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Abstract

Purpose – The purpose of this study was to explore the role social entrepreneurship has played in post conflict recovery in Gulu district in northern Uganda.

Design/methodology/approach – An exploratory and qualitative research design was used to examine the role of social entrepreneurship in post conflict recovery in the Gulu community located in Uganda. A sample of five social entrepreneurs and 15 beneficiaries were interviewed.

Findings – The findings revealed that there is an association between active social entrepreneurship and post conflict recovery. Social entrepreneurship was found to create opportunity recognition, networking and innovation at both an individual and societal level.

Research limitations/implications – The generalization of the findings was limited by sample and method. A cross-sectional design that was used does not allow for a long-term impact study and limited empirical published research done.

Originality/value – This in-depth richness provides a clearer appreciation of the role social entrepreneurs' play in post conflict recovery.

Keywords Lord's Resistance Army, Post conflict recovery, Social entrepreneurs
Social entrepreneurship

Paper type Research paper

Introduction

Societies emerging from violent conflicts face extraordinary constraints related to mobilising and utilising resources required for recovery. Post conflict areas as a priority have to preserve the peace and safeguard security, re-integrate ex-combatants, re-settle internally displaced persons and returning refugees, rehabilitate essential infrastructure and key public institutions, restore private investors' confidence, generate employment opportunities, tackle horizontal inequalities and re-establish the rule of law (Ohiorhenuan, 2011). Providing for these post conflict needs is challenging. One may argue that there is nothing novel about these post conflict societal challenges, except their magnitude. Counter arguments may also be made that government through provision of public goods, services and entrepreneurship through corporate social responsibility can alleviate post conflict challenges. However, despite the social goods

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and services provided by the Ugandan government coupled with private initiative through corporate social responsibility, post conflict challenges in Gulu district have not completely been eradicated.

There are still a number of pressing post conflict societal needs and challenges in Uganda, which are worsened by the structural rigidities of Uganda's economy. Uganda is characterized by high-unemployment rates, the lack of social security safety nets, high birth rates and high child mortality rates, which further inflict societal challenges on post conflict areas. To survive, individuals who fail to find employment are pushed into entrepreneurship (Walter *et al.*, 2004). We contend that, first, conventional entrepreneurship cannot solely solve all the needs of a society in general and post conflict society in particular. Secondly, it is not possible for every person to engage in productive entrepreneurship or acquire employment to survive due to variations in resources and capabilities among other reasons. Therefore, government efforts and conventional entrepreneurship cannot solely alleviate post conflict social problems. In this study, we attempt to investigate whether social entrepreneurship provides solutions to post conflict challenges and the extent of its contribution in Gulu.

Social entrepreneurship has been at the forefront of social transformation (Elkington and Hartigan, 2008; Martin and Osberg, 2007; Austin *et al.*, 2006; Hemingway, 2005; Trivedi, 2010). In Africa and specifically in Uganda, social entrepreneurship research is scanty with emphasis on eradicating poverty, ending human rights abuses, provision of safe water, advocating for children who are victims of forced marriage, child labour, abuse and sexual exploitation, among others. There is little empirical work investigating the contribution of social entrepreneurship to post conflict recovery. No known study has attempted to venture into assessing the role of social entrepreneurship in post conflict recovery in Gulu. Available literature on social entrepreneurship focuses on renowned social entrepreneurs' experiences, personal characteristics, leadership and success factors (Alvord *et al.*, 2004; and Thompson, 2002). There is insufficient literature about social entrepreneurs' actions and outcomes, specifically in post conflict areas in Uganda. We therefore contend that social entrepreneurship should be stretched beyond the renowned social entrepreneurs' experiences, personal characteristics, leadership and success factors. Social entrepreneurship is about their actions and the impact of these actions on societies, post conflict areas inclusive. We contend that social entrepreneurship plays a role in post conflict recovery. We attempt to deepen empirical literature on how social entrepreneurship contributes to post conflict recovery.

In the remainder of the article, we first review the literature followed by a description of the data and discussion of results. We conclude, discuss limitations to the study and suggest recommendations for adoption by policy-makers in the last section.

Literature review

Conflict in northern Uganda

The period between1986 and 2005 was a gruesome time for the Acholi and neighbouring ethnic communities in northern Uganda. For two decades, northern Uganda was marred by war. Alice Lakwena started an armed rebellion in 1986. This rebellion culminated into another rebellion led by Joseph Kony with the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA). In contrast to Lakwena's movement, Kony's Army was not welcomed by the Acholi people and thus he turned against them, stealing food, and abducting children to fill positions in his army. LRA often forced children to kill their parents, abducted girls to be sex

slaves, brainwashed and indoctrinated the children to sustain the rebellion. At the height of the conflict, every evening, children would walk miles from their homes to the townships in an attempt to avoid abduction by the LRA. Nonetheless, the LRA abducted more than 30,000 children in northern Uganda.

