

Women in Flower Farms: The Impact of Flower Growing on Gender Roles in Uganda

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ABSTRACT

The study recognised the obvious impact of survival pressures and work dynamics on gender roles in society and thus assessed the impact of flower growing on gender roles in rural communities. Using a mixed methods research approach, the study focussed on Wagagai and Fiduga farms in Uganda due to their vast sizes and high employment levels compared to related farms. Data was collected using both primary (questionnaire, interviews, FGDs and observation) and secondary (documentary review). A sample of 362 participants (322 questionnaires and 40 interviews) were purposively selected. Thematic and content analysis techniques were utilised in qualitative data analysis while descriptive statistics (mean, Std. Dev, multiple regression and impact estimation techniques) were utilised in quantitative data analysis. From the field findings, it was established that with the increased absence of women at home due to work engagements in flower farms, men were increasingly engaging in home care duties. This is against a widely held ethnic practice and norm as well as cultural dictate that men should not be in the kitchen. Study findings further revealed that, there was an increased feeling among men that by employing more women, flower farms were systematically destroying the bond that had kept families together in their local communities. This was supported by evidence of sizeable number of single mothers working in flower farms. The study recommended that there should be increased counselling of couples regarding the changing nature of gender roles.

Key Words: Women, Flower growing, Gender roles, Uganda

INTRODUCTION

From the time of its introduction, flower farming has attracted more women than men. Harvesting, sorting and packing of flowers are considered too delicate to be mechanised and are normally carried out by people. Women's tender hands and patience in handling perishable goods have given them an edge over men. Being a labour intensive industry, its presence in the rural communities is argued to have availed jobs to the otherwise disadvantaged community members (Mbelwa, Semboja, and Bonaventura, 2000, Meier, 1999).

Gender roles and expectations play a significant role in couple interaction, family decision-making, and perspectives on marital satisfaction. Determined by the society, these roles and expections have been preserved and passed over to the subsequent generations (Williams and McBain, 2006). They are normally adopted during childhood and continue into adulthood.

The presumptions concerning gender roles may vary according to place. At home, for example, these may include decision-making, home care practices, financial responsibilities, and so forth. While at work, the presumptions concerning power, the division of labor, and organizational structures may be of importance. To understand what involves gender roles, Blackstone, (2003) argues that one requires an understanding of the term "gender". Blackstone, (2003) then defines gender as the economic, social, political, and cultural attributes and opportunities associated with being a woman or a man. These attributes, he argues, often vary among cultures and changes over time. Similarly, Tuyizere (2010), conceptualises gender as a social definition of individuals largely premised on socialisation patterns existent in diverse communities.

GENDER DIVISION OF LABOUR IN AFRICA

There is ample evidence pointing at the numerous manifestation of the sexual division of roles in pre-colonial and colonial African households, in which women's labour largely became appropriated by (Boserup 1970; Kyomuhendo and McIntosh 2006; Akyeampong and Fofack 2014). Literature suggests that the emergence of a cash-based economy in which a number of African households would later engage in, provided one of the chief dynamics of colonial change (Sender and Smith 1986; Iliffe 2007). As men entered the colonial economy as cash crop farmers and wage labourers, women were side-lined into domestic work which was comparatively considered to be inferior (Henn, 1984; Lawrence et al., 2006).

According to Boserup (1970) gender discriminatory attitudes of African men can be traced back to the desire shared with men in other continents, to reserve for themselves the much-desired jobs in the modern sector and keep the women out of such sectors as much as possible. They only allowed the women to train and engage in activities which were to confine them at home. This was even inculcated through education system. By actively discouraging mixed schools, the missionaries separated boys and girls. They, therefore, subjected the different sexes into different training, whereas girls were exclusively trained to be good Christian wives, boys were trained to be clerks and administrators. De Haas, and Frankema, (2018) refer to a petition to open an Anglican school for girls in 1911:

It is absolutely necessary for the welfare of the country that the girls should also be educated to a degree suitable for their conditions in life. To teach the girls to lead pure, clean lives, and become industrious. To show them the best methods for cultivating their gardens, and keeping their homes clean, and to teach them what I may call 'Home Industries' e.g., mat making, basket making, sewing et cetera (Kyomuhendo, and McIntosh, 2006).

