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Non-formal education and new partnerships in a (post-)conflict situation

‘Three cooking stones supporting one saucepan’

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ABSTRACT

The conviction is gaining ground that education, not only for children, but also for youth and adults, is vital in conflict-affected areas to (re)build a strong society. This article discusses the constructive role of non-formal education in a post-conflict situation. Concepts of international cooperation and partnerships on the one hand and non-formal education and lifelong learning on the other hand are used to build a framework for analysing a micro development project in a conflict-affected area in North-Western Uganda. The analysis highlights the dynamics that play a role when people collaborate in rebuilding their communities.

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1. Introduction

The conviction is gaining ground that education is vital in conflict-affected areas to (re)build a strong society capable of sustaining itself (UNESCO, 2011; Paulson, 2011; Davies, 2012; Martinez, 2013). Not only children, but also youth and adults are in need of education in these areas, as many of them have missed their chance to go to school. The education offered in these situations should not only meet the needs of the individual learners, but also the urgent needs of the community suffering from reduced or stagnated educational development (Jones and Naylor, 2014). In this way education becomes constitutive of development involving community empowerment and agency in human development as discussed by McCowan and Unterhalter (2015) in their recent volume *‘Education and International Development’*. Human capacity to rebuild societal structures is an indispensable requirement in conflict-affected areas. Aside from the quantitative knowledge on the impact of armed conflict on education (see for example Jones and Naylor, 2014), this article aims to contribute to understanding the relation between education and conflict and fragility (see Shah and Lopes Cardozo, 2015) by discussing the constructive role of non-formal education for youth and adults in a post-conflict situation.

Due to the vulnerability of most post-conflict situations the word ‘post’ has been put between brackets in the title of this article. Concepts and developments in international cooperation and partnerships on the one hand and non-formal education and lifelong learning on the other hand are used to build a framework for the analysis of a micro development project in a conflict-affected area as a case study. The micro development project to be analysed is a non-formal education project in Koboko district in West-Nile Province in North-Western Uganda, jointly organised by a women’s group and a youth group from the area and supported by some members of the South Sudanese diaspora living in the Netherlands. This case study highlights the dynamics playing a role when people collaborate in rebuilding their communities. The leading question is directed at the implementation of non-formal education in a (post-)conflict area from two perspectives:

- What kinds of partnerships support the supply of education in this (post-)conflict situation?
- How does the education offered relate to the needs of the learners and the surrounding society?

This article will start with the construction of a theoretical framework, subsequently the context of Koboko district and the research design will be discussed. The data will be presented from the two perspectives and the conclusion will return to the leading question to identify issues that are of interest in rethinking the role of partnerships and non-formal education in (post-)conflict situations.

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2. International cooperation and partnerships in a changing world

As depicted by the UNDP primer on capacity development, the approach of international cooperation has evolved from the transference of aid to the empowerment and strengthening of endogenous capabilities (UNDP, 2009a). In the search for symmetry instead of dependency in cooperation relations, capacity development and knowledge-sharing became vital issues (King, 2009). To stress the equal position of the cooperating partners and take into account that knowledge is developed in interaction, Zeelen and van der Linden (2009) prefer to use the term '*joint knowledge production*'. This term does not only refer to North-South cooperation, but also to South-South cooperation at all levels of society. Migration, increased mobility and ever-increasing possibilities of communication of people have blurred national borders. Transnationalism is the term used to describe long-term cross-border relationships (Vertovec, 2009). Although power-relations have shifted, they still exist. In fact, they have become more and more complex as development cooperation is no longer only cooperation between countries, but also includes non-governmental organisations, the private sector, charities, and members of the diaspora sending remittances (de Haan, 2013; Ferrier, 2013). For example, King and Palmer (2013) uncover the dominance of Northern agencies in the discourse on the post-2015 agenda for the Millennium Development goals as a '*northern tsunami*' against a '*southern ripple*'.

In addition to the fading national borders, there is the development that governments are retreating in favour of citizen initiative in the so-called participation society (see for example RoB, 2012). A recent Dutch study (van den Berg, 2012) discusses the fact that private initiatives in international cooperation are becoming more and more important next to established large charities. The study includes projects of diaspora from developing countries living in the Netherlands, but does not pay special attention to this 'transnational' aspect. This may be a lost opportunity if we look at the way the views on development cooperation have changed. As the lack of contextualisation is a common pitfall in implementing capacity development (OECD, 2006), members of the diaspora with their knowledge of both South and North would be excellent partners in developing capacity and joint knowledge production. The contribution of the members of diaspora may thus stretch substantially beyond sending remittances (UNDP, 2009a, 2009b). The way in which these new partnerships succeed in avoiding the pitfall mentioned is a critical issue to be tackled in this article.

