

# RESEARCH PEARLS | FEDU PEARL #17

*With L-IFT's recent completion of another diaries research, Financial and Energy diaries Uganda (FEDU), there is ample opportunity for comparisons to be made between this dataset and the dataset of the Youth Livelihood diaries (YLD) and to allow for further hypotheses to be tested and (dis)proven. In this Pearl we will dive into the role of agriculture in mixed livelihoods among different age groups.*

## Diving into datasets - Employment activities

From April 2015 to March 2016, in cooperation with the MasterCard Foundation L-IFT completed a diaries research called Youth Livelihood diaries (YLD). A key takeaway from the research paper written about Youth Livelihood diaries, *Invisible Lives*, is that Ugandan and Ghanaian youth have diverse livelihoods. These young people typically had a combination of income sources, reporting to have had simultaneously informal employment, self-employment and agricultural activities. In this research pearl we explore whether the FEDU data set confirms the findings from the Youth Livelihood diaries.

One major difference between the Youth Livelihood diaries and the FEDU research is the age group of the research sample. The YLD focused on young people aged 18 to 24 years old, while FEDU included all adult ages, i.e. 18 years and above and the oldest respondent was 80 years old. To be able to compare the Youth Livelihoods diaries data, we have split the FEDU data into two datasets, one with the same age group as the Youth Livelihood diaries (younger than 25) and one older than the YLD (25 and older).

We are therefore comparing three groups here: Youth Livelihoods young adults, FEDU young adults and FEDU older adults. In comparing these groups, we aim to learn about differences and similarities between Ugandan young adults and older adults.

### The role of agriculture in mixed livelihoods “strategy”

One of the hypotheses of the Youth Livelihood diaries research was that agriculture is an activity that is taken up if no other activities are available. In other words, when there are alternative options, young people will discontinue their agricultural work and focus on these other, presumably better earning options. We will explore this hypothesis using the three research groups.

The graphs on the following page are an overwhelming sight at first and require some explanation. They map out respondents' income earning activities. Each bar along the x-axis represents one respondent. The sample sizes are as follows:

Research group	Number of respondents
YLD	124
FEDU < 25	141
FEDU >= 25	445*

\*for the sake of being able to fit the graph, a random sample of 150 respondents was taken for this group

Therefore, the Youth Livelihoods graph, for example, shows 124 bars, each one representing one respondent.

There are five categories of income earning work: employment, business, horticulture, livestock and agricultural crops. As you can see in the graphs, almost all respondents are involved in a different mix of activities; there is almost no specialization in one activity. For example, in Youth Livelihood diaries, the first bar, respondent number 157, was engaged in crop agriculture, livestock, horticulture and employment during the research period.

The graphs are arranged in descending order as to the frequency related to carrying out crop agriculture. The respondent farthest on the left hand side, as you can see, was most active in crop agriculture (the grey color). From the above mentioned hypothesis, one would expect that as agricultural activities decrease, other activities, such as employment or business would increase. However, there is an *overall* decreasing trend, i.e. as agricultural activities decrease, so does all other activity. On the far right side of the graph, where respondents are not active at all in crop agriculture, the count of activities overall is also quite low. The hypothesis therefore, does not hold and the reverse appears true: those that are less active in agriculture are also less active in other areas.

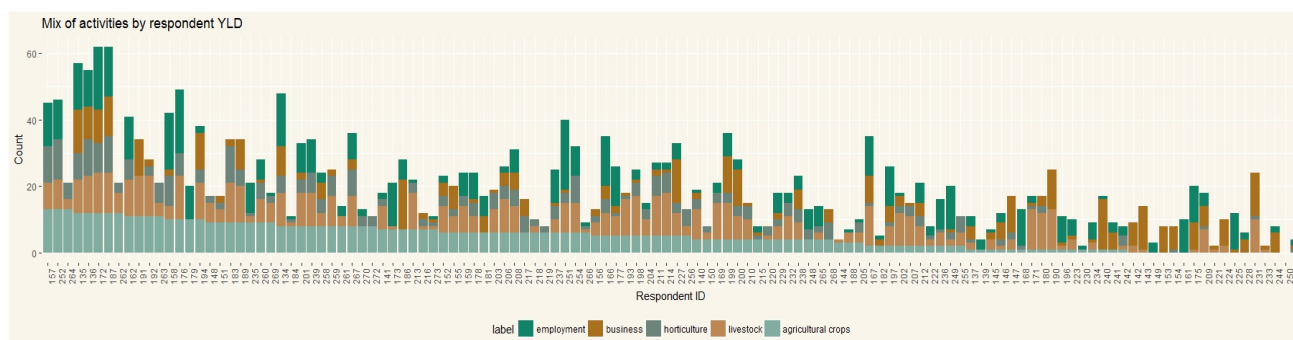


Figure 1: Activities Youth Livelihood Diaries

This pattern is different for FEDU respondents. As you can see, when crop agriculture decreases in a respondent's activity mix, the amount of other activities they carry out does not necessarily decrease; even when respondents have no agricultural activities, about one fourth way into the graph for FEDU < 25 and almost half way for  $\geq 25$ , respondents still have other activities running for quite a large amount of the time. For FEDU, therefore, the hypothesis can tentatively be accepted, such that respondents who are not active in agriculture are more likely to look for alternative sources of income.

