

SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC PROGRAMS AND GENDER INCLUSION¹

Across several social and economic dimensions Uganda scores relatively well in sub-Saharan Africa in terms of gender gaps. Yet, despite a progressive institutional framework, women continue facing higher poverty and vulnerability, lower education opportunities, and obstacles to acquiring productive assets. While existing social protection and economic (i.e. poverty-reducing) programs do not show gender exclusion given the need to close the remaining gaps in opportunities and outcomes consideration could be given to strengthening direct gender targeting and increasing programmatic support.

A. Introduction

1. The explicit objective of social policies is reduction of poverty and vulnerability for the entire population, with gender inclusion receiving residual attention. Social protection can, however, be instrumental in supporting women's basic food security as well as economic independence thus enabling them to pursue education and invest in small businesses. But if social protection benefits accrue to women and men in unequal proportions – after adjusting for differences in population distribution and other qualifying criteria – the system may be imposing an unintended burden on women or not taking into consideration potential constraints imposed by legislation and social norms regarding work, inheritance, or land ownership in addition to other barriers that generally hinder economic empowerment such as early marriages and gender-based violence.

2. A gender-sensitive social protection system can contribute to closing gender gaps though it may not be sufficient alone. When gender gaps in opportunities persist, a more systematic integration of gender issues into all stages of intervention—from design and implementation to monitoring and evaluation of social programs—may be needed to ensure that programs do not exacerbate existing inequalities (UNICEF, 2020). Other disparities between women and men in access to education, paid work, or ownership of productive assets may also preclude closing gender gaps. Social protection policies will then have to be combined with other measures such as land reform, gender budgeting, accountability, and sensitization of population, among others, and will complement efforts to reduce gender disparities (Ramírez López, 2021).²

3. We do not find systematic empirical evidence of gender exclusion in Uganda's social and economic programs. In this study, we look at the gender incidence of social protection and economic programs that are included in the Uganda National Households Survey 2019/20 (UNHS).

¹ This paper was prepared by Izabela Karpowicz and Franklin Sozi. It benefited from discussions with Lisa Dardis (UNWOMEN), Margaret Kakande (Budget Monitoring Unit, MOFPED), Margarita Gomez (WB gender expert), Beate Bull (Gender Equality and GEFD from Norad), James Ebitu and Angela Nakafeero (Directors, MGLSD) and Fatima Naqvi (WB social protection expert).

² For a discussion of gender gaps see Annex I.

Only in the case of one economic program focusing on boosting agricultural production females are slightly less likely to benefit directly from the support offered. This may be due to obstacles that are not imposed by program design itself but possibly by other factors, such as information asymmetries, physical, legal and social obstacles, and others. However, budget allocations for these programs have decreased over time while gender gaps persist. A combination of more explicit gender targeting of existing social protection programs and other complementary regulatory and social reforms may be needed to improve economic opportunities for women and narrow the gender gap in social outcomes if programs not captured in this study cannot play a greater role.

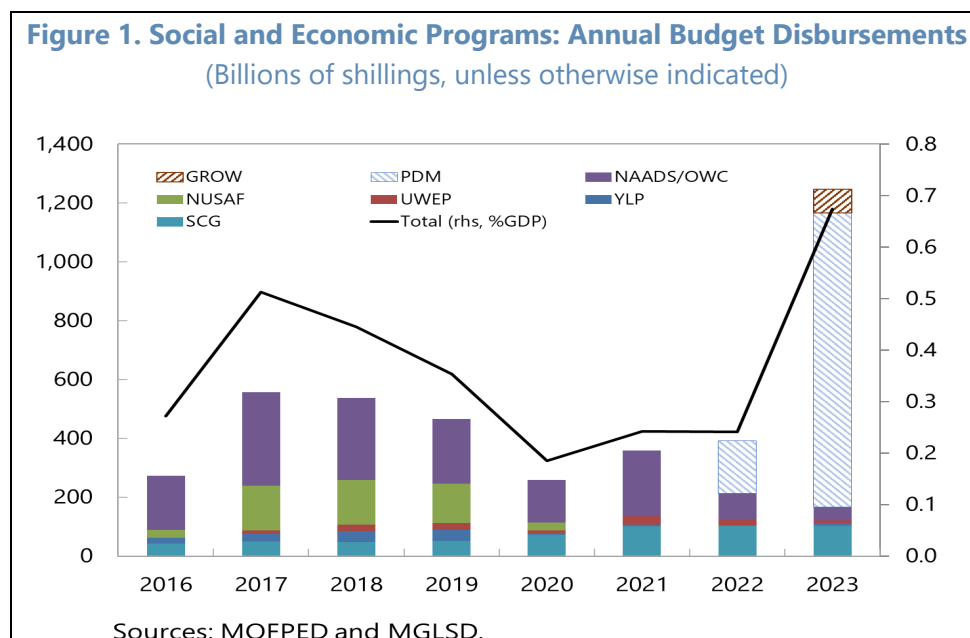
B. Social and Economic Programs: Overview