The above epigraph points to a calculated move by the Christian mission schools in Uganda to instil gender inequality through education. Mission schools prepared men for employment as administrators, managers and clerks but secluded women to home production and reproductive functions (Boserup 1970, Rodney 1972, Akyeampong and Fofack 2014). While home industries are argued to have contributed to the welfare of the household, they did not bring in much income and as such contributed little to women's economic independence (Kyomuhendo, and McIntosh, 2006). They were mainly to improve the women's own homes. Given that the craft wares could be made by almost all the women in the community, there was little room for commercialising one's craft ware and generating income.

The discussion above points to how the European missionaries and colonial government reinforced the codification of patriarchy in Africa. Whether intended or not this patriarchal

codification was reinforced through the nature and operation of the colonial economy, which enlarged gender gaps by distancing women from expanding market opportunities (Meier, 2015). In a number of communities in Uganda this has culminated into the now prevalent traditional gender roles and behaviours which portrays men as autonomous, assertive, and self-driven. Women, on the other hand, have traditionally been expected to marry and have children. As a mother she is expected to be compassionate, loving and caring and as a wife she should always find time to be sexy and feel beautiful (Tamale, n.d).

After being confined at home for years, carrying only home care activities, the women's sudden appearance in wage labour activities might have gone against some of the expectations of community norms. As more industries arrive in the rural communities, more women are tempted to leave the home care duties and join these industries as employees. One such industries is floriculture industry which has positioned itself as one of the major exporting industries in Uganda employing more than 70,000 people directly. The next section discusses the factors that led to the arrival of large scale flower farms in some parts of the country and how they have impacted on the distribution of gender roles in such communities.

FLOWER FARMING IN UGANDA

The initial effort by the NRM's government to diversify into the nontraditional agricultural exports was guided by a 1987 newly created programme; Economic Recovery Programme (ERP) (Tjalling, 2001). However, this effort was frustrated with high inflation, drought, low coffee prices, stranded reforms, ongoing war in the north of the country, and border clashes with Kenya (Ochieng, 1977). By 1990 the NRM government made a second effort with the help of successive arrangements under the enhancing structural adjustment facility (ESAF) programme to once again stabilise the economy. According to Tjalling (2001), 1990s saw the increment of investment in non-traditional exports (vegetables, fish and flowers) which resulted to an export worth \$20 million.

Among the non-traditional exports targeted by the government by then was flower farming. Literature suggest that flower farming started earlier in Kenya, (Dolan et al., 2012, Whitaker and Kolavalli, 2006). This can be explained in line with the two different administrative approaches used by the colonial government. Whereas the British ruled Uganda as a protectorate, subjecting it to indirect rule with the locals as the administrators, Kenya was a colony with a high number of British settlers directly ruled by the British administrators. With this high number of settlers, the British culture and their love for flowers were much more pronounced in Kenya than in Uganda. As such, the production of flowers for local consumption started way back in the 1960s in Kenya.

According to Agona and Muyinza (2008) in Uganda, a small-scale flower production targeting mainly the local market was started in 1970s. Export production had to wait until 1992 when the industry had started attracting export-oriented businessmen. The first commercial flower farm is traced back to a Ugandan of Asian origin. The Hudda family had been in greenhouse farming since 1950s. The nationalisation of all the investment owned by foreigners by Amin did not spare them, however in 1988, under the rule of NRM the estate was returned to the family and is currently known as Mairye estates, (Gabre-Madhin, 2004). Beginning with two green houses, the industry slowly expanded.