As a consequence, in 1996, the government set up Internally Displaced People's camps in Gulu and Pader districts. This necessitated the people of northern Uganda to leave their villages and enter these government-run camps. These camps were supposedly created for the safety of the people, but the camps were rife with disease and violence. At the height of the conflict, 2 million people lived in these camps across the region. The conditions were squalid and there was no way to make a living. Though a safe haven from war, the conditions of the people in the camps worsened in respect to sanitation, hygiene and malnutrition; culture loss and breakdown of the value system, which resulted into suicide, despair and HIV and AIDS prevalence.

Impact of conflict

The 20-year LRA conflict in northern Uganda greatly affected the northern region's socio-economic facets. Northern Uganda and Gulu in particular lost human security, life and assets. The region was characterized with social upheaval, dismantling of social safety nets, reduction in productivity, destruction of social networks and vital infrastructure such as health, educational and economic facilities (Blattman and Miguel, 2010).

An entire society had been systematically destroyed physically, culturally, emotionally, socially and economically. The extent of suffering according to international benchmarks constituted an emergency out of control. The result was unnatural rates of physical depletion and socio-economic regression of the community, and a radical undermining of its capacity for preservation, regeneration and development as a group. In line with Michailof *et al.* (2002), one may say that conflict in northern Uganda destroyed bridging social capital leading to fear, mistrust and a lack of capacity organizational or otherwise. In the absence of which, economic markets could no longer function effectively, and economic activity was stalled.

In the aftermath of the LRA conflict, the government of Uganda set out an agenda for the reconstruction and recovery of the Gulu and neighbouring communities. These programmes included the Peace, Recovery and Development Plan for northern Uganda (Rugadya *et al.*, 2008) and Post Conflict Reconstruction Programs aimed at supporting "Returnees" from camps to settle back to their original homelands. These programmes were largely supported by donors. However, the design of these programmes was limited in the ability to effectively fulfil their mandate largely due to the absence of policy frameworks, inadequate staffing levels and inadequate financial resources.

We contend that in addition to government, donors too cannot provide all the post conflict needs in Gulu and neighbouring communities; hence, the need for social entrepreneurship to fill this gap. Post conflict recovery suggests a return to the status quo before the conflict. This would ideally involve bringing back life and hope to the people who have been socially, economically and psychologically affected (McLeod and Dávalos, 2007). Post conflict societies like Gulu face an alarmingly high risk of reversion to conflict (Collier *et al.*, 2007). (Collier and Hoeffler, 2004a; John and Soderbom, 2012) estimate a 40 per cent risk of reversion for a society that has faced conflict during the

first decade of recovery. Therefore, as priority, government and other stakeholders ought to endeavour reducing such risk.

Social entrepreneurship

Largely entrepreneurship in conflict regions has been a bilateral research area. On one hand, it is seen as the "smoke in the fire" or the incubating factor in the conflict (Collier and Hoeffler, 2004). On the other hand, the victim of conflict in terms of destroyed capital, technological regress and a massive shortfall in income (Abadie and Gardeazabal, 2003). Another angle of entrepreneurship which has received less attention in conflict scenarios is that which re-builds the lives and society of the affected areas without profit motives. Social entrepreneurship combines the passion of a social mission with the business-like or entrepreneurship approach (Pelchat, 2005). Social entrepreneurship uses entrepreneurship principles to organize, create and manage a venture to make social change. Social enterprises are change agents with a problem-solving mission. The social mission is the core of what distinguishes social entrepreneurs from business entrepreneurs (Dees, 1998). Social entrepreneurs are like the business entrepreneurs only driven by social improvement and not profits.

A generally accepted and now popular definition of entrepreneurship by Shane and Venkataraman (2000) lays emphasis on process and individual-oriented approach to entrepreneurship as "a process which involves the discovery and exploitation of opportunities to introduce new products, services, processes, and ways of organising or markets". Shane and Venkataraman (2000) argued that both discovery and exploitation are required for entrepreneurship to happen. The general theory of entrepreneurship is typically based on the individual opportunity nexus, which focuses on the existence, discovery and exploitation of opportunities and the influence of individuals (Alvarez and Barney, 2006; Shane, 2003). Shane's general entrepreneurship theory provides the theoretical framework for this study. Taking the classical view point, three basic trends can be observed from the field of entrepreneurship; opportunity recognition, innovation and social capital.