4. Uganda has a comprehensive institutional framework for social protection and gender inclusion¹ and has implemented several programs that aim at eradicating poverty and improving population wellbeing. While there are many small programs administered by various ministries, the most prominent ones are included in the UNHS and considered in this study. They target vulnerable groups, including elderly, youth, women, and population with disabilities. These are the Senior Citizen's Grant (SCG), Northern Uganda Social Action Fund (NUSAF), Uganda Women Entrepreneurship Program (UWEP), Youth Livelihood Program (YLP), and National Agriculture Advisory Services (NAADS)/Operation Wealth Creation (OWC). Four of these programs target some form of vulnerability, either age or gender related. The NAADS/OWC focuses on agricultural productivity and wealth creation (Box 1). The National Single Registry of Social Protection Programs launched in 2021 consolidates information on beneficiaries and is continuously updated. In addition to the programs above it includes scant information on Orphans and Vulnerable Children, Disability Grant, Girls Empowering Girls, National Gender Based Violence, and Food for Assets Program.

5. Uganda spends a relatively small share of its budget on the social programs included in the survey. The budget share has declined over time, but new initiatives and family support may make up for the gap (Figure 1). The total budget for the programs fell from half percent of GDP in 2017 to less than 0.1 percent in 2023. This reflects in large part the lack of continuation of the NUSAF program and an ideological shift away from social protection transfers towards lending for agro-industrialization. Indeed, a new economic program—the Parish Development Model (PDM)—focusing on agricultural productivity of subsistence households was introduced in 2022 and also includes a gender component (Box 2). The financial inclusion pillar of the program is expected to run for five years, and the overall disbursement is about 0.5 percent of GDP per year. A recently launched project - Generating Growth Opportunities and Productivity for Women Enterprises (GROW) - financed by the World Bank aims at supporting transition of women-led enterprises from micro to small and from small to medium and improve productivity. Grant funding for \$217 million will be disbursed over 5 years (0.3 percent of GDP) and benefit about 60,000 female enterprises, including 280,000 women entrepreneurs and their employees, among which also refugees. The project focuses on training for entrepreneurship, removing barriers to women's ownership of assets, and boosting access to finance and incomes through its cash support component (World Bank,

¹ For a discussion of the institutional framework for social protection and gender policies see Annex 2.

2022). Moreover, while government financed spending on social programs is comparatively low (Ebitu, 2020) social care and support are also provided by developing partners, traditional social networks, civil society organizations, and non-governmental organizations that contribute to filling part of the gap.



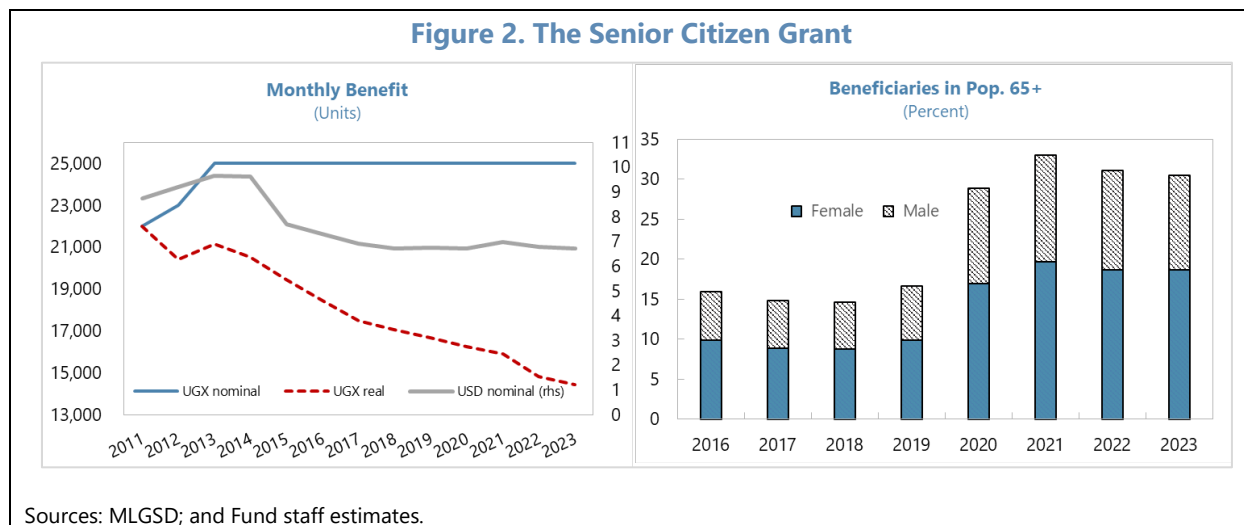
C. Programs Effectiveness and Gender Outcomes: a Review of Literature