3. Non-formal education, lifelong learning and development

In his book '*Globalisation, lifelong learning and the learning society*', Jarvis (2007) discusses lifelong learning as the ongoing process by which people learn from experience in different ways and in different settings. In Jarvis' view, what triggers learning is the feeling that new situations cannot be understood and negotiated, based on available knowledge. Jarvis calls this '*disjuncture*'. Overcoming the feeling of '*disjuncture*' is a holistic learning process in the sense that it involves the whole person. In this respect van der Kamp and Toren (2003) point to the importance of a powerful learning environment for groups at risk, acknowledging the learners as human beings with valuable experience in the way Freire (1970) proposes. Unfortunately, due to globalisation and the influence of the social economic structure, the dominant type of learning is not that holistic. It is rather functionalistic, serving the capitalist system and only considering the part of the learner that is of interest to the system instead of including the person as a whole (see Nussy, 2015, pp. 257–274).

Also Preece (2009a) criticises the narrow, functionalistic approach of lifelong learning. She gave her book '*Lifelong Learning and Development*' the subtitle '*A Southern perspective*' and approvingly quotes Torres (2003, p. 20), who criticises international cooperation agencies that '*prescribe narrow basic education ceilings for poor countries*'. According to Preece, international aid policies, based on the Millennium Development Goals, put a straightjacket on the educational policies of countries in the South, forcing them to focus on primary education and only on lifelong learning in terms of skills for economic, human capital purposes. Inspired by philosophical traditions from the South like Nyerere's Ujamaa, she claims that it must be possible to '*embrace indigenous philosophical world views, [...] in a way that also recognises the hybrid nature of the contemporary world*' (2009a, p. 1). Preece refers to Pant (2003) to show how gender equality can be promoted in an integrated literacy and skills training approach. Key components of this approach are: a participatory approach, mobilisation of community resources, partnerships with local organisations and capacity building of the local community. Apart from formal education in schools and informal learning in everyday life, non-formal education is pre-eminently suited for this kind of education (Preece, 2009b). Non-formal education includes non-institutionalised practices, which play an important role in lifelong learning practices, especially in developing countries (van der Linden and Manuel, 2011).

To shed more light on how indigenous worldviews can be integrated with the demands of global reality at a programme level, the concept of '*pedagogy of contingency*' (von Kotze, 2013) could be useful. von Kotze uses this concept analysing skills development training for urban informal workers in precarious situations in South Africa. The pedagogy of contingency contends that training should be contingent upon the trainees and their backgrounds and should go hand in hand with activities to bend macro policies in a favourable direction to support the livelihood strategies of the trainees. In the words of Nussbaum (2011), apart from internal capabilities, favourable conditions are needed for the realisation of capabilities, which she calls '*functionings*'. The capabilities approach looks at each person as an individual, entitled to freedom, choice and basic social justice. According to Nussbaum, this is a better measure for development than the Gross Domestic Product. Education, in the view of Nussbaum, plays the role of '*fertile functioning*' because of its fertile role for other capabilities or functionings, opening options and chances in different areas and on different levels. From a social justice perspective quality education could then be defined as developing capabilities valued by individuals and societies (Tikly and Barrett, 2011). In this article we look at how non-formal education can fulfil these expectations, maintaining its flexibility, without losing the connection with formal education.

4. Non-formal education and new partnerships in a (post-)conflict situation

In (post-)conflict situations conditions are almost by definition adverse for internal capabilities to become functionings, using Nussbaum's words (2011). Yet, this is needed for people to take charge of their own lives and of their environment. Also, for young people this provides alternatives to taking up arms. Davies (2012) reports on education in conflict-affected areas: '*physical destruction of infrastructure, negative impact on access, retention and learning outcomes and damage to the teaching force, as well as exacerbation of gender inequity*' (p. 5). She proposes a combination of community participation, provision of resources and incentives and training for teachers to repair the damage. According to UNESCO (2011) both in situations of crisis and reconstruction, education is of vital importance. Education for internally displaced persons and

refugees in conflict situations should be on the humanitarian agenda. In situations of reconstruction, long-term partnerships are needed to rebuild education systems contributing to sustainable peace (UNESCO, 2011). Appropriate strategies to meet learning needs of different groups require careful deliberation, always strongly related to the surrounding society and its 'learning needs'. As Thompson points out, collaboration with community groups promotes tailoring to the context and sustainability of initiatives (Thompson, pp. 82–92, in GCPEA, 2014). In a post-conflict situation the tasks of peace building and reconciliation are often added to the agenda of education. In line with the research agenda proposed by Shah and Lopes Cardozo (2015), the volume compiled by Paulson (2011), shows what a challenging task this is in situations where the school population itself played a part in the conflict.

In summary, looking from the perspective of development cooperation, one could ask how new partnerships can result in new powerful learning environments to produce new knowledge in post-conflict situations. And looking from the perspective of non-formal education and lifelong learning, the question would be how learning needs can be met and developed contingent to the experience and situation of a group at risk in a holistic perspective, including an interpretation of the learning needs of the conflict affected society as a whole.

