**Project title: A Behavioural Economic Analysis of Agricultural Investment Decisions in Uganda**

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We outline here how we obtained consent from participants in our experiments and household survey. We asked their consent for participation as well as for the subsequent use of the data: analysis, archiving and possibly sharing with other researchers. We tried to ensure that they had a good grasp of what would happen with the data they provided us with, as well as assure them that their names and contact details would not be used in the analysis of the data, only for recontacting them if necessary, and then only by members of our project team, following the procedure described below.

Since many of our participants are illiterate or semi-literate, we could not rely on consent forms. Instead we relied on their oral consent in response to information that we provided them with orally about the experiments, survey and subsequent use of the data. As the recruitment of participants proceeded along several stages, we begin by outlining our sampling strategy, which makes clear the key points at which information about the research was shared with potential participants, as well as with local leaders and assistants instrumental in the recruitment, and at which therefore an explicit opportunity was provided to indicate consent or alternatively to choose not to participate.

*Sampling strategy*

We used a multistage sampling procedure to obtain our sample of 1,803 participants in the experiments and accompanying household survey. The study area selected was the former Sironko District in eastern Uganda, now comprised of Sironko District and Lower Bulambuli. From this area, we selected ten sub-counties randomly. Uganda has a Local Council structure of local government, which consists of elected government officials at various administrative levels, so-called LCs. Sub-counties are at the LC3 administrative level; the first persons to seek permission from for the research were therefore ten LC3 chairpersons, with whom information about the research objectives was shared, as well as a copy of the research permit obtained from the Uganda National Council for Science and Technology (their reference SS 2806) and appropriate introductory letters.

Within each sub-county, ten villages (LC1 level) were randomly selected. Information about the research thus needed to be shared with ten sub-counties times ten villages so one hundred LC1 chairpersons in order to obtain their permission for research to be conducted among member of the villages they are in charge of. After such permission was obtained and with the assistance of the LC1 chairperson, as well as various local helpers typically nominated by that person, a list of all households and individuals eighteen years or older was drawn up, our sampling frame. At this stage, each household in the village was assigned a unique number on the list, and each adult member of the household a number unique within the household, which was necessary for the random selection.

Random selection of individuals was then carried out by drawing up to 20 numbers from a large envelope containing as many numbered pieces of paper as there were households in the village (quite often the number was smaller for particularly small villages). We showed that this was the case to the LC1 chairperson and as wide a representation of villagers as it was feasible to obtain: several village officials and elders along with miscellaneous others would thus typically witness the random selection procedure in its entirety. After the households had been randomly selected, we randomly selected an adult in each household, following an analogous procedure witnessed by the same individuals.

Randomly selected individuals would then be visited in their homesteads in the days following their selection. We explained what the research was about, why we would appreciate their participation, and made it clear that participation was entirely voluntary, that they should feel under no obligation whatsoever to participate, and what would happen with the information they provided us with.

If at this stage an individual chose not to participate – which happened in about five percent of cases – we replaced them with a person randomly selected from the next household on the list of households in the village who had not yet been randomly selected, who was then informed about the research in the same way that the initially randomly selected individual had been.

The first invitation to participate took place typically about a month before the household survey, which itself took place in the week leading up to the experiments that were always organised on a Saturday – ten Saturdays in total, one in each of the ten sub-counties in a strategically located central venue, suitable for our purposes, such as a school (we organised transport for selected participants from remote villages). The invitation was next reiterated twice, closer to the survey and experiment dates.

*Information relevant for obtaining consent shared with the LC1 and LC3 chairpersons*

In addition to a copy of our research permit and introductory letters, we shared with the chairpersons of the sub-counties and villages that were randomly selected the information that is given below. In the case of the LC1 chairpersons, we obtained introductions from the LC3 chairperson, typically transmitted through an intermediary, a person we tend to refer to as the “general mobiliser”. At this stage, we usually have to explain that there will be no development projects coming to the area as a direct result of our research.

1. Information on who was conducting the study and why, as well as how their sub-county/village was selected for the research: we informed them that Arjan Verschoor and Ben D’Exelle from the University of East Anglia in the UK are conducting a study on livelihoods in the study area that can help in understanding how farmers take decisions about their farms (our research interest is in investment decisions – decisions whether or not to purchase fertiliser, grow cash crops and other investments that can improve the profitability of their farms; we did not spell this out as this might have induced chairpersons to give information to participants that might have biased their decision making, for example to be more, or possibly less prudent in the risky choice experiments we organised than they otherwise might have been). We explained that ten sub-counties and one hundred villages in Sironko and former Bulambuli had been randomly selected (including how that was done, i.e. by giving each sub-county and village a number after which the computer generated numbers in such a way that each number is selected “by chance”) and that their sub-county/village happened to have been selected. We communicated that there would be approximately 1,800 participants in the study, of whom up to 200/up to 20 would be in their sub-county/village. We also explained how we intended to select participants (as per the outline of the sampling strategy above).
2. Information on what would happen to participants in the study. We explained that participation is entirely voluntary and that nobody should feel under any pressure whatsoever to participate. We explained the nature of our experiments: that individuals will receive from us some money – the equivalent of about two days’ rural wages – and that they will be asked to take decisions about that money, decisions that will help us understand how they take decisions in real life, i.e. that concern their farms. We also explained the nature of our household survey, that it contains a list of questions designed to give us detailed information about people’s farms and farming practices.
3. We left the contact details of a senior team member in case of any query.