Within five years (1992-1997), the number of flower farms in Uganda had increased to nineteen (Kirigia et al., 2016; Munyuli, 2014), and so did the land, from 2 hectares in 1992 to 192.1 hectares in 2009, (Floriculture Sector Brief, 2009). By 2011, Uganda's floriculture exports had generated employment to a number of people and was supporting livelihoods of more than 70,000 people, both directly and indirectly (Flavia, et al, 2014; Munyuli, 2014). Data provided by the World Bank study illustrates the range of contributions made by the industry towards Uganda's economy. Growing at a rate of 14% while the overall economy grew at just over 6%, floriculture industry was Uganda's seventh largest export earner (World Bank, 2003; Eleni and Hans, 2004; Flavia, et al, 2014). The number of livelihoods supported by the industry increased and so did corporate social practices with regard to infrastructure; roads construction and maintenance, support services such as access to clean water, and health services (Mbelwa, 2000).

WOMEN IN FLOWER FARMS

The relocation of large companies from the developed to the developing nations has resulted in the creation of gendered employment opportunities, (Tekalign, 2015). These export-oriented farms targeted the able-bodied young men and women from the southern nations. One of the motivating factors behind this mass relocation of farms is the availability of cheap labour. The rampant population growth in LDCs is argued to have reduced the labour cost to its bare minimal. Being the majority and having been side-lined from the few available jobs for a long time, the women have been the easiest target by the new industries (Nisonoff, 1997).

Women's tender hands and their patients in handling perishable goods gave them an upper hand compared to their counterparts, men. Other traits that have brought the women into the limelight of floriculture production include their compliancy; women are more subservient to managerial authority, less prone to participate in union activities, and more committed to their jobs (Lawler and Atmananda, 1999). Another important characteristic of women that have earned them some respect is dexterity. The gender roles that typically confine women to activities within the household, such as cooking, cleaning, sewing, tending to the sick and personal services, have overtime improved their skills in performing tasks, especially with their hands. These have made women better suited to achieve the rigid standards for product quality and homogenization (Lawler and Atmananda, 1999).

One other factor can be attributed to the wages; women's wages are typically lower than men's (Tzannatos 1999). The lack of minimum wage in the country (Wambuga, 2016) has given leeway to the proprietors of these farms to come together and agree on how to reward their employees, especially the general workers. With their strong focus in profit maximization, the proprietors of the flower farms manipulate other stakeholders (employees) in order to enhance financial performance and efficiency of their farms. Women tend to be less aggressive and can easily be manipulated with little or no resistance. They rarely participate in strikes, little do they complain about what they are rewarded for the work done. For these reasons farms are more interested in employing women than men. The women are being encouraged to do some of the activities which were purely put aside for men. These include activities like digging trenches, guarding, track and tractor driving.

To be able to fully tap these benefits, flower farms have adjusted and put in place day-care units with baby sitters on whose care the women leave their children. The lactating mothers are

allowed, especially, at 10.00 am (tea break) and 1.00 pm (lunch break) to breast feed their children.

The above adjustments coupled with the nature of activities, have made more women get attracted to work in these flower farms. Some of these women have broken glass ceiling and risen to top administrative levels wielding immense power and controlling bigger budgets in their respective departments. This trend, however, is not without its paradoxes. As women abandon their home care duties in favour of wage labour, the norms and structures that have kept families together in these communities could be at stake. The question at hand is how have the men in these communities adjusted to embrace the changes? As their wives take more time in flower farms harvesting, grading, and as well as managing the workers, who then oversees the care duties back at home? Have the men accepted to take over some of the reproductive roles and are now staying in the kitchen? This study was designed to address this potential knowledge gap.

METHODS AND MATERIALS

Embracing a mixed methods approach, the study adopted a sequential mixed methods design which according to (Creswell and Clark, 2011; Berman, 2017) is a two or three sequential design characterised by an initial qualitative phase of data collection and analysis followed by quantitative data collection phase and analysis and lastly with a final phase of data integration. This design, enabled centralization of the voices of the flower farm workers and those of the local community members neighbouring these flower farms. By giving the respondents the opportunity to express, in their own understandings and terms, the researcher was able to capture events taking place in the farms and their influences on neighbouring communities (Patton, 1990; Limb and Dwyer, 2001). Because results, from a few interviewed individuals were inappropriate for generalisation, a follow-up quantitative survey was conducted.