5. Koboko and the other 'cooking stones'

'*Salia musala*' are the Kakwa words for the three cooking stones that are used to support a saucepan. The expression refers to the Kakwa people, who are united although living in three different countries, namely South Sudan, Congo and Uganda. It shows the artificiality of national borders as related to peoples. People cross borders for security and economic reasons (UNDP, 2009b).

During the long war between northern and southern Sudan, many South Sudanese fled from Sudan to neighbouring Uganda and the Lord's Resistance Army of Joseph Kony moved up and down committing its atrocities on both sides of the border (Angucia, 2010). Only a few 'islands of education' were left in southern Sudan (Sommers, 2005). The war ended with the peace agreement of 2005 which was followed by secession from the North and the establishment of South Sudan in 2011. The new nation had to build the education sector from scratch (Lako et al., 2010). Unfortunately armed conflicts tore apart new-born South Sudan in December 2013. This went with the confiscation, damaging and looting of schools (GCPEA, 2014), thwarting achievements reached so far. The conflicts show the lasting fragility of the new nation. Our research on the reconstruction of education in South Sudan shows how refugees living in the diaspora, with backgrounds in different educational systems, struggle to lend a hand in building the new system (van der Linden et al., 2013).

In the 2013 index of failed states, which was made up before the armed conflicts started in South Sudan in 2013, South Sudan appears fourth after Sudan and the Democratic Republic of Congo appears second after Somalia (Failed States, 2013). Herbst and Mills (2013) contend that even the status of failed state is overrating the Democratic Republic of Congo as there is no sovereign power outside the urban areas. They mention the activities of the Militia 23 rebel group, active in Eastern Congo on the border with West-Nile Province in Uganda. van Reybrouck (2010) shows how bordering nations and also multinationals take advantage of the situation in Eastern Congo, which is rich in mineral resources. Especially in this area children miss out on education for lack of schools and teachers and risk recruitment into armed groups (GCPEA, 2014).

Of course the ranking of failed states may be corrected from day to day. Still, it is clear that the cooking stones are hot in more than

one sense and the three countries share a history of interrelated conflicts, which cannot be discussed in detail here (van Reybrouck, 2010). Especially in Congo and South Sudan, security and livelihoods are still endangered by unstable conditions. Uganda, appearing as number 22 on the list of failed states of 2013, had its share of violence in the past and is still struggling to overcome the consequences (Broere and Vermaas, 2005; Angucia, 2010). It had to accommodate an influx of refugees due to unstable conditions in the neighbouring countries. In West-Nile Province, they settled particularly in the districts of Arua and Koboko. The already meagre (educational) resources had to be shared with newcomers of various origins, such as Kakwa, Maadi, Dinka people from South Sudan. Thus the district of Koboko, as it is so near conflict areas in eastern Congo and South Sudan, is affected in more than one way by the nearby conflicts and sadly merits to be called a (post-)conflict district. A report written by Ukuonzi (2013) identifies an overwhelming number of school dropouts, as high as 73.4% for girls and 49.8% for boys, poverty and limited income among the youth, limited participation in reproductive health services and nutritional deficiencies. At the same time, the education sector is subject to poor or limited school facilities and equipment, poor terms and conditions of service of the staff and a limited number of trained and qualified personnel.

6. Research design

The joint initiative by women and youth in the post-conflict context of Koboko, supported by members of the diaspora living in the Netherlands, serves as a case study (Flyvbjerg, 2001, 2006) to discuss the leading question posed in this article directed at the implementation of non-formal education in a (post-)conflict area. As Shah and Lopes Cardozo call for research showing the complexities of the field (Shah and Lopes Cardozo, 2015), the power of example (Flyvbjerg, 2001) applies here.

For the case study, I make use of data collected in the framework of a larger research project on the contribution of the South Sudanese diaspora to the reconstruction of education in South Sudan (van der Linden et al., 2013). This research started off in the Netherlands by accompanying members of the South Sudanese diaspora in their efforts to support the education sector in South Sudan. Three projects with different target groups and locations were followed more closely to identify their strengths and weaknesses. Although the involvement of the diaspora was certainly a strength, the initial phase proved to be very hard. Due to unclear procedures and security problems members of the diaspora did not manage to get started in the intended areas. As this was also the case with initiatives of other South Sudanese living abroad, it probably reflects the fragile state of the country. The only education project of the three that actually started, was a project in northern Uganda. This was the Youth and Women Community Development Organisation (YWEDO), supported by an organisation of South Sudanese diaspora (van der Linden, 2014).

When southern Sudan was still at war, the project started in a relatively safe and stable region to which many South Sudanese had fled. A reason for this choice was that there was contact with an apparently strong local group. The members of the diaspora were not the initiators; they were the supporters involved at a distance. This makes the project interesting in terms of new ways of development cooperation and motivated me to pay a visit to YWEDO to complement the research in the Netherlands. In terms of Flyvbjerg (2001, 2006) one could call it a 'critical case', because what is valid for this case may also be valid for other cases in similar circumstances, or even an 'extreme' or 'deviant case', because it succeeded where others failed. The aim of the visit was to find out how the members of the organisation and the participants of educational activities viewed the added value of

the organisation, its activities and the role of the diaspora. The study of this (critical or extreme/deviant) case will add to the understanding of the relation between education and conflict and fragility (Shah and Lopes Cardozo, 2015).

