

# Gender and Poverty: the Agriculture Sector Programme Support in Uganda

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## Summary

At the time of writing Uganda was the only country in Africa with an established Ministry of Gender. The country has an operational National Gender Policy to facilitate the process of mainstreaming gender concerns in the national development process. The policy outlines the strategies to be followed and the institutional framework. It is concluded that poverty eradication and gender equity can only be achieved through recognition of the fact that the two are complementary.

*Key words:* Gender, Uganda, policy, agriculture.

## Background

Uganda was in the past referred to as the "pearl of Africa" because of its favorable climate, rich vegetation and abundant agricultural production in most parts of the country.

During the first decade after independence in 1962, the economy grew and Uganda had its golden age. Most smallholder families could feed themselves and earn income mainly through sale of coffee, cotton, or tobacco among others.

In 1971 Idi Amin took over power and for the next 15 years, Uganda suffered civil war, political instability and economic decline. Some parts of the country suffered more than others, resulting in greater numbers of widows, orphans and displaced people in these areas. By 1986, when the National Resistance Movement (NRM) came into power the country was in ruins.

Uganda, with a population of about 16.7 million of which 51% are women, is now characterized by the World Bank as one of the poorest countries in the world (World Bank 1995), with per capita income of US \$220. Uganda has very low educational and health indicators, a continuing legacy of the destruction of social infrastructure during the years of political turmoil. In spite of the lost decade, Uganda is now back on its feet with a political climate favourable to development and poverty eradication high on the agenda. A lot of progress too has and continues to be realized in efforts towards gender equity in all aspects of development.

## Gender oriented policy development

Uganda has made steady progress on gender oriented policy development. It is one of the few countries that have an established Ministry of Gender within the government system.

The country has now an operational National Gender Policy whose overall goal is to facilitate the process of mainstreaming gender concerns in the national development process. The policy outlines the strategies to be followed and the institutional framework including the roles and responsibilities of all sectoral ministries, district authorities, NGOs and other stakeholders in development. Subsequently the rest of the ministries have reviewed their own policies taking into account gender responsiveness, reformulating policies where necessary and making commitments to take actions. One outcome of gender oriented policy development has been identification of the need for gender skills training for staff at different levels of the government hierarchy. One important source of gender focused research and training is the MA Programme of the

Women Studies Department at Makerere University started in 1991.

Another need identified in policy development work is for better statistics: sex disaggregated statistics to show the differences between women and men in particular sectors, highlighting areas of serious gender inequality. As a result of a long process of advocacy, skills development for production of disaggregated statistics, the Ministry of Gender in collaboration with the Central Statistics Office has produced a hand book on Facts and Figures of women and men in Uganda and it is being used among others as an important planning and monitoring data source. It is worth mentioning also that state support for gender equality is entrenched in Uganda's new Constitution (1995) where the Ministry of Gender summarised women's recommendations and presented them to the Constitutional Commission. Women recommended that the constitution should prohibit discrimination on the basis of gender and that their economic rights as independent persons, including the right to a fair inheritance at husband's death, be protected. These recommendations were incorporated in the final draft that was debated and adopted. The result now is a gender sensitive Constitution, probably the first of it's kind in Africa. Finally Uganda is one of the countries implementing the Affirmative action strategy for women particularly in politics and education. The strategy has equally been adopted in the implementation of most development programmes at all levels.

There is therefore a conducive political will and framework for mainstreaming gender into development.

## **Poverty eradication**

Given Uganda's political and socio-economic history poverty eradication is high on the agenda and has received special attention. The government has a clear Poverty Eradication Action Plan, a document that outlines priorities geared towards poverty eradication within each of the sectors and how these are interrelated. There are at the moment a number of key actors including NGOs and Donors supporting different initiatives within the Poverty Eradication Action Plan. Priority however is in the sectors of Education, Health, Infrastructure development and improving household incomes through Modernization of Agriculture. All these programmes are being implemented and monitored in the framework of decentralization that has been fully embraced and operationalised in Uganda.