The choice of Wagagai and Aurum farms as cases was based on their dominance of the sector as big farms with sizeable numbers of employees from within localities. Hence, key supporters of community livelihoods. For instance, Wagagai and Aurum flower farms combined have a total employee population of about 2000 workers.

Using purposive sampling technique in qualitative phase and Dillman (2007) and Salant and Dillman (1994) in quantitative phase, a total of 362 respondents (322 questionnaires, and 40 interviews) participated in this study. Both primary (questionnaires, interviews, FGDs, observation) and secondary (document reviews) formed key sources of data. FGD was mainly used to obtain data from management and local community members while interview guide was utilised in picking information from both in-depth interviews (IDI) and key informant interviews (KII) with the workers, farm managers, supervisors as well as community members and community leaders. Thematic and content analysis methods were used in analysing qualitative data while descriptive statistics [Mean, Standard Error of Mean (SED), and Standard Deviation (Std. Dev)]; inferential [multiple regression (Mincer's earning function) and t-statistics]; and impact estimation techniques [Propensity Score Matching (PSM)] and the Difference-in-Difference (DiD) methods were utilised for quantitative data analysis.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Flower farm employment and economic empowerment in rural communities in Uganda

The respective governments of Uganda have attempted to improve the livelihoods of rural people. To achieve this, efforts have been put in providing a conducive environment for the establishment of industries in rural communities. The main reason for the extension of industries in such areas was to avail employment opportunities to the rural communities. The introduction of floriculture industry and its eventual expansion, for example, was one of such efforts by the government to provide mass employment to the rural people.

Studies from other parts of the continent suggest that the immediate beneficiaries of floriculture industry are always the women (Dolan et al., 2003; Gezmu, 2013; Mlynska, et al, 2015). The women have rare qualities and characteristics that have set them apart for some of the activities carried out in flower farms. With their tender hands and great skills in handling fragile things like young tender flowers, the women have become a force to reckon with in the production and exporting of flowers. In Kenya's floriculture industry, for example, Dolan et al. (2003) found that the industry had employed more women (80%) than men. In Uganda, this study found gender composition in the two study farms at 70.7% women, suggesting that, in comparison to Kenya's flower farms, Uganda's flower farms employed a higher number of men (29.3%). The percentage of women in this study was slightly below what Dolan et al. (2003) found on the gender composition in flower farms in Kenya, but it still confirmed that women dominated the industry.

Apart from gender composition, this study further measured two other variables which included the marital status, and the average age of flower farm workers. This was to find out the extent of engagement with home care duties within the workers. The argument here is that a married woman might have different sets of responsibilities as compared to unmarried single women who might neither have to care for the children nor cater for the husband. The study found that 49.7% of flower farm workers were married (see Table 1 below).

Table 1: Workers' Marital Status

	Frequency	Percentage
Single	148	44.3%
Married	166	49.7%
Divorced	20	6.0%

Source: Field Data (2020)

Unlike the finding of Odhong' and Omolo (2014) where the majority of flower farm workers were found to be married, this study agrees with Kabiru, et. al., (2018), that the majority of flower farm workers are single. The study argues that not opting to settle down and start a family might suggest that the flower farm workers were uncertain of their future and as such avoided the responsibilities that comes with married life. During in-depth interviews, some respondents reported that they could not get married because they believed that they might not be able to cater for the children while still working in flower farms. They reasoned that the farms were engaging them for longer hours and paying them very little, leaving them with no time to be with the children and with insufficient funds to cater for the children's needs. In

measuring the average age of workers the study found that majority of the flower farm workers (72.7%) were within the age bracket of 18-30 years.