Opportunity recognition

Entrepreneurship requires the existence of opportunities and opportunity recognition lies at the heart of entrepreneurship (Baron *et al.*, 2007). Likewise, opportunity recognition is core to social entrepreneurship. Opportunities are situations in which new solutions, goods, services, raw materials and organising methods can be introduced (Farr-Wharton and Brunetto, 2007; Shane, 2003). Opportunity recognition acts as a bridge that connects an unfulfilled market need and the solution that satisfies the need (Bhave, 1994). During opportunity recognition, individuals are sensitive to changes in the business environment, which provide them with cues of market needs.

Opportunity recognition includes three distinct processes: sensing market needs and/or underemployed resources, discovering a fit between the market needs and specific resources and creating a new fit between separate needs and resources in an entrepreneurial way (Hansen *et al.*, 2005). The entrepreneurship theory distinguishes between two perspectives of opportunity recognition; one is the discovery perspective fronted by Kirzner (1973) and later, Shane and Venkataraman (2000) describing opportunities as existing facts which need someone to notice them; secondly, the

creation perspective of Schumpeter (1942), who perceives opportunities as created by the entrepreneur.

Social capital

Social capital comprises of trust, norms and mutual obligations that develop in relationships. It is a valuable asset that can produce advantages for individuals and firms as a function of their location within a network of relationships. Social capital plays an important role in opportunity-discovery by diffusing new ideas and providing a wider frame of reference (Aldrich and Zimmer, 1986). For those affected by war, social capital provides an opportunity to re-explore their abilities and opportunities that still exist around them and re-build themselves by creating economic and or social activities that help revive their communities. Maurer and Ebers (2006) note that an entrepreneur's social capital is an asset that provides information and learning, increases legitimacy and coordinates benefits. The application of social capital by the entrepreneur influences innovation capacities, particularly as it relates to boundary-spanning activities (Subramaniam and Youndt, 2005), and especially as regards radical innovation (Dewar and Dutton, 1986). Social capital is a resource that can be mobilized to achieve ends that would otherwise be difficult or even impossible to reach.

It is particularly important that we recognize the role of social capital as a mechanism for ameliorating pain and suffering associated with disasters given the growing research showing that marginalized populations are unequally and negatively impacted by disaster (Aldrich, 2010; Aldrich and Crook, 2008; Chamlee-Wright, 2010; Kage, 2010). It is imperative, therefore, to note that social entrepreneurship has demonstrated that women, children, the elderly, those of lower social status and other marginalized communities like the people in Gulu, who suffered a loss of identity, are vulnerable during and after the conflict because they are often unable to penetrate the social networks to access aid in the same way or at the same rate as non-marginalized populations (Aldrich, 2010; Aldrich and Crook, 2008). Social entrepreneurship therefore helps in building the social and psychological aspects which people lose during disasters through enhancing the value of social capital among these communities.

Innovation

Innovation implies to possess and practice ideas about new products, services and technological processes (Frese, 2000; Littunen, 2000). Innovation has been described widely to include: an inherent role of entrepreneurship (Stewart *et al.*, 2003), a characteristic of entrepreneurship (Gurol, 2006), a primary function of entrepreneurship (Eyal and Inbar, 2003) and the backbone of entrepreneurial orientation, (Lumpkin and Dess, 1996).

Social entrepreneurship involves the creation of a new way of exploiting opportunities or social challenges in a novel way. Therefore, innovation is one of the ingredients of social entrepreneurship because it involves novelty for a social enterprise to be relevant in society. Therefore, innovation is central and critical in any entrepreneurship process (Shane, 2003). As opposed to invention, innovation premised here is the Schumpeterian (1934) new combination(s) that yields creative destruction. The fact that social entrepreneurship involves the recombination of resources into a new form according to the judgment of the social entrepreneur to solve societal challenges implies that social entrepreneurship highly depends on innovations.

In post conflict situations, which are severely resource-constrained, innovation involves the ability to combine resources in a novel way to create new products, new methods and new solutions. Innovation involves the intentional introduction of new ideas, processes and products designed to significantly benefit the individuals, organisations or society at large (Frese and Fay, 2001; Organ, 1997; Rauch and Frese, 2007; West and Richards, 1999). Innovation is a key element in addressing social problems (Alvord *et al.*, 2004). While it has been argued that some business enterprises may survive without being innovative, it provides less value to initiate un-innovative social enterprises, especially in post conflict environments (Leadbeater, 1997). Using this perspective, social entrepreneurs are sometimes referred to as the midwives of invention. (Grenier, 2002).