In Uganda like in many other countries, Poverty is considered by many as lack of income to meet the requirements of daily living. It is a multifaceted concept depicted through disease, illiteracy, malnutrition, and generally poor conditions of living. Poverty is evident in many of the communities through a clear lack of or inadequacy of basic human needs affecting different segments of society much more than others. It relates to standards of health, nutrition education, and social participation. Individuals and communities living under poor conditions desire freedom from starvation, hunger and undernourishment, little or no participation in communal life, inadequate shelter and clothing, and inability to access social services both physically and economically. The poverty profiles within the country depict variations in degrees of vulnerability in the different districts due to variations in the following:

1. Resource endowment
2. Dominant crops and livestock
3. Educational and health standards
4. Land security situation (tenure and access)
5. General constraints facing the population
6. Insecurity

At the household level poverty is caused by among others:

7. Persistently low and inconsistent incomes
8. Inadequate access to productive resources and assets
9. Lack of access to education and health
10. Physical and social isolation
11. Limited economic basis
12. Lack of decision making power
13. HIV/AIDS
14. Natural calamities e.g. earthquakes, floods, drought and others

Based on very rough calculations,

15. 9.6 million Ugandans are classified as "poor"(50% of the population)
16. 8.8 million Ugandans are classified as "rural poor"(92% of the poor live in rural areas)
17. 4.7 million Ugandans live below the "poverty line"(27% of the rural population)

## **Gender and poverty issues in the agricultural sector in Uganda**

Agriculture is the backbone of Uganda's economy involving 2.5 million farm families, accounting for approximately half of the country's GDP and nearly all export revenues. Eighty nine percent of the population in Uganda live in the rural areas and derive a livelihood from farming. Three quarters of the agricultural labour force are women and children. Therefore sustained growth in agriculture involves addressing gender conditions, which are of central importance for all aspects of development and in particular poverty reduction.

There are marked and persistent gender inequalities in agriculture. Women and children (girls) provide almost all the labour for food crop production, much of which is retained for household consumption. Women also provide an estimated 60 percent of the labour for cash crops such as coffee, cotton and cereals. In spite of their high contribution, women hardly control income from agricultural production, including that of the surplus sales in food crops where their labour input is highest. Nor do the majority of them have a say in how income, which is controlled by men, is used.

Women have access to agricultural land through their husbands or male relatives. When widowed or divorced they lose this access and may have to return to their father's land where they may not be welcome by their brothers and sisters in law. There is an ongoing debate in parliament at the moment addressing women's inheritance rights under the Domestic Relations Bill. Women's experience with credit is limited given that they do not own land, as collateral required by banks. The few lending programmes that have tried to target women have shown that such factors as unfamiliarity with banks or distance from home to bank makes agricultural credit less attractive to women. (Musoke and Amajo, 1989). Other constraints for women in agriculture include inadequate extension contact, lack of appropriate technologies, low participation in marketing, limited access to information and training. However the Ministry of Agriculture has a sectoral Gender Policy that defines strategies for overcoming such constraints and is now being adhered to in designing and implementing programmes in the sector.

Women do not constitute a homogeneous group and it is necessary in development planning to consider the various categories. Like in many parts of the world women constitute the majority of the poorest of the poor in Uganda. But as Naila Kabeer (1998) puts it "not all the poor are women and not all women are poor". It is reported that 30% of the households in Uganda are headed by women and that these are generally poorer and more vulnerable to hunger and disease among others than most male headed households. Unfortunately such households are on the increase because of civil strife and HIV/AIDS. Analysis of poverty has been done at household level and it is reported that households headed by women have even more limited access to productive resources and information further impairing their participation and benefit from development activities. However it is important to mention that there are a few male headed households too that fall within this criteria. Such households need to be targeted specially under the programme.

## **The Agricultural Sector Programme Support (ASPS)**

The ASPS is a Ugandan agricultural development programme in its inception phase supported by Danida. The programme has been in operation for only the last 6 months mainly refining implementation strategies through planning and consultations with the stakeholders. The programme is giving support to the Agricultural Modernization process launched by the Gov. of Uganda. The main focus being poverty reduction and household food security through increasing production in the rural areas.