Table 2: Gender and Age Range of Respondents

		Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	98	29.3%
	Female	236	70.7%
Age	18-24	98	29.3%
	25-30	145	43.4%
	31-35	37	11.1%
	Above 35	54	16.2%

Source: Field Data (2020)

This finding suggests that the industry, irrespective of gender, attracts young men and women. Targeting young people might be a strategic approach by the farms to avoid more mature workers who might be having more family responsibilities at home and may as well demand for higher wages. Older people, especially the women between the ages of 32 to 45 years are normally engaged with a number of home care responsibilities including the nurturing of children. This nurturing role might not allow the women to fully avail their services to the farms. They may be forced to occasionally take some time out of work to nurse the children. Another reason that might explain the farms' failure to attract and retain the older employees might be attributed to low wages paid by the flower farms (Mekonnen, 2017). Even though the literature suggests that such industries can be instrumental to the lives of rural people (Gezmu, 2013), the lack of appropriate minimum wage in some countries especially in Africa has seen several employees remain poor (Jade, 2019). In such environment where the country lacks appropriate minimum wage, workers' wages are negotiated between employers and workers' representatives, which in a number of occasions are the union members. The success of this collective bargaining agreement (CBA) depends on the strength of the workers' union in handling workers' disputes. Where the workers' union is either weak or has been compromised the wages given to workers will be at the discrete of the employers who might come together to pay a uniform wage which might not consider the current living wage. The concern of low wages was also raised by some of the community members who said that the farms were unfair to the workers.

"The majority of workers in the farm down there are desperate. They are being exploited. I can't encourage anybody, leave alone my relatives, to work there. They work for very long hours and yet are paid very little money"¹.

The above epigraph points at what the community thinks about the flower farms. To capture the views of the workers themselves, the variable was measured by asking the workers to give their opinions concerning their economic conditions. The lead question was: "Do you feel that your economic condition has improved or worsened since you started working in this farm?" A summary of the descriptive statistics is given in Table 3 below.

¹ Interview 30/08/2020

Table 3: Economic conditions of flower farm workers

		Frequency	%
	Not improved	79	23.7
	Improved	255	76.3
	Total	334	100.0

Source: Field Data (2021)

The majority of the workers (76.3%) reported that their economic conditions improved from the time they started working in the flower farms. Given that 70.7% (see Table 2) of them were women, this response implied that the arrival of flower farms in Uganda might have improved the economic status of the women. To ascertain the feeling that economic conditions of flower farm workers improved after the arrival of flower farms, the study further in the second phase subjected the responses to a binary logistic regression.

Table 4: Results of the binary logistic regression for the factors associated with the feeling that economic conditions have improved (*Not improved is the Reference Category, RC*)

	Coef.	Odds Ratio	Std. Err.	z	P>z
Gender (<i>RC=Male</i>)					
Female	0.51	1.66	0.41	1.22	0.222
Age	0.10	1.11	0.04	2.30	0.022*
Level of education (<i>RC=Primary</i>)					
Secondary	-0.40	0.67	0.46	-0.86	0.387
Tertiary	-0.58	0.56	0.62	-0.94	0.347
Employment status (<i>RC=Permanent</i>)					
Casual	-1.35	0.26	0.52	-2.61	0.009*
Household size	-0.10	0.90	0.12	-0.91	0.364
Monthly salary	0.61	1.84	0.51	1.21	0.227
Times salary has been increased (<i>RC=Once</i>)					
Twice	-0.19	0.82	0.49	-0.40	0.692
Severally	1.11	3.03	0.55	2.00	0.045*
Union membership (<i>RC=Yes</i>)					
No	-0.73	0.48	0.42	-1.75	0.079
Able to meet basic needs with ease? (<i>RC=Yes</i>)					
No	-2.45	0.09	0.49	-4.98	0.000*
Constant	-7.08	0.00	6.24	-1.13	0.257
LR chi2(11)	= 84.24				
Prob > chi2	= 0.0000				

Source: Field data 2022

Even though there was a general feeling in the first phase (qualitative) that the wages were low and insufficient, the quantitative results in the second phase registered a positive coefficient (+0.51) implying that women as compared to their male counterparts were of the view that, with the arrival of flower farms, their economic conditions improved. The binary logistic

regression in Table 4 confirms the results from the descriptive statistics in Table 3, where about 76.3% reported that flower farms have improved their economic status.