Role of social entrepreneurship in post conflict recovery

Twenty years of insurgency, instability and conflict led to high rates of poverty, economic downturn, lack of access to information and unemployment in Gulu district. The government and other stakeholders acknowledge the need for better access to basic health care, education, water and sanitation, as well as social protection and these have remained a priority. Whereas government and other private institutions have put in so much effort to restore these conflict-affected areas, in this case – Gulu – there is still a lot to be done with reference to psychological restoration of those affected by war. It has been noted that much of the recovery endeavours have largely ignored the psychological issues in recovery.

It is imperative therefore to investigate the role of social entrepreneurship in the post conflict recovery process. Social entrepreneurs have provided cutting-edge innovations to unmet social needs like addressing the psychological issues that have unanimously been by-passed or ignored by various authors in the post conflict recovery discussion. Social enterprises use business skills and knowledge to create enterprises that accomplish social purposes in addition to being commercially viable (Emerson and Twersky, 1996). These enterprises may create commercial subsidiaries and use them to generate employment or revenue that serves their social purposes. It is also argued that social entrepreneurship leads to new and continued innovation by turning around the economic, educational, welfare, social and spiritual welfare of a given society (Thompson, 2002). Social enterprises maintain close ties with the community, closing a gap left behind by government, private sector and donor agencies. Therefore, social entrepreneurship does not only provide for post conflict needs, but they also galvanize the support that is essential for community and personal resilience.

Alvord *et al.* (2004) describes social entrepreneurship as:

> […] a catalyst for social transformation by mobilising the ideas, capacities, resources, and social arrangements required for sustainable social transformation without a need for profit in mind. Social enterprises advocate for government assistance, the restoration of public services, and pool resources to feed, shelter, and otherwise care for the community members who have suffered during the disaster (Myers and Nelson, 2006).

Social entrepreneurship provides for societal needs that are not being met through innovative responses to human deprivation and suppression (Haugh, 2005). Therefore, social entrepreneurship becomes a worthwhile course of action through which people can be comforted and developed. Social enterprises provide employment opportunities and job training to segments of society that are disadvantaged (Myers and Nelson,

2006). Social entrepreneurship through a combination of these opportunities and the right resources may subsequently influence the development of communities or regions (Mair and Marti, 2006). However, it is argued that social entrepreneurship is not a universal remedy for all societal challenges (Marquez, 2008). Although social entrepreneurship is not a universal remedy for all societal challenges, it plays a vital role in post conflict recovery by providing for those societal challenges unmet by the private sector and the government. We therefore attempt to investigate the role social enterprises play in post conflict recovery. In the next section, we present the method used in this study.

Method

The initial complexity to be solved when investigating the role of social entrepreneurship in post conflict recovery is lack of databases of social entrepreneurs in Uganda and Gulu in particular. This is compounded with the scanty studies in Uganda and other developing countries about social entrepreneurship and post conflict recovery from both a theoretical and empirical point of view.

An exploratory research design was used to provide an in-depth preliminary understanding about the roles social entrepreneurship plays in post conflict recovery. Given the limited research in this area, a qualitative approach was used because the issues under investigation were not entirely amenable to quantification (Hammersley, 1992). The major objective of the study was to understand rather than measure the breadth of social entrepreneurship roles in post conflict recovery (Oinas, 1999). We used case study design to have an in depth understanding of the role of social entrepreneurship in post conflict recovery. (Yin, 1981; Dana and Dana, 2005).

Studies that are based on qualitative research designs largely work with small samples that are mainly purposive rather than random in nature, (Miles and Huberman, 1984). Using small sample sizes enables intensive investigations of the problem (Sekaran, 2003; Miles and Huberman, 1994). The choice of the sample was driven by the conceptual questions and not by representatives (Miles and Huberman, 1994). Consequently, a purposive sample of five social entrepreneurial entities and 15 beneficiaries was selected to provide information for this study.

Data was collected using a combination of interviews and observation. The key informants were subjected to loosely structured face-to face interviews. Given the fact that many of the respondents have limited time for anything else apart from their own work, the question guide was inspired by simplicity and clarity to exhaustively explore these variables. Rich and in-depth data was required to investigate the role of social entrepreneurship in post conflict recovery in Uganda.

