today that I am not interested in having sex but give in the following day. I would not have any alternative because I would be living in his house. (Slum woman, aged 42)

Market women fared little better in insisting on condom use within their regular relationships for reasons similar to those cited in other studies of barriers to condom use (Schoepf 1993, Obbo 1993, Heise and Ellas 1995, Maxwell and Boyle 1995, O'Leary 2000). While the women who desired to use condoms felt it was their role to initiate their use, they often did not do so for fear of being suspected of infidelity and lack of trust for their partners. Some feared that even admitting knowledge of condoms might arouse suspicions of having learned such techniques from outside partners.

Several women cited deeply believed myths and misconceptions surrounding condom use that discouraged their use. These include beliefs about condoms getting lost inside the woman's body, being infected with HIV, or being deliberately pierced by men who want to make them pregnant. Overall, 61% ( $n=129$ ) of the women in the survey reported never using a condom and many of them had never seen one.

*Judith:* I cannot claim to fully trust my partner but we have not used a condom before.

*Interviewer:* What would happen if you asked him to use a condom?

*Judith:* He would not allow using it.

*Interviewer:* Have you ever asked him to use condoms?

*Judith:* Yes I did but he refused. (Slum woman, aged 40)

*Interviewer:* Don't you want him to use condoms?

*Bessie:* I do because I know he is very promiscuous and so I wish he used a condom. However I fear that he might think I got another partner and we used condoms and I enjoyed sex when using condoms and that is the reason I am asking him to use condoms. I thus fear to do so and wait for him to propose condom use. (Urban woman, aged 36)

## Discussion

Market work in this region of Uganda represents an important departure from women's traditional roles as farmers, housewives and mothers. It involves work away from the domain of family and household, a high level of public visibility and unregulated social interaction with those who attend markets. It also demands a degree of assertiveness in bargaining with male and female customers alike. In essence, market work demands women take on a number of traditional male roles, and in so doing, provides access to socially valued resources—money, mobility, assertiveness in a public domain—that symbolize and reinforce cultural male dominance. In this study, we examined to what

extent the public shift in gender roles demanded by market work empowers women in the dual domains of spending authority and sexual decision making. In other words, does taking on male roles in one domain allow women to challenge male authority in another?

In the Ugandan context, women's entry into paid employment over the last three decades has been more a response to economic decline and diminishing contribution of men's formal sector wages to household income rather than any wholesale ideological shift in women's status in society. The push factor in women's employment is reflected in the disproportionate per cent of women surveyed in this study who were either single never-married, widowed, or divorced and effectively had no choice but to be economically self-reliant. Nevertheless, market work does represent a form of empowerment in the eyes of women interviewed in this study. Regardless of income level, women reported being able to keep the money they earn and make spending decisions without male approval. A small number claimed to have saved enough from their work to buy land or build houses—a role normally reserved for men. A still greater number reported pride in being able to provide for the needs of themselves and their children without having to rely on the less dependable support from husbands or regular partners.

The women interviewed for this study represented a broad range of backgrounds and market experience that must caution any overall generalization. Nevertheless, the study clearly points to the limits of even modest forms of economic empowerment through cash work across these three settings. Women consistently complained that men continue to exercise indirect control over how they spend their money, by selectively withdrawing support for expenditures that fall within the domain of women's traditional concerns such as basic household needs and child care. The consensus view among women interviewed was that men are not willing to negotiate these issues in any case; they simply decided what they will pay for and left the rest for women to manage.

As in Snyder's (2000) study of Ugandan working women, domestic expenditures compete with ability to accumulate or reinvest in businesses and ultimately limit the degree of financial independence possible from market work. Added power comes at the expense of gaining derisory masculine labels such as *kivagi*. Seeley and colleagues (1994) similarly found economically independent women in rural areas of the same region were labelled as *nakyeiyombekedde* (I built my own house) implying both masculine qualities and connoting illicit wealth gained through prostitution.

If market work allows women to challenge traditional role boundaries in the economic domain, even in a limited way, the same apparently does not extend to the domain of sexual negotiation within partnerships. Access to cash does not free women in married or cohabiting relationships from role expectations passed down through *ssengas* and reinforced by bride wealth exchange. Correct behaviour in this case generally means being subservient to a husband's sexual demands, never to refuse sex if asked, to expect men to have outside sexual partners, and to accept that they do, while remaining faithful themselves. This is not to say that the boundaries of correct behaviour are not actively contested. The majority of informants said that they would refuse sex from their partners on specific occasions, though usually under false pretexts of illness or menstruation. Yet with few exceptions, women were open about the fact that denial of sex was not a sustainable strategy in the long run without threatening the foundation of the union. As a number of women concluded with a tone of resignation, 'It's *his* house...'. The similarity of these findings to other research in Uganda cited in this paper suggests that working women may face the same formidable barriers to sexual negotiation with their partners as non-working women.

Where economic empowerment may confer a degree of sexual empowerment lies in greater opportunity to enter and exit relationships than non-working women. The fact that between a third and two-thirds of market women are unmarried is notable but probably precedes entry into market work. However working women report that men prefer them as partners precisely because they do not need as much financial support. Similarly the greater autonomy of movement outside the home exposes market women to greater opportunity to meet with potential sexual partners. Women face strong social pressures to get and remain married for reasons other than economic security, particularly in the rural areas where being married is repeatedly cited as important for women's 'dignity'. However, a degree of economic self-reliance may underlie the stated willingness of some market women (particularly those in urban and peri-urban areas) to abandon partners rather than tolerate lack of support or infidelity.