The initial funding of the programme is \$50 million to cover a period of 5 years. It is however envisaged that this support will be extended for a longer period of about 20 years after the pilot phase. Initially 6 districts will be targeted. The ASPS is targeting the agricultural sector in a broad and flexible way through six major components coordinated by the Ministry of Agriculture but implemented in a multi-sectoral way as

follows:

18. Agricultural Education implemented through the Ministry of Education
19. Household Agricultural Support Programme implemented through the Ministry of Local Government
20. Livestock systems Research Programme implemented by the National Agricultural Research Organisation (NARO) and Makerere University Kampala (MUK)
21. Farmer's Organisations implemented by the Uganda National Farmer's Association (UNFA)
22. Savings and Credit implemented through existing financial intermediaries
23. Support to Ministry of Agriculture directly through the same ministry.

### **The gender and poverty strategy of the ASPS**

The ASPS has a relatively well defined gender and poverty strategy that recommends ways in which these important concerns will be integrated into all the relevant outputs/activities of the programme at all levels. It seeks to operationalise the Ministry's Gender Policy that has for a long time been redundant due to unavailability of sufficient resources.

1. District level gender-disaggregated poverty profiles are being carried out to establish baselines for the programme and to assess specific poverty and gender related needs. This is being done in collaboration with the Makerere Institute for Social Research. The expected outcomes include,
  1. *Quantitative data on farmers' economic and human assets, income and expenditure patterns stratified by gender.*
  2. *Qualitative studies to better identify constraints to poverty reduction and agricultural output increases, taking into account gender related constraints.*
2. Personnel from the level of programme implementers and advisors to extension staff of the various components will be sensitized, trained and guided on;
  3. *Integrating poverty and gender concerns in planning, implementation and monitoring (particularly through gender analysis).*
  4. *How to adopt gender sensitive anti-poverty measures.*

This will be done using among others participatory techniques, such as PRA at the district and sub county level.

1. Immediate objectives will be operationalised to:
  5. *Directly link to poverty alleviation*
  6. *Be specific to which aspects of poverty that are targeted (income, specific assets, health, education etc.)*
  7. *Develop selection criteria for beneficiaries (that will include female headed households, poor male headed households, displaced people etc)*
  8. *Quantify outputs and objectives with specific relation to poverty and gender.*
1. Activities will be specifically defined so as to take into account  
*Poverty and gender related constraints (such as illiteracy, labour constraints, lack of capabilities, women's access and control over resources and women's participation)*

An example of some gender issues in the Livestock Systems Research Programme

### **Problems, needs and priorities of women and men by social group**

2. Women's specific responsibilities in given livestock systems, e.g. building fences or shelter, collecting fodder and water, care of the sick animals, milking, processing, record keeping etc.
3. The interaction between women's livestock activities and other duties in a seasonal perspective.
4. Women's access to and control over major resources and decision making in matters related to specific livestock.

## **Labour inputs by men and women**

5. Work load increases if any for men and women
6. Infrastructure needs for alleviating increasing demands on women's time e.g. household water supplies and fencing for livestock
7. Labour saving technologies and appropriate inputs

## **Uses of livestock and livestock products**

8. Variations by gender can be based on ceremonial uses, traction, investment security, food, income etc

## **Rights in and ownership of livestock**

9. Women or men disadvantaged in different types of stock
10. Distribution of breeding stock
11. Marketing and decision making over income from sales

## **Extension service**

12. Constraints to women's and men's equal participation and benefit from extension and training
13. Gender specific cultural and logistical constraints for male and female staff
14. Gender responsiveness of extension service-curriculum
15. Time and locations in response to men's and women's other gender roles

## **Research**

16. Women's needs and priorities related to research
17. Involvement in action oriented research of men and women
18. Research on animals owned and managed by women

## **Monitoring and evaluation**

19. Gender disaggregated data on participation of women and men in consultations, research, technology transfer, training etc
20. Utilization rates
21. Qualitative assessments of benefits for men and women of the key aspects of the component.

The programme is in the process of designing actions to address such issues.

## **Conclusion**

The promotion of a process of gender mainstreaming in development programmes is of paramount importance. Poverty eradication and gender equity can only be achieved through recognition of the fact that the two are complementary. Moreover there should be collective responsibility for men and women implementing programmes to ensure that these critical aspects are properly articulated and operationalized.

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