Qualitative in-depth interviews gave time and opportunity for participatory observation and enabled the researchers to get near to the "real-life world" of the social entrepreneurs and their beneficiaries, appreciating their point of view, at the same time having them at the centre stage with their own experiences and perspectives This enabled the researchers to recognise the multiple realities of the role of social entrepreneurship in post conflict recovery. To attain data triangulation, in addition to social entrepreneur interviews, we interviewed the beneficiaries of the social entrepreneurship projects. The social enterprises in this study are defined by their social mission or objective.

Results

The findings reveal that the cases under study exhibited the typical individual opportunity nexus, which focuses on the discovery and exploitation of opportunities. The major constructs of social entrepreneurship, that is, social opportunity, innovation and networking, are extracted from the data. The findings demonstrate the roles social entrepreneurship plays in post conflict recovery in Gulu district. Below, we present the general information on the cases in the study followed by the findings on the role social entrepreneurship plays in post conflict recovery through innovation, social opportunity and networking.

Case 1: Volunteer Action Network (VAC-NET)

VAC-NET was founded and registered in 2005 as a non-governmental organization by committed people who live and serve in the Gulu community. It started at a very small scale, targeting women in the rural poor community who had lost their assets and livelihood during the conflict in northern Uganda. Its focus was to mobilize community efforts to enable the women engage in social and economic activities that could change their lives after the conflict. VAC-NET was motivated by the need to change the predominant sense of hopelessness among people in the Gulu community. One of the social entrepreneurs relates that:

> The conflict affected people to the extent that they did not realize the potential of the resources among them and around them and worse still they did not know how to use them. After the conflict, several organizations were started, but mainly gave them "handouts" (clothing, food and water) which created a lot of dependency as opposed to creating initiative to work for a living. VAC-NET was founded mainly to change the peoples' mindset and help them realize their own potential to minimize their dependency on the "handouts".

The biggest challenge VAC-NET had to deal with in changing attitudes of the people was the continued dependency syndrome and limited funding. Despite these challenges, the organization provides financial literacy training, adult education programmes, entrepreneurial skills, leadership development and health programmes focusing on HIV/AIDS. VAC-NET has been able to give out 3,300 micro-loans, enrolled 505 women into various programmes, among other income-generating projects.

Case 2: Community Rural Empowerment and Support Organization (CRESO)

CRESO started its operations in 2009 with an objective of reducing gender based violence. The organization works closely with the local communities to take the initiative of preventing gender based violence through sensitization of young people, promoting village savings, loan associations and providing vocational education to street children and youth on the street.

CRESO's activities include providing trainings in entrepreneurial development, marketing skills, financial management and basic skills in book-keeping, as well as provision of linkages and referrals to vocational training centres among others. With a vision of reaching 2,235 beneficiaries each year, CRESO managed to reach 2,000 beneficiaries in 2011/2012. In 2012/2013 the organization reached 1,655 beneficiaries in terms of trainings, referred 100 street children to vocational centres and re-united 23 street children with their families. CRESO notes that:

> Despite these challenges, street children still face an eminent danger of exploitation from persons or organizations under the disguise of assistance.

Case 3: Gulu Youth Development Association (GYDA)

GYDA was formed in 1992 as a small group of youth from Gulu district. The organization came into existence after realising the impact the war had on the Gulu community, especially the youth. The centre started in 1992 in the middle of the insurgency when people were escaping from the war-torn areas. In 1995, the organization was registered as a community-based organization (CBO). In 1999, the CBO re-organized as an non-governmental organization. The target groups were youth aged over 16 years, school dropouts, former child soldiers and child mothers. GYDA provides youth trainings in vocational skills enhancement; for example, carpentry and joinery, welding, tailoring, saloon and hair dressing, computer training, among others. This has become a source of employment, source of therapy and reduced crime levels among the youth. The organization has helped over 10,000 youth despite the funding challenges.

Case 4: Tetugu Uganda Association

Tetugu Uganda Association, formerly known as KORO development association, was registered in 2007 mainly working with youth and women dealing in entrepreneurship skills and development. It was started with the support of development partners in Canada called Cleaves Microfinance Group and the Government of Uganda. Tetugu was established to support the local community in the fight against poverty.

The organization provides micro-finance services, trainings in entrepreneurial development, HIV/AIDS prevention and has trauma-healing programmes. So far, the organization has assisted over 579 women through provision of micro-loans. This has contributed to reduction of extreme poverty, reduced idleness and disorder because the youth have a source of employment and, finally, women have acquired entrepreneurship skills, which they apply in their businesses.