Any conclusions about the effect of market work on either economic or sexual empowerment must take into consideration the limitations of the study design itself and the scope of the current analysis. While the sample covers a broad range of women in terms of income, skills and relationship status, both the data and our analysis of them focus on a middle range of market work experience that does not allow for systematic comparison at the extremes. For example, we cannot know whether the limitations to empowerment observed at the modest level of income enjoyed by most market women still apply as income or skill levels increase. Moreover, the cross-sectional design does not allow us to say whether market work itself empowers women or whether more empowered women choose to join market work in this setting.

What is clear, however, is that access to the symbols of male power: money, mobility, and public assertiveness, does not give women the same power as men in either economic or sexual domains. Market work requires women to challenge gender role boundaries on a number of levels, not only access to and control over money, but also mobility, assertiveness, bodily action, language and other aspects of behaviour usually reserved for men in this society. In this study, however, there is no evidence that any resulting sense of empowerment comes at the expense of male authority; on the contrary, women report that men welcome the additional source of household income.

Nevertheless, market work does represent a real form of 'strategic' empowerment in the economic domain, as evidenced by the mixed resentment and admiration implied in the *kiwagi* label. The level of economic empowerment possible through market work does not empower women either practically or strategically within relationships to influence the timing or conditions of sex, or to protect themselves better from HIV/AIDS. We suspect that successful future empowerment in this domain will require more than economic interventions.

## Notes

1. Among women who contribute all household expenses with their own money, for example, just over a third say they make spending decisions alone, compared to 78% of those who contribute little or nothing.
2. Markets in Masaka are of two kinds namely; stationary markets and mobile markets locally known as *Mubuulo*. Stationary markets refers to markets that operate daily in an established site often in the centre of a trading centre to enhance access. Traders in stationary markets own particular stalls in which they operate on a daily basis. Traders in stationary markets sell a range of goods including processed, fresh and cooked foods, first hand and second hand clothes and shoes, cosmetics, traditional herbs and accessories, kitchen and dining ware and cooking fuel (firewood, charcoal and paraffin). The mobile markets refer to markets held once every week at particular open grounds in a given place and rotate cyclically from place to place throughout the week. Traders in these markets do not have permanent stalls and often lay their goods on the ground or put up temporary stalls

often made of reeds for stands and grass or canvas for roofing. These temporary stalls are destroyed at the close of each market day and traders travel to another open ground in another parish or even district the next day. Major items sold in *mubuulo* markets are perishable foodstuffs, local brew, kitchen and dining ware, second hand clothes and shoes, household items, traditional medicine and accessories (cowry shells, clay moulds, waist beads).

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## Résumé

Faire du commerce sur les marchés exige de pouvoir accéder à du cash, de prendre des décisions de manière indépendante, de la mobilité et de l'interaction sociale. Cette étude a cherché à vérifier si cette forme de commerce donne du pouvoir aux femmes, en ce qui concerne la décision d'engager des dépenses, la négociation sur les rapports sexuels et sur l'usage du préservatif. Un questionnaire semi-structuré a été soumis à 212 vendeuses de marché dans le Sud-Ouest de l'Ouganda. Douze groupes focus et 52 entretiens en profondeur ont été menés dans cette même population. Les participantes ont rapporté des niveaux élevés d'indépendance, de mobilité, d'affirmation de soi et d'interaction sociale. Cependant l'accessibilité au cash n'était pas synonyme de contrôle sur celle-ci. Les décisions d'engager des dépenses étaient limitées par la capacité qu'avaient les hommes de réduire de façon sélective les budgets importants pour les femmes, dont le ménage et les besoins des enfants.

Faire du commerce sur les marchés procure aux femmes des étiquettes masculines comme celle du *kivagi*, décrit comme indépendant, rebelle ou insubordonné. Gagner de l'argent ne modifie pas les attentes d'une conduite correcte pour les épouses. Cette situation rend difficile l'initiation ou le refus de rapports sexuels par les femmes, ou encore leur demande d'utilisation de préservatifs. L'indépendance et le revenu du commerce peuvent faciliter l'initiation ou l'interruption de nouvelles relations sexuelles par les femmes. Il se peut cependant que leur incapacité à se protéger au sein de relations suivies augmente leur exposition au VIH.

## Resumen

Para llevar a cabo actividades comerciales se requieren dinero en efectivo, la capacidad independiente de tomar decisiones, movilidad e interacción social. En este estudio, se pretende analizar si las mujeres que trabajan en los mercados tienen el poder de decidir cómo gastar el dinero que ganan y voto en las negociaciones en materia de sexualidad y el

uso de preservativos. Se llevó a cabo una encuesta semi estructurada entre 212 mujeres trabajadoras en mercados. Asimismo se organizaron doce grupos de discusión y se realizaron 52 entrevistas exhaustivas entre mujeres trabajadores del sudoeste de Uganda. Se observaron altos niveles de independencia, movilidad, seguridad en sí mismas e interacción social entre las mujeres que trabajaban en mercados. Sin embargo, el acceso al dinero no era sinónimo de poder controlarlo. Las decisiones de cómo gastar el dinero estaban limitadas por la capacidad de los hombres para acceder selectivamente al dinero destinado para los gastos básicos de las mujeres, como gastos para la casa y necesidades de los hijos. Las mujeres que trabajan en los mercados reciben motes masculinos, por ejemplo *kivagi*, que entre otras cosas significa independiente, rebelde e insubordinado. El poder ganar dinero no implica un cambio en las expectativas de las esposas a la hora de decidir cuál es una conducta correcta lo que impide que las mujeres puedan tomar la decisión de cuándo iniciar una relación sexual, negarse a tenerla o exigir que los hombres usen preservativos. El tener independencia e ingresos financieros gracias al trabajo en el mercado puede facilitar que las mujeres empiecen o terminen nuevas relaciones sexuales. No obstante, si no pueden protegerse de sus compañeros sexuales esto puede provocar un posible aumento del riesgo de contraer VIH.