In explaining the discrepancy between the qualitative and quantitative results, it should be noted that in some of these communities, by the time of this study, culture dictated that the place of women was at home. This perception was much stronger in the rural areas where the farms were located. Most of the women in these areas were engaged in home care activities which normally not financially rewarded. Joining the flower farms as employees and with constant monthly salaries, the women felt that their economic status had changed, hence, a positive coefficient. Whereas the men were comparing the rewards they were getting from the farms against other likewise financial rewarding activities other men were doing outside the farm, (fishing, bodaboda² riding, and brick-making), the women had no such comparison.

Despite the positive response on the improvement of economic status of flower farm workers, an attempt to find out whether the women were then able to meet their basic needs with ease yielded a negative coefficient (-2.45). This negative coefficient might suggest that the farm's salary was not congruent with the living wage. The women's sole reliance on the salary, as opposed to the male workers who were engaged in other financially rewarding activities after work, could not make them purchase their basic needs with ease.

Not considering this achievement by the women, some of the men did not support their wives' decision to join flower farms. Considering the importance of home care work and its role in keeping the family intact, these men were of the opinion that the women were supposed to remain at home and carry out their home care duties. They reasoned that money is not everything and as such should not be sought at the expense of the family.

*"The farm has offered our wives jobs; it is a good thing. But we have faced a number of problems with them. Some of these women think that they no longer need us because they have their own money. They have all of a sudden become irresponsible, leaving very early in the morning and coming back late in the evening. They no longer take care of the children; neither do they even cook food for us."*³

For a long period of time a good woman in most of the communities in Uganda has been judged on how she manages her home; taking care of her children, prepares food for her husband and keeps both the house and the compound clean. In the above epigraph the man describes some of the traits of a failing woman. He carefully mentions her failures; she leaves her husband in bed before dawn and comes late when the children have gone to sleep. Due to her late coming, the husband concludes that the woman had neglected her children and even did not know what her husband eats.

The demands of work and the financial empowerment of some of the rural women working in flower farms might have changed their attitude towards handling of the home care duties. Because of their engagement on the farms the women tended to ignore some of their assigned gender roles.

² A bicycle or motorcycle used as a taxi for carrying a passenger or goods

³ Field Interview 6/09/2020

*"Your wife might not be the same again after joining the flower farm down there. She meets with very many other men who have and can easily give her money. We have lost our wives, the mother of our children, to the farm."*⁴

The low wages have not made it any better for the women working in flower farms. Mlyniska et al, (2015) in their study of Ethiopia's flower farms observed that the poor pay was particularly more pronounced among women who were the majority. This was because most of these women were single mothers whose struggle was not only to meet their own needs but those of their dependants as well. The women in Uganda's flower farms were not spared either. They faced the same challenges like their counterparts in Ethiopia. Indeed, it was common for female employees to be engaged in petty trade after work to supplement their incomes so that they could be able to pay for their children's school fees and cover debts.

*"With us ladies ... we accept the advances from some of our male bosses. We occasionally survive on the handouts we receive from them."*⁵

The study found this behaviour a bit common in the farms visited and as such attributed it to the cause of marriage breakages of several couples within the farm. In Table 1 above 6% of the respondents reported that they were divorced. This might be one of the reasons why most of the women working in flower farms, as pointed above by Mlyniska et al, (2015) were single mothers. In many rural communities in Uganda, especially in central region, culture strongly influences how a woman is expected to behave in the community (Tamale, n.d.). The above epigraphs; depicting women disregarding their home care duties, illustrate some of the gender dynamics that were being witnessed in rural communities in Uganda after the arrival of flower farms.