Case 5: Flama Uganda

Flama Uganda started in June 2011 as a CBO established by a team of dedicated volunteer medical and social development practitioners. The organization and its affiliate medical centres provide appropriate, affordable and integrated reproductive health. The organization has since formed partnerships with Uganda Health Marketing Group and the Government to focus on maternal and child health.

In 2013, 45 women delivered free of charge from Flama Uganda. It has provided employment opportunities to the members of the community and made internet-based connections for patients who need surgeries at major hospitals in northern Uganda. Flama relates its major challenge as the negative response from the clients when they are asked to pay small amounts for the activities they undertake.

The findings on the contribution of social entrepreneurship to post conflict recovery are summarised in Table I and Figure 1.

Social entrepreneurship begins with the recognition of a social challenge, which doubles as an opportunity that is transformed into a constructive venture to serve society. Our findings revealed that all the social entrepreneurs in our study recognized a social challenge, like education, health, employment, psychological and financial empowerment. These organizations exploited the opportunities in a unique way to help the people recover from the LRA conflict. The following extract from one of the interviews (Interviewee 4) substantiates this finding:

Case	Social opportunity	Innovation	Contribution
VAC-NET *Social motive*: To change women's lives and mind-set especially those affected by the conflict	The conflict left many women in camps and vulnerable. There was a sense of hopelessness which made them feel they were not worth living	*New projects*: "Push me once" a piggery project (send a piglet), Creating a voice for women (an Annual exhibition and a platform for women to express their views *New ways of delivering existing services*: Building local capacity by providing small loans for women to start businesses	Throughout the trainings, the women have gained financial literacy, nutrition and child parenting skills, leadership skills and financial sustainability
GYDA *Social motive*	The insurgency had displaced people but they had nowhere to go. The youth could not afford formal education, could not farm or get employment in the camps	*New ways of delivering existing services*: Provided vocational trainings in carpentry, welding, saloon and hair dressing, electrical, block laying and concrete practice, mechanics, plumbing, borehole repairing to youths who did not have any form of formal education Used vocational training as a therapy to those traumatised by the conflict	Have provided employment opportunities to the youth. The youth have gained various technical, leadership skills, among others The centre has become a therapy to those traumatised by the conflict The employment and therapy contributed to crime reduction
Tetugu Uganda Association *Social motive*: To help women affected by the to become self-sustaining	The insurgency left many men dead and so the women headed homes was on increase. The women had no resources to take care of their homes. These widows were very poor but also had no skills	*New ways of delivering the existing services*: The organization equips its women clients with skills especially in bead making Export some of their products Have also started trauma healing programme, trainings and counselling in HIV/AIDS women patients	The organization has been able to combat extreme poverty through the micro loans given to the people to support their small businesses. There is reduced idleness among its clients because most of them have started up small businesses to support their families

(*continued*)

Table I.
Showing a summary of cases under study

Table I.

Case	Social opportunity	Innovation	Contribution
CRESO *Social motive*: Turn street children into law-abiding and responsible citizens	Increasing number of children forced to the streets due to LRA conflict. The street children are deprived of shelter, education, food, clothing and health facilities	*New ways of delivering existing services*: Building social capacity consisting of street children to express their views and knowing about their rights Educating parents about the dangers of child abuse and gender-based violence	Street counselling and doing referrals of some of the street children to vocational training centres, reunions of some street children with their parents, the organization has mobilised willing individuals to improve the lives of the street children
Flama Uganda *Social motive:* To provide appropriate, affordable and integrated reproductive health to the poor women	The insurgency left many child mothers who could not afford medical support Some acquired HIV/AIDS as a result of the social effects of the LRA conflict	*New ways of delivering existing services*: The organization offers free HIV/AIDS counselling and medical tests, community sensitization Used radio talk shows in local languages to about the importance of maternal and child health	The organization has linked patients who need severe surgeries to major hospitals using their local and international networks Flama has sponsored girl children to continue with their education It has provided employment opportunities to many women as nurses and administrators The centre is open 24 hours to cater for all patients at any time

> […] people escaping from the LRA conflict areas settled in the middle of the Gulu town, surrounded by the government soldiers. People had nowhere to go, they could not afford any formal education, could not do any activity and everything they wanted had to be provided by government soldiers and World Food Programme (WFP) […]. We focused on youths above 16 years of age and especially school dropouts, former child soldiers, child mothers and those who have not gone to school.