At the time of the visit, the organisation facilitated a two-week full-time training course for women on leadership and entrepreneurship skills. This provided the opportunity to gain insight into the operational strength of the organisation using research instruments such as classroom observations and interviews with organisers, trainers and participants, as well as reading documents on the organisation and its activities. The visit was also used to get to know the living conditions and educational challenges of a border province in a war-torn area through informal conversations, observation in the local market, a visit to the South Sudanese border town Kaya, and meetings with district officials. Thus, after familiarising myself with the experiences of the members of the South Sudanese diaspora and their contribution to the educational development of the region, the visit to YWCDO provided an opportunity to get the 'other side of the story'. To check on my first impressions I shared a field report with key persons right after the fieldwork. Later on I transcribed the interviews and tried to get a deeper understanding of the partnerships in practice and the benefits of the educational activities by identifying transversal themes and corresponding and conflicting views against the background of the (post-)conflict context (Hennink et al., 2010).

As described before, I adopted two perspectives:

- What kinds of partnerships support the supply of education in this (post-)conflict situation?
- How does the education offered relate to the needs of the learners and the surrounding society?

The two themes to be discussed are related to these perspectives: partnerships in practice and non-formal education and skills training. I call them transversal because all parties involved have their view on them. Most of these views are derived from the interviews, combined with information from documents, personal observation and informal conversations. Thus, I arrived at the identification of interesting patterns that can be valuable for joint knowledge creation and 'making social science matter' (Flyvbjerg, 2001; Zeelen and van der Linden, 2009). To live up to the claim of joint knowledge creation, I am in the process of checking the views presented with their 'owners' as well as the patterns they form together in terms of 'reciprocal adequation' (Boog, 2014).

7. Partnerships in practice

In Koboko the two community-based organisations that joined forces, were: a women's group offering courses on literacy and income generating skills, and a group of young university graduates offering computer courses. After some discussion about the order of youth and women in the name, they formed the Youth and Women Community Training Centre. They were lucky to run into a member of the South Sudanese diaspora, who was able to raise funds from private persons, churches and non-governmental organisations in the Netherlands. With these funds they bought land and built a centre with two classrooms and a conference hall, and managed to set up activities such as the Women's Leadership and Entrepreneurship course which will be discussed in this article. After building the centre, the name was changed in Youth and Women Community Development Organisation to express the involvement in community development as an outreaching organisation rather than a centre. Under the title 'partnerships in practice' the views of the partners in the organisation will be discussed in this paragraph; in the

next paragraph the focus will be on the leadership and entrepreneurship course.

To get an understanding of the partnerships in this context, it is interesting to have a look at the views of the different groups involved. The views of the women's group are presented by Ruby¹, leader of the group and literacy teacher, and by the ladies who started the group who are still honoured as the 'founders'. The views of the youth are given by the coordinator of the centre, who started the computer courses using his own computer and is currently leading the organisation, and by the youth who joined the organisation later on and have positions in the board now. Amy is the chairperson of the diaspora organisation. Because of the war in southern Sudan, she spent part of her youth in Koboko District and some of her family members still live there. She gives the view of the diaspora organisation. To provide insight in societal needs and governmental priorities I include the view of the district officials (see Table 1).

A closer look at Table 1, which gives the views of the partners involved in their own words (taken from interviews), shows how inventively these different partners came together. The interest of the founding women is to grow crops for their own subsistence and for the market. For these Kakwa speaking ladies literacy seems to come second, while for their teacher and leader it came first. She saw the advantage of cooperating with the youth:

Now we got a partner in the Netherlands. We do not know how to operate computer. Why can't we work together with the youth? We called Amy: 'We have two groups here, youth and women.' ... So, we said: 'Okay, let us work together, so that they can help us.' And right now we work together. They have their computers there. We have adult literacy here, we have ... tailoring here. We are doing tailoring, agriculture and adult literacy. So, we are now together. ... And our work is going on well (Ruby, chairperson).

The coordinator of the centre acknowledges Amy for getting the two groups to cooperate. The youth are happy that they can pay back the efforts of their parents: *We help them, typing, typing their memos. Trying to develop for them some documents. When they want letters out, we develop for them.* The combination of these two groups gives the organisation a strong base, as Amy testifies:

The group is the most active and organised group in Koboko. They have affiliations with different groups. (...) So much effort has come from the group of women; really ... they have done a tremendous work given the instability in those areas (Amy, diaspora organisation).

The local government officers are included in the table, although they explained their priorities are somewhere else:

This district became a district in 2005. By then, we had only 39 primary schools, ... but today as we talk we have 68 primary schools, government plus ten private, which means there is a total of 78 primary schools. UPE [Universal Primary Education] encouraged this. It made more children to come to school ... And there were only two secondary schools in 2005, but now we have six government secondary schools plus ten private (District education officer).