Women juggling between reproductive and productive work

Home care work is indispensable. It plays a central role in contributing to the well-being of individuals, families and societies at large (Stiglitz et al., 2007). Women; across different regions and cultures are expected (as have been discussed above) to spend important part of their day on meeting the expectations of their reproductive roles (Ferrant, et al., 2014). Every day individual women spend time cooking, cleaning and caring for children, the ill and the elderly. Looking at the role played by unpaid care work in supporting the well-being of people in the community, it cannot be taken for granted neither can it be neglected. As women abandon their unpaid care work and joins wage labour, the question at hand is; who then carries out this essential home care duties? This study attempted to find out who was really performing these duties in households where both husband and wife were employed in one of the flower farms. The variable was measured by asking the workers to give their opinions on who normally carried out unpaid care work back at home. The questions were constructed to capture some of the common unpaid home care duties which have been traditionally assigned to the women by the society. These included the following questions: "Who does the laundry? Who looks after sick family members? Who does the household cleaning? Who prepares the meals? Who does the gardening? Who helps with school homework?" A summary of the descriptive statistics is given in Appendix I.

⁴ Field Interview 06/09/2020

⁵ Field interview 06/09/2020

In responding to the questions of who does the laundry, cleans the house, and prepares the meals, the women still believed that they were the one who were doing such duties in their families. About 61.6% of the women were of the opinion that they were carrying out laundry work, 73.8% believed that they were the ones cleaning the house and 85.9% agreed that they were the one cooking for the family. Traditionally these three activities have been carried out by the women (Ferrant, et al., 2014).

This study, however, registers a slight adjustment on gender division of labour. The data suggest that some men, though with a smaller margin, had started carrying out these roles. In most of the ethnic groups in Uganda, culture dictates that men should not be in the kitchen. For this study to have captured some men agreeing that they cook, wash clothes, and clean their houses only point at the dynamic of gender roles in these communities. This change can be attributed to the absence of the women from their respective homes. Thus, it can be construed that the arrival of flower farms deep in the rural communities in Uganda is slowly changing the views of both men and women on gender roles. By removing women from homes to paid work, flower farms are forcing some of the men to overstep the boundaries of gender division of labour and are carrying out home care duties.

The women's absence is much greater during peak seasons when employees work late and do mandatory overtime, (Gezmu, 2013; Mlynska, et al, 2015). The husbands during such times lend hand in cooking, bathing and taking the children to bed. In other home care duties like looking after sick family members, taking care of family garden, and helping the children with school homework the husbands have greatly adjusted and were doing 50% of such duties. However, this study argues that men's participation on home care work was still minimal. The arrival of flower farms, with its uncontrolled working hours, might have created the "double burden" of work for women. In one of the field interviews the issue of women going back to their houses completely exhausted was mentioned.

*"They are over working our women. In fact, they are killing them by forcing them to do work that should be done by men. They dig, carry heavy loads, and even if the work is lighter like harvesting; can you imagine bending the whole day! The only job the women do not do is spraying."*⁶

Financial contribution and control within the family

As the flower farms provided the women with an opportunity to enjoy the benefits associated with paid labour, the study attempted to measure the financial contributions of both the husband and the wife in fulfilling the household needs. The study considered this variable very important given that traditionally it was the duty of the husband to provide for all the financial requirements. The variable was measured by asking the respondents to state who, according to their own opinion, was the main financial contributor to the family?

⁶ Field Data 2021

Table 5: Main financial contributor to the family

		Frequency	Percentage
Who is the main financial contributor to the family?	Wife	93	28.5%
	Husband	231	70.9%
	Together (couple)	2	0.6%

Source: Field Data (2021)

The finding still suggests that husbands (70.9%) were the main financial contributors to their families' household requirements (see Table 5 above). However, the study also found that out of 326 respondents 93 women (28.5%) agreed that they were the main financial contributors to their families. This is a complete departure from the known traditional norms where men were to provide all the finances needed for the running of a family.

With the above finding the study further attempted to measure, given that both wife and husband were employed and were earning salaries at the end of the month, who then was controlling the family finances. In Table 6 below, the study found that unlike in the financial contribution above, the control of family finances was done by both the husband and the wife. This meant that the two had to consult each other on how to spend the money.

Table 6: Measuring who controls the family finances

Who controls the money in your family?	Wife	78	24.0%
	Husband	97	29.8%
	Together (couple)	150	46.2%

Source: Field Data (2021)

The arrival of flower farms has given the women a chance to support their families financially. This has increased their involvement in the overall management of the family finances as they have to be consulted on how the finances should be put to use.