Given the severe resource constraints after the conflict, innovation was used to develop new ways of delivering both new and unique services to the underprivileged. In all the cases, innovation was exhibited by mobilization of human, physical and financial resources which had been destroyed by the conflict to provide for the people who had been affected by the conflict. The innovative mobilisation of resources was vital for the starting and sustainability of the social enterprise. As Interviewee 2 states:

> […] since I had expertise in midwifery and social work, I mobilised other unemployed doctors to start a clinic as a way of extending our support to the vulnerable women in our community.

Thus, financially empowering victims of the conflict through provision.

Beneficiaries indicated that social enterprises contributed to providing employment and business opportunities. The employment and business opportunities enabled the beneficiaries to rehabilitate their financial status, as well as their well-being. It is interesting to note that the employment and business opportunities created by the social enterprises broke into a spiral of new employment and business opportunities creation. As Interviewee 4 states:

> I got a job earning about 200,000 Uganda Shillings (US$80). I earn and am now able to take care of my family very well […]. GYDA has provided employment opportunities to the youth […].

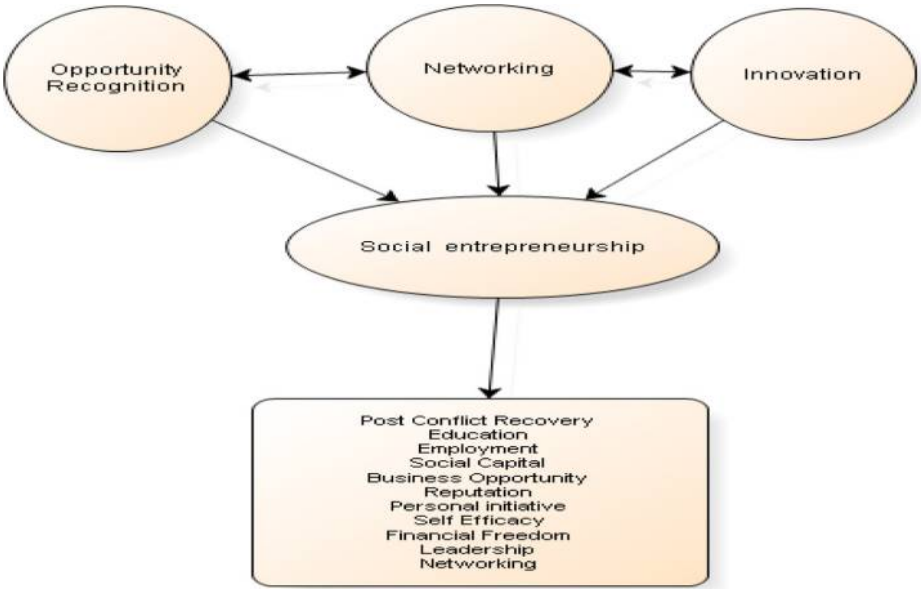

Figure 1.
Schematic presentation of the social entrepreneurship role in post conflict recovery

The findings reveal that majority of the beneficiaries interviewed appreciate the role social enterprises played in their lives, which they interpreted as a social reward (capital). It emerged that some of the entrepreneurs attended events with their colleagues and used them to make their workplace and wider commercial network more productive. According to Interview 9:

> At the annual events we enjoy music dance and drama; we also get a chance to discuss with people from outside Uganda and hence get exposed to the outside world […].

Our findings from the beneficiaries indicate that social entrepreneurship opportunities and activities positively enhanced their beliefs and confidence in their capabilities. Self-efficacy, personal initiative and leadership skills have been strongly enhanced through the social entrepreneurship activities. As Interviewee 9 says:

> I have also gained confidence especially while addressing crowds of women which I never had before […]. I have become a leader in our community in the fight against violation of women's rights even up to the local council level.

Conclusion and discussion

This study attempted to identify the role of social entrepreneurship in post conflict recovery in Gulu district. The findings suggest three main social entrepreneurship themes, namely, opportunity recognition, exploitation and innovation. In addition, the findings reveal critical social enterprise contributions at both an individual and societal level. Social entrepreneurship was found to contribute to education access, employment creation, business opportunity provision and recognition, social capital and self-efficacy, personal initiative, leadership building and financial freedom. These findings are essential in advancing our understanding of the role of social entrepreneurship in post conflict recovery.