The way the district education officer discusses the problems of the youth and the few active women (see Table 1) shows that YWCDO is filling a gap left by the government, but hardly acknowledged for it. YWCDO not only keeps the young graduates busy, but also reaches out to the youth in and outside school: *We*

¹ I use pseudonyms for the respondents.

Table 1
Views on the origin and added value of the organisation.

Views on the origin and added value of the organisation	
Women	Youth
<p>Chairperson (Ruby): We came and we started this thing under a mango tree. ... Amy, she got us when we were learning there. She picked interest: 'Eh, you are learning here?' 'We are here. We learn here.' We told her ABCD: 'We do not have a pen, books, house for learning, what what, very many things there. Amy, when you go back to Holland, please, remember us.'</p> <p>Founders: We started like this. The saying was going around that we should be in groups and then our chairperson madam Ruby would get a donation. Then the group started progressing. We started with farming, things like <i>khudra</i>, <i>durra</i>, <i>piripiri</i> and other greens. ... Then we realised that there was a problem. We should make bricks for building a place where we could gather. We laid the bricks. We even carried them from where they were and used them for raising this building. Then we built this place and we adapted a section also for teaching.</p> <p>Diaspora organisation (Amy): They were selling groundnuts, oil whatever in the market and most of them were illiterate. So they used to go for literacy classes and they used to sell these things. So they said: all we want is a piece of land to do our own activities. ... We bought the piece of land for them, and okay, so now what? Now we came out with the plan that, okay, since these women most of them are semi-illiterate and they will not understand development ... it is better to bring these youth to work together. So we decided to have a youth and women's centre. The youth have their own activities; the women have their own activities but we have one coordinator who is managing the centre.</p>	<p>Coordinator (Donald): We had six members ... graduates from Makerere University. So, we tried to open up a computer centre. ... So, we are running, teaching people, computer skills and what. ... Then the women came. ... they were also having their organisation. It was headed by Ruby. They were operating adult literacy. How these organisations came together? That is through Amy.</p> <p>Volunteering youth: We felt, in the Ugandan situation, we were really suffering. You go to school, you finish and no job. What do we do? Let us join hands and see what we can do. So we decided to come together and form this group, fight for a common cause. ... We, as youth or the graduates, we have to give back to our communities, our parents what they have imparted on us and it is very important for us ... to help our community to change their ideas which are there from long ago to present.</p> <p>Local government (Education officers): The majority population of the youth after primary 7, they just remain. They have no jobs (...) here. You see some of them just playing cards, what what. It is a very big problem, but there is a youth centre, only it cannot be maintained, there is no funding for them to be at least kept busy in that youth place. (...) The centre on Kaya road? That one was initiated by the women, as a kind of FAL Centre. So women are just there. There are very few there and I have not known much what activities they are exactly doing. It is a FAL, which means Functional Adult Literacy. (...) There are very few women who are organised and make something for themselves.</p>

had a programme of visiting youth. We visited all the secondary schools in Koboko district... to try to give them guidance and counselling at secondary schools (youth member YWCDO board).

It seems there is a need for this organisation and its position in society joining two groups, gives it a strong base. How strong is this base? Will it keep its strength? What views do the partners have of the future? Which hopes and dreams do they have and which challenges do they see? Table 2 gives the views of the partners for the future. The view of the local government is taken from the speech made by the Local Councillor at the graduation ceremony of the Women's Leadership and Entrepreneurship course.

From Table 2 it is clear that the people involved have different views of the future. This shows that sustainability of the organisation is not a matter of course. Efforts are needed to keep people together, accommodating different views and interests. The founders, for example, feel it is their turn to 'harvest'. Jacob, who

translated what they said from Kakwa to English, explains their feelings:

Actually, the main point here is that the founder members are complaining of being weak, old age and sometimes they are also breadwinners at home. Some of them are widows (Jacob, translating the words of the founding women).

Donald, the coordinator, refers to the claims of the founders: *We have challenges in the organisation and one of the things is ... when funding comes like this [for the course], people expect a lot.* During the course, the funds can be used in a creative way to help the women:

The only thing that we can do to help, when we get a funding like this, we can create some activities [...]. We said: 'Okay, instead of buying food, eating in a hotel, we have a budget for

Table 2
Views on the future of the organisation.