*"Yes, he can have some time with his friends because I know he takes beer (alcohol). But that money must also be budgeted for. We have agreed on how much he can use in a month with his friends."*⁷

A lady explains the agreement they had come up with on how to use their end month salaries.

DECISION-MAKING IN THE FAMILY

As more women opted for paid work in the farms, there was a concern on how this new arrangement might impact on the women's family decision-making. According to Tekalign, (2015), the arrival of these export-oriented farms gave the women an opportunity to join income generating employment. This made them more autonomous and gave them courage to openly express their opinions on how the family resources are to be used. The vegetable industries of Guatemala and the Dominican Republic, and the flower industry of Mexico, were

⁷ Field Data 2021

some of the predominant examples where women's participation in wage employment had led to greater independence in household decision making (Kabeer, 2005).

To understand the situation in Uganda the study attempted to measure the variable on the family's decision-making. The lead question was: "Who decides on how to use the household income on big affairs?" A summary of the descriptive statistics is given in the following table.

Table 7: Decision-making in the family

Decision on how to use the household income on big affairs.	Wife	60	18.6%
	Husband	95	29.5%
	Together (couple)	167	51.9%

Source: Field Data (2021)

Table 7 above shows that more than half of the couples who participated in the study, affirm that they jointly make decisions on how to use their household income. Decision-making is a crucial issue between husband and wife in many African families. As sole breadwinners in the past, men were expected to make all decisions on how a family resource was to be used. This included the selling of any of the family properties, e.g. family land and cattle.

CONCLUSION

The study assessed the impact of flower farm employment on gender roles in some of the communities where such farms were located. While the extension of floriculture industry deep into the rural communities was to avail the rural dwellers with jobs, overall findings of this study indicate that the move by the women to join wage labour have made gender relations and related values more fluid than before. Whereas, some men reported having adjusted and were carrying out home care duties in the absence of their wives, others rejected the idea and reported that flower farms were destroying the bond that had kept families together in rural communities.

Looking at the central role played by home care duties in contributing to the well-being of individuals, their families and societies, there is need to formulate work policies which will enrich the wellbeing of individual employees at work and even at home. There is need to sensitise the flower farm workers and the community at large on the changing gender roles. The evolution of gender roles should be taken more seriously if the family is to fulfil its primary responsibility for the education and socialization of children as well as instilling values of citizenship and belonging in the society. There is need to inculcate this through education system most especially from the lower levels, and extend it to other institutions like the church and mosque where youths should be sensitised towards the looming changes in gender roles.

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APPENDIX I: RESPONSES FROM MARRIED MEN AND WOMEN

		Gender			
		Male		Female	
Who does the laundry?	A male	4	5.1%	3	4.1%
	A female	34	43.6%	45	61.6%
	Both males and females	40	51.3%	25	34.2%
	Someone else	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Who looks after sick family members?	A male	26	32.9%	19	24.7%
	A female	12	15.2%	18	23.4%
	Both males and females	40	50.6%	40	51.9%
	Someone else	1	1.3%	0	0.0%
Who does the household cleaning?	A male	3	3.8%	3	3.8%
	A female	52	66.7%	59	73.8%
	Both males and females	22	28.2%	18	22.5%
	Someone else	1	1.3%	0	0.0%
Who prepares the meals?	A male	5	6.5%	0	0.0%
	A female	53	68.8%	67	85.9%
	Both males and females	19	24.7%	11	14.1%
	Someone else	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Who does the gardening?	A male	13	17.6%	2	2.5%
	A female	26	35.1%	37	46.8%
	Both males and females	34	45.9%	39	49.4%
	Someone else	1	1.4%	1	1.3%
Who helps with school homework?	A male	3	3.8%	2	2.6%
	A female	10	12.8%	17	21.8%
	Both males and females	61	78.2%	55	70.5%
	Someone else	4	5.1%	4	5.1%