*Information relevant for obtaining consent shared with potential participants*

When the first invitation to participate was extended, the following information was shared:

1. Information on who was conducting the study and why, as well as how they were selected for the research. We introduced ourselves and research objectives in the same way that we had introduced ourselves to the LC chairpersons and explained that the national government and the LC3 and LC1 chairpersons had agreed to our research being conducted in Sironko and Lower Bulambuli, as well as in their sub-county and village. We explained that we were interested in their livelihoods, especially how they organise their farming activities. We then referred to the random selection procedure that had taken place at most a few days before the first invitation, giving details of the individuals who had witnessed it. This was to assure them that selection had been by chance and that there was no favouritism involved: the risk of ill will was thereby minimised among other villagers that might have followed participation of fellow villagers in potentially lucrative economic experiments.
2. Information on what would happen to participants in the study. Most of this essentially repeated what we had told the LC3 and LC1 chairpersons. In addition, we now also spelt out in more detail that we would ask them to make several decisions individually and in private, and that the decisions would be for real money that we would provide them with at the beginning of the study. We assured them that decisions would not be difficult, that what we were asking them to do would be clearly explained and that there were no right or wrong decisions: that we were simply interested in what they want to do in certain situations.
3. Information about the time participation in the study would take (we used the local term for “workshop” to refer to the experiments). We asked them if they could make themselves available for a maximum of three hours on a particular Saturday, the day of the “workshop” in their sub-county, and up to one hour in the week leading up to it, during which we would ask them some questions about their farms.
4. Information about risks associated with the study, including of the analysis, sharing and archiving of the data. We explained that the “workshop” would be conducted in a safe environment in which nobody would interfere with the decisions they took and that no other participant would observe or ever find out about their decisions. We also explained that the information they provided us with “when we come to ask some questions about your farms”, as well as information about decisions they took during the “workshop” would be treated confidentially. We explained that as follows: “we are interested how the people in this area take decisions about their farms. When we will look in the future at the information you gave us when we asked you questions, we won’t know it is you. Exactly the same goes for what you decide to do in the workshop. We will keep your name and the name of your village, just in case we want to come back to this area and contact you again. However, we will keep your contact details separate from all the other information we have about you. We won’t use that information to find out things about you, only for finding out things about the farmers who live in this area. The information about you will be kept by us and will also be kept in a central place. This is so that other researchers can also use that information. However, your name and contact details will not be shared with other researchers. It will also not be kept in that central place. Other researchers can use the information about you but will never know who the information is about.”
5. Information about benefits of participation. We explained that during the workshop we would provide them with an amount of money that would be compensation for their time. We also explained that we expected to learn about farming practices in this area and that we would share this information with the government of Uganda and other organisations interested in it. We mentioned that we hoped that this would be used for supporting farmers. We emphasised that we did not expect that development projects would come to this area because of our research.
6. Information about voluntary participation and withdrawal from the study. We explained that participation is entirely voluntary and that they could refuse to participate without any repercussions. We also explained that they could withdraw from the study at any point or refuse to answer questions. The latter did not happen – our questions were apparently perceived as quite innocuous – the former only in a handful of cases: a couple of participants withdrew after they had agreed to participate when the first invitation was extended because they had come to believe that we were “promoting homosexuality” (a consequence that startled us of radio programmes that alleged that this was the secret intention of some Western donors, thereby jeopardising “African values”), another couple because they believed we were members of a satanic sect who were after their souls; we have not managed to ascertain how they had come to hold the view that we were spiritual predators other than finding out that the individuals concerned were members of a local religious cult.
7. Information about who they could contact if they had any further questions. We explained that we had left our contact details with the LC1 chairperson.

We then asked them if they agreed to participate. When we returned (twice) to reiterate the invitation, we did not repeat all the information provided when the first invitation was extended other than reminding them that participation was entirely voluntary and that there would be no repercussions – and that we would not hold it against them – if they chose not to participate. We then asked them if they still agreed to participate.

We recorded whether or not a randomly selected individual had indicated they would participate. In our records we have not distinguished between unwillingness to participate and inability to participate; the percentage of the two categories combined is about five percent of all those initially selected.

When the household survey is administered, people are again reminded that participation is voluntary. Transliterated from Lugisu, the local language, participants are told that “it is your freedom to choose not to participate or to participate in the study”. When the experiments are conducted, participants are told the following, again transliterated from Lugisu: “We want to tell you three important things. […] The second is participating in this study is out of your own wish. Nobody forces you. It is true that we told the LC to call you but you are free at any point during today’s workshop to decide to walk out and go home. There is no one who will take it in bad faith”. The last phrase is particularly important as it connotes in Lugisu that nobody will hold it against them in the slightest if somebody chooses at this late stage not to participate, or to withdraw from the experiments as they are being conducted.