Views on the future of the organisation	
Women	Youth
<p>Chairperson (Ruby): I want this centre to be bigger and more recognised. But I do not know whether I will live [5 years more] I am only remaining with few years (laughing).</p> <p>Founders (through translator Jacob): They are saying as the founder members, they do not want to regret, they do not want to leave the institution as they started it, they want it to continue, they want a nursery section, a primary, a secondary where their children can come. They want the place to progress. ... They founded it and they do not want it to die and secondly, as they are growing old, their children are supposed to benefit. Then the other question is: you come here, they are getting old, how will you help them?</p> <p>Diaspora organisation (Amy): The only challenge is now, the sustainability of the centre. Because one, they need trained people to train them, and then these people need to be paid. They cannot do all that thing only voluntarily. And then in terms of expanding the place and an outlet market, for their crafts. ... And for the youth, actually it is the first ever kind of training centre in Koboko itself. ... If they could get a visionary, or a development worker I think it could take it to a higher level.</p>	<p>Coordinator (Donald): Sometimes when you have a structure like this, you find that the money cannot be enough and we cannot raise money. We have to wait, write a project, explain, sit until those things are taken. So those are some of the challenges in the organisation. ... Also members, we are looking: how can they be motivated?</p> <p>Volunteering youth: I think we are doing well, because through Amy we are being receiving communication from [mentions organisations]. Amy can discuss with them and write back to us. ... There should also come people like you and [mentions people]. They should come and see for themselves. They cannot depend on photos, emails. ... They can come here and we have a chat with them. We discuss developmental issues. How we can develop the organisation. What are their experiences there, which can be transferred to our organisation?</p> <p>Local government (From speech of local councillor on graduation ceremony Women Leadership and Entrepreneurship Skills course): We should look forward. You do your best and we shall also do our best. The women in the subcounties [graduates of the course] should not work in isolation. Koboko as a district is an enabling environment. We welcome more donors, if they use the rightful procedures to access the community, support activities that are of our need and do not promote ideas and ways of living that go against our traditions.</p>

food. You people come and cook the food, we pay you for cooking.' (Donald, coordinator).

As there is no structural funding for the organisation itself, the only financial benefits are payments received by those who perform tasks in a funded activity. One of the trainers states:

As an organisation we lack the structural funding from where you can be able to pay salaries, the running costs of the organisation, utilities like electricity and so forth. This funding we do not have and all of us, we are just working as volunteers. Actually we do not have permanent employees because we do not have structural funds (Trainer and former board member).

This makes the organisation vulnerable: people invested a lot and expect returns, though not necessarily returns in the sense of salaries and payment. The youth mention the importance of exchange of experience and knowledge:

Knowledge is very, very important. How much you have money and you do not have knowledge of bringing up, developing the organisation, those moneys can vanish. And as youth we consider knowledge to be a valuable asset in life (youth member YWCDO).

In their own words, they refer to the concept of joint knowledge production (Zeelen and van der Linden, 2009). In contradiction to the attitude of the youth, the speech by the local government official shows reluctance and even distrust to accept what the Local Councillor called 'donor' involvement. The background to this remark is probably that donor influence has, in the past, been difficult to control (see UNDP, 2009a). In this case, it was experienced as almost an insult for the diaspora organisation involved. Amy hurried to stress that she was not a donor, but a Kakwa like them, struggling to collect funds to support the region that once accepted her and her family as refugees from southern Sudan. The tension remained. Conversations with Amy and others revealed a world of conflict and conflicting interests behind this incident, as explained by Paulson (2011). It shows how difficult it is to establish genuine partnerships for joint knowledge production in a conflict-affected area, also for diaspora led organisations. Apart from the time factor and other priorities, this may be one of the reasons why the possibilities of cooperation between the local government and diaspora organisations and other small development projects are not fully utilised.

Trying to combine the interests of the different groups involved, the strategic plan of the YWCDO states as its comprehensive goal:

To realize all skilled and empowered youth and women in Koboko Town Council, while the purpose is advocating for skilled, talented and empowered youth and women with positive attitudes, cultures and practices in Koboko Town Council by 2016 (YWCDO Five Year Strategic Plan 2012–2016: p. 3).

This goal contains a flexible interpretation of education and training, including skills and empowerment, contributing towards sustainable peace in the region. It is the youth who stressed the necessity of a change in attitude as implied here (see Table 1). The YWCDO ascribes itself an important role in society and people in the organisation seem to have the potential to hold on to its stakeholders, but maintaining and embedding the organisation in local government and educational structures is still a challenge.

8. Non-formal education and skills training

The training of leadership and entrepreneurship skills connects to the second perspective. It fits into the framework as described above. The training would support the women in Koboko district as follows:

Training of women in entrepreneurship and leadership puts real power and decision making at the disposal of women. Training women in these skills will not only help the women to start their own enterprises (both profit and non-profit making), but will put them in a better position to have influence, compete with men favourably, manage and lead effectively and ultimately exercise control over those enterprises (Proposal for the training: p. 5).

One should note the attention to women, not only as objects of education because of their educational deprivation (compare Davies, 2012), but also as subjects of education because of their potential as leaders. This contradicts the way in which women are viewed in the region, as one of the trainers explained:

So, first of all, economically these women are very poor. They do not own the means of production such as land. Capital, they do not have this. They actually depend on their spouses. They are called names such as a goat keeper. They are just there to wait. They are looked down on by men. Our women do not want to take on leadership roles. There is that local custom. They fear. Our cultures are generally against women leadership. Actually here in our cultures, when a woman is a leader, men think this woman is almost becoming a hook, because they associate leadership with a lot of exposure. Many men do not want their women to take on leadership roles with this kind of exposure. ... Then we said: this evil must be fought. One, making the women economically disempowered, we are against that. Two, making them not leaders, we are against that. It is based on these problems the women face, that we decided to come up with this project, training women on entrepreneur and leadership skills (Trainer and former board member YWCDO).