We recognized that social entrepreneurship plays an active role in the post conflict recovery of Gulu district. Social entrepreneurship, like conventional entrepreneurship requires the existence of opportunities and opportunity recognition, which are the heart of social entrepreneurship (Baron *et al.*, 2007). The findings reveal that social entrepreneurship was triggered when the social entrepreneur recognized an unmet societal need – an opportunity – and innovatively exploited it. Opportunities do not spontaneously result in exploitation until an entrepreneur acts (Shane, 2003). Social entrepreneurs use opportunities around them to create a new means for society by recombining little available resources.

We recognized that social entrepreneurship practiced in Gulu district corresponds with the theoretical literature underpinnings. In line Shane (2003) who argued for the individual opportunity nexus, through discovery and exploitation of opportunities, the social entrepreneurs in Gulu were influenced by social needs to innovatively exploit the opportunities available. The thrust of innovation related to resource mobilisation and usage, given that much of the financial and non-financial resources had been destroyed during the conflict. Social entrepreneurs must ultimately act and their actions require resources. The critical role of a social entrepreneur in a post conflict situation is viewed as determining, accessing and employing the scarce, but appropriate resources in the entrepreneurship process (Firkin, 2001).

Another critical ingredient of social entrepreneurship is the concept of social capital. We found social capital very critical for social entrepreneurship. Given that almost all

financial and non-financial resources had been destroyed during the conflict, social capital was one of prominent means of acquiring scarce resources after the conflict. It is amazing to note that these social entrepreneurs not only built social networks in their locality, but they also made productive attempts to build networks with stakeholders in other regions in and outside Uganda. The networks outside Gulu mainly provided social entrepreneurs with important information and markets for their goods. The findings also revealed that social entrepreneurs recognised opportunities others did not see because they accessed information and resources through their social network structure. The access to information and resources through their social networks enabled the social entrepreneurs expand the social enterprises both in breadth and depth.

On the other hand, we note that social entrepreneurship has demonstrated that marginalized groups like women, children, the elderly and those of lower social status in Gulu penetrated the social networks to access resources in the same way or at the same rate as the non-marginalized. Social entrepreneurship supported the building of social and psychological aspects of individuals through enhancing the value of social capital among these communities.

The study also reveals that social enterprises played a number of post conflict recovery roles at the individual and society level. The social enterprises provided education, employment and business opportunities for the marginalized youths and women. This enabled these youth and women break the "glass ceiling", which enabled them achieve their life goals. At the individual psychological and sociological level, social entrepreneurship uplifted the reputation, personal initiative, self-efficacy, networking opportunities and leadership opportunities of the beneficiaries. The psychological, social and financial rehabilitation of the beneficiaries enabled them enjoy a near to normal pre-conflict life. However, it is important to note that the psychological recovery roles (personal initiative, self-efficacy) have not been comprehensively investigated in this study. Therefore, this calls for further investigation of these constructs.

Limitations

Our study was limited in several ways. First, the study was exploratory, with a qualitative approach. The qualitative design has its weakness, including limited statistical foundation for generalisation. This makes this study suitable for expanding theory more than proving it. In addition, the researcher's theoretical approach and ideological perception may bias the analysis of the individual cases. Secondly, the generalisation of our findings is limited by sample and method. The sample of social entrepreneurs and the beneficiaries used in this study are not necessarily representative of the population. We used non-random sampling in a single district, which limits the generalisation of our findings. However, we believe that the findings provide a foundation for further empirical research.

The third limitation was the cross-sectional design of our study. A snap-shot investigation of post conflict roles of social entrepreneurship yields results that should be used with caution. This is against a background that social entrepreneurship and post conflict recovery should be investigated over a period of time to attain some degree of accuracy. Therefore, it would have been preferable to study a longitudinal process of

how social entrepreneurship aids post conflict recovery in Gulu district. However, this is a very costly and time-consuming design.

Fourthly, the uniqueness of this study is also one of its limitations. Little empirical research has been carried out and published about the role of social entrepreneurship in post conflict recovery in Uganda. The limited literature available, especially in a developing country context, deprives us of the opportunity to do comparative analysis with our results. This leaves the researchers with limited and modest sources of local scholarly literature on which to base the development of this study.

Our findings reveal essential association between active social entrepreneurship and post conflict recovery. Although our study posts a number of implications, it has limitations. This study was preliminary and exploratory in nature and therefore lays ground for many propositions and questions. The intent of this study was to provoke further exploration of the role of social entrepreneurship in post conflict recovery. The more we learn about the role of social entrepreneurship on post conflict recovery, the more it will be possible to design successful post conflict recovery future initiatives. Future research is required to further clarify how social entrepreneurship may influence post-recovery, especially in a developing context.

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