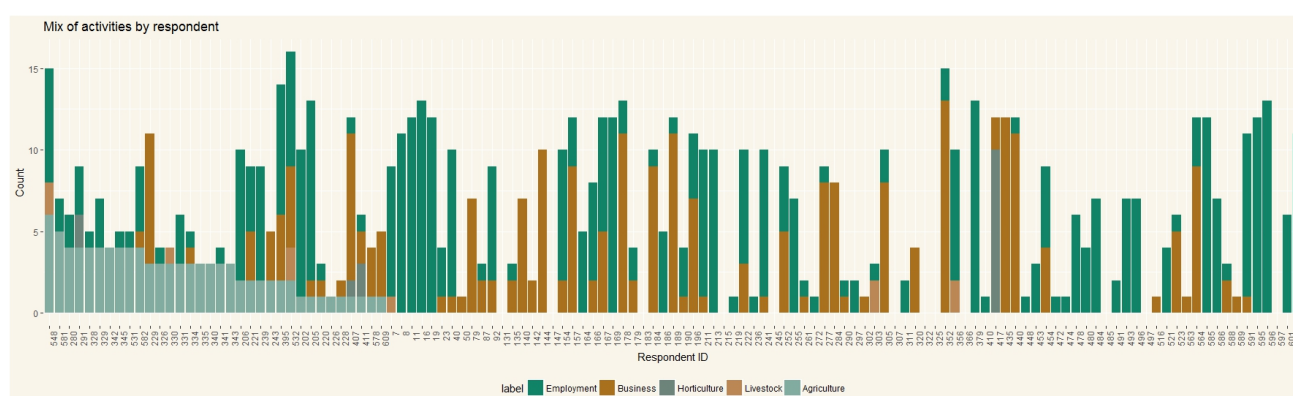


Figure 2: Activities FEDU <25

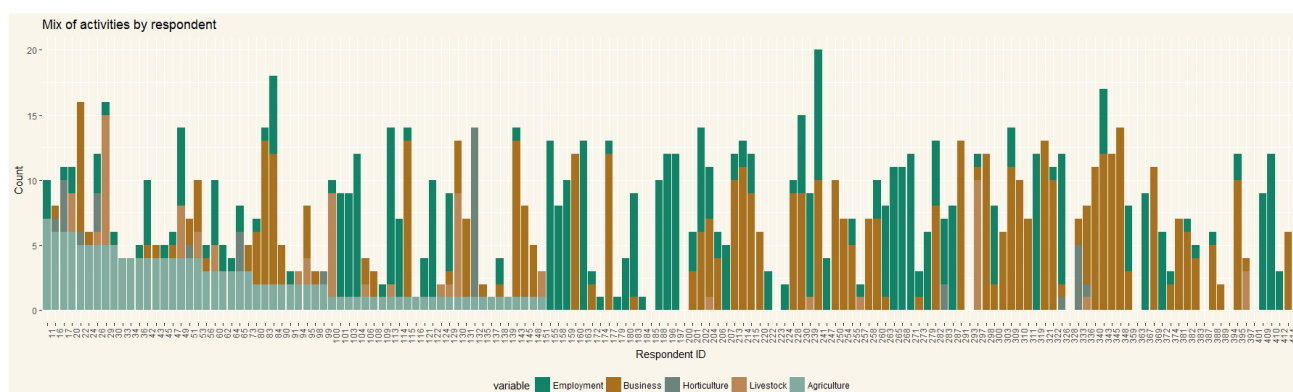


Figure 3: Activities FEDU  $\geq 25$

## Delving deeper: reasons for different findings in FEDU than YLD

It is an interesting finding that for both FEDU groups the pattern differs from the Youth Livelihood diaries respondents. It was actually expected that the difference would arise from age, such that older adults from FEDU would differ from the two younger groups. However, looking at the graphs, this is clearly not the case, because the FEDU < 25 displays the same pattern as FEDU ≥ 25.

We explored possible reasons for this difference. One assumption we tested is the area of research: Youth Livelihood diaries only took place in the three neighbouring districts of Iganga, Jinja and Mayuge, while FEDU took place in those districts as well as three other clusters of districts in Western, Central and far eastern part of Eastern Region. Cultural differences could have impacted the way respondents answered the questions. However, a thorough analysis revealed that the research area had no effect on the above findings. Hence, the additional research locations do not explain the difference between FEDU and Youth Livelihoods Diaries data.

Another explanation for the difference could be that questions were asked in a slightly different way in FEDU as compared to the previous Youth Livelihoods Diaries. For example, in FEDU, one question was asked which combined all income earning options, while in Youth Livelihood diaries, the questions were split into the five overall income earning activities. Presumably, when asking about income in one question, people are more likely to only report their main income and neglect to report all income. This explanation appears plausible when analyzing the data. We tentatively conclude that when a respondent is specifically asked separate questions “Have you been employed?”, “Have you been active in business?” “Have you been involved in crop agriculture?”, “Have you been involved in horticulture?”, “Have you been involved in livestock?” and for each they have to define “yes” or “no”, people report about more livelihoods activities than if people are asked one question “which of these livelihoods activities were you involved in?” followed by a list of options. Presumably, when people have already reported about one or two activities (e.g. some employment and some business), they may omit reporting about other livelihoods activities. The way the question is phrased may results in forgetting some activities or simply reporting about two main livelihoods activities may feel like “enough” and particularly subsistence farming activities may then be regarded as unimportant and too insignificant to report. This portrays the importance of how questions are phrased. This topic will be explored further in another Research Pearl.



Get into contact with us:  
[aswinderen@l-ift.com](mailto:aswinderen@l-ift.com)

Check our website:  
<http://www.l-ift.com>



Follow us

Follow us