The trainers made a programme with the following topics: legal, institutional and policy frame for women entrepreneur- and leadership; leadership and leadership styles; entrepreneurship in the local business environment; identification, selection and management of income generating activities; communication skills and group dynamics; management of change and action planning. The programme could be characterised as '*Western knowledge with a Ugandan twist*'. The topics could be copied from any Western handbook on leadership and entrepreneurship; the '*Ugandan twist*' comes in with the legal framework, the local business environment and the selection of income generating activities. Sitting in on classrooms, I witnessed how the Ugandan trainers related to the Ugandan reality, often with a humorous undertone, making the women laugh. The programme, seemed quite knowledge oriented, with few possibilities for the women to participate and digest the knowledge. At some moments the word '*banking education*' meaning the one way traffic of depositing knowledge from trainer to learner came to mind (Freire, 1970). One of the trainers stated:

They understand very good. ... If they would get the daily evaluation, the project presentation and so on, you see that they are really understanding. They are very happy about the training. The most interesting session was when they were trying to identify the various income generating activities, which they would be engaged in (Trainer Women Leadership and Entrepreneurship Skills course).

The women were selected for the course because of their educational background, command of the English language and position in the community. Six of the seven sub-counties of Koboko district were present, totalling 25 women. To prepare for their role as leaders in the sub-counties, the women were asked to develop action plans for each subcounty and present them on the last day. Table 3 shows the personal benefits of the course and the

Table 3

Participants of the Women's Leadership and Entrepreneurship skills course: personal benefits and action plans.

Subcounty/position of participant(s)	Personal benefits mentioned (interview)	Action plan (poster)
Koboko Town Council Head teacher mother care nursery and owner of small business	Improving administration and communication in school and in the family, increase income from gardening	Share training experience with authorities at the Koboko Town Council, the women's group, the church audience
Midia Tailor in the market	Planning business in agriculture	Share experience with group members in Midrabe village, groups in Lurunu parish, women in Dricile parish, women and men in Godia parish, groups in Midia parish, groups in Degiba
Kuluba Crop farmer and secretary of farmers' association in new settlement	Improve farming and improve organisation	Share training experience with subcounty officials, the village executives, women and men of the subcounty, formation of subcounty women group, share training experience with youth
Ludara Tea seller and chairperson of women group; fish trader and leader of women farming group; farmer and chairperson of women group	Setting up business in agriculture	Share training experience with authorities at the subcounty, believers, women in Ludara subcounty, the community at large

objectives of the action plans for four out of the six sub-counties as examples.

Table 3 reveals a mix of personal and community benefits. Referring to personal benefit, Rebecca, a business woman in the local market, explained how she would benefit:

I will use phones. I will use my phone to advertise. I call: 'This is madam Akuya calling from market, at the entry of the market. So, you come and buy beans from me. Yeah, I have new beans, I have fresh beans.'

Each of the participants had her own story and her own way of using what she learnt. Anna, head teacher of a nursery school, said: *I will make sure that I have good contacts with the teachers and I will make sure that the children perform better.* Leah, who moved to Kuluba bordering South Sudan in a resettlement programme, started farming on a small scale because of lack of labour and capital. She was the secretary of a group of farmers. She wanted to use what she learned to improve her organisation. Studying Table 3, the first column shows how the personal lives of women are linked to the community. Most of them hold positions in the social structure of their subcounty, contrary to what might have been expected from the words of the trainer. The column on the action plans in Table 3 reflects the women's knowledge of formal and informal structures which can be used to reach as many women as possible. Unlike the words of the district education officer, who hardly knew of the centre, the YWCDO itself is part of a vast network in the district of Koboko. The closing ceremony of the training course, at which the certificates were awarded, was attended by local councillors, the mayor and several other district officials. They praised the course and the centre. The mayor promised to repair the road to the centre.

Thus skills development, reviled by several western writers on lifelong learning and non-formal education (among others, Preece, 2009a), is embraced by these women and their trainers in Uganda. The women highly appreciate the knowledge they get, not only to improve their own lives, but also to improve the lives of people in their communities. Of course, one has to be careful here. This is not an effect or impact study. Whether all the plans are or will be implemented, one does not know. Still, it is apparent that the women are capable of producing their own blend of Western knowledge and local expertise, even challenging local traditions regarding the position of women in Ugandan society.

9. Conclusion

Reaching a conclusion about the contribution of this project to knowledge on non-formal education in a (post-)conflict situation, I

will firstly discuss the partnerships at stake and secondly the type of education offered. Finally, I will reflect on the project as a case study for highlighting the dynamics when people collaborate in rebuilding their communities. It is remarkable that in Koboko two different community-based organisations joined forces: a women's group offering courses on literacy and income generating skills, and a group of young university graduates offering computer courses. The partnerships as exposed, when analysing the project, reveal a network of groups and interests that come together in the organisation as it is: women and youth of Koboko with many links with other organisations in the district, capable of mobilising women from nearly all the sub-counties. This is even more remarkable as the danger of this network falling apart is imminent. The cooperation of the different groups increases the organisational strength, but continuous efforts are needed to maintain this strength. It needs people handling conflicts, coming up with creative solutions to prevent participants from getting discouraged. It needs human activity of people who look beyond their own situation and take the lead in getting people to cooperate. This is strongly developed in YWCDO, but seems to be less developed in the local government. Thus, the strength of people in dire circumstances is complemented by the vulnerability of their initiatives in terms of sustainability. Structural embedding is at stake. Collaboration involving people valuing each other's efforts and being open to communication is a challenge in post-conflict conditions where each person, family and group has its own conflict history (compare Paulson, 2011). Joint knowledge production (Zeelen and van der Linden, 2009) is an attractive perspective, which needs practical conditions as Nussbaum (2011) explains: internal capabilities need conditions to become functionings.

What do the data collected in Koboko teach us about the role of non-formal education in (post-)conflict situations? In the district of Koboko, the educational infrastructure is limited and people are still struggling to get the education they need. As in many other (post-)conflict situations, the government focuses on formal education; flexible, non-formal need-oriented education is left to non-governmental organisations (see Zeelen et al., 2010, 2014; van der Linden and Manuel, 2011). The YWCDO identified the need for a training course on leadership and entrepreneurship skills for women, raised the required funds, advertised the course and took care of its implementation. Although one may comment on the orientation on skills enhancement and the Western concepts that were taught, the seeds fell on fertile soil: many women applied to the course. All of them made plans to use what they learned to their own benefit, but also to the benefit of the surrounding community. Thus, the course seems to be an example of community oriented

quality education, in which education and development are closely related. On the other hand, good intentions do not necessarily lead to good practice. Whether these women will succeed in using what they learned and in transferring it to others with a minimum of support from the organisation, remains to be seen. In the research affiliations and plans to make use of them were recorded, but we could not look beyond the level of education to assess the impact on the community.

Although a 'Northern' perspective on skills enhancement prioritising 'Western' knowledge may be recognised (Preece, 2009a), in the case of this course, there is certainly a link to community development and there is a strong orientation towards the needs of the learners in their own context. The women testify that they benefit from the contents offered and that they will put it to use in their own businesses, families and communities. Thus, the women in the course make their own 'blend' of Western and local knowledge, strengthening their roles as leaders. It is this mix of knowledge that they may need to achieve freedom of choice and autonomy (compare Nussbaum, 2011). Strikingly, the 'Southern' perspective in the context of this course is related to the role of women leaders in maintaining peace and initiating entrepreneurship in the region. This perspective goes against traditions in the region as the trainers stated. Flyvbjerg (2001, 2006) could consider it a phenomenon worth studying as an extreme or deviant case. It complements the Western discussion on women in post-conflict situations being deprived and disadvantaged (Davies, 2012): women are not only victims; they take the lead too.

10. Reflection

Taking stock, reflecting on the role of non-formal education in a (post-)conflict situation, I would state that quality education from a social justice point of view (Tikly and Barrett, 2011), should enable learners to adapt knowledge to their own needs and living conditions. Both the participating women and the youth in the centre show eagerness to acquire knowledge. This calls for reflection. Why would we deny people the knowledge that has been developed in other contexts? Who is going to decide which knowledge is suitable in a certain context and which knowledge is not? How can we develop a pedagogy of contingency that views the learning needs of vulnerable people from their perspective and develops fertile functionings in dialogue?

Dialogue and interaction on contents and conditions are essential components of an approach to non-formal education and partnerships acknowledging and supporting people in (post-)conflict areas. The study of the non-formal education organisation in Koboko District reveals the importance of human activity to bring people together, to think of creative solutions, and to act as a leader in embedding the organisation in governmental structures. In line with the Global Monitoring Report 2013/4 (UNESCO, 2014), that pays tribute to the teachers involved in primary education and lower secondary education, we conclude that it is the professional who, either paid or unpaid, plays a crucial role in implementing non-formal quality education. It needs a professional with dedication and involvement to secure partnerships and create powerful learning environments (see also Nussy, 2015).

The metaphor of the cooking stones and the saucepan refers to the partnerships and to the conditions for maintaining these partnerships. Private initiatives and micro development projects require a minimum of collective responsibility, embodied in national and local governments, just as Nussbaum (2011) discusses the responsibility of governments to guarantee a threshold of social justice. To form a firm base for a saucepan, cooking stones need even ground and an occasional hand to keep the saucepan in its position.

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