The SCG is the only program in the UNHS featuring cash transfers, but its value to beneficiaries has decreased over time.¹ The monthly benefit was increased from UGX 23,000 at start in 2011 to UGX 24,000 in 2012 and to its current value of UGX 25,000 in 2013 (Figure 2). According to UBOS (2019/20), the latter represented about 20 percent of the monthly household consumption of the poorest population.² The inflation-adjusted value of the SCG has declined over the past decade by more than 40 percent and constituted less than 4 percent of the living wage in 2018 (Trading Economics).³ There is a proposal to increase the monthly transfer to at least UGX 45,000 and reduce the qualification age from 80 to 70 years (CSBAG, 2022).

¹ The Girls Empowering Girls program launched in 2019 also includes a cash transfer of UGX 60,000. This program is not captured in the UNHS.

² Throughout the paper CY are used to represent the FY in all figures. For instance, FY2015/16 is displayed as 2016.

³ Living Wage computations are based on the cost of living for a predefined food basket derived from the FAO database distinguishing 50 food groups with national food consumption patterns in per capita units, for housing and for transportation, with a margin for unexpected expenses. The data about prices of these items is collected through an online survey.

Figure 2. The Senior Citizen Grant

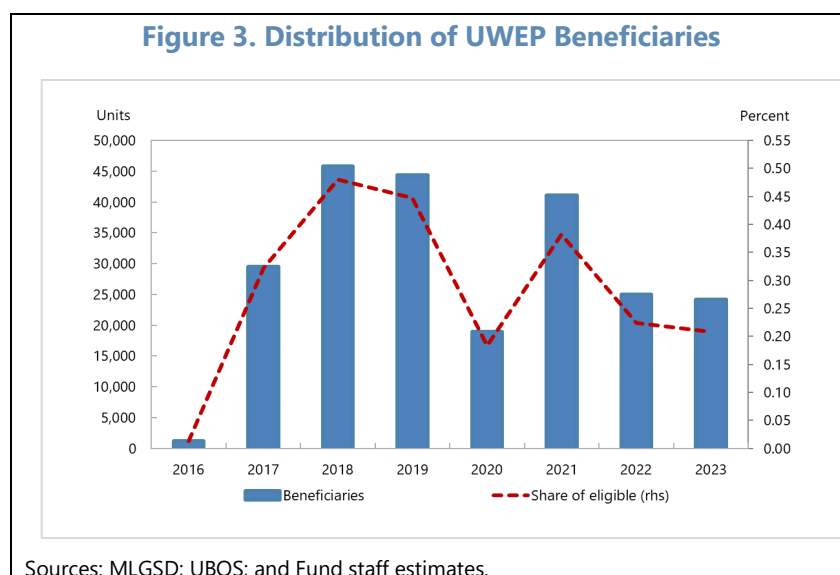
6. Evidence on SCG's targeting effectiveness is inconclusive. The SCG was associated with a strong increase in household expenditure (33 percent on average) and has reduced the poverty rate among recipients by 19 ppt) between 2011 and 2017 according to Gelders and Bailey-Athias (2019) and 15.7 percent according to MOFPED (2023). The transfer was largely spent on food, health, and education, and increased ownership of productive assets such as livestock, also marginally improving females' control of assets (Marttens et al., 2015). However, the SCG was found to display significant leakages toward with around 76 percent of total benefits going to non-poor households (IMF, forthcoming). Another study found no evidence of improved non-material well-being of women under the program, such as greater control over household decision making (Oxford Policy Management, 2015). The SCG has benefited a higher share of women, on average about 60:40 percent through the years (Figure 2) but information asymmetry may be hampering older women's participation (MLGSD, 2017).¹

7. The NUSAF targeted female-headed households in its various components. About 61 percent of NUSAF2 financed households were female headed (World Bank, 2015). Women represented about 58 percent of all beneficiaries of NUSAF3. A randomization control group study of the Youth Opportunities Program (a component of NUSAF3) targeting youth willing to start a skilled trade in the North showed positive impacts on business assets, working hours and earning. These impacts were found to be qualitatively stronger for women because they begin poorer and their work and earnings stagnate without the program but takes off with it (Blattman et al., 2014).

8. The results from the implementation of UWEP were mostly unsatisfactory. Between 2016 and 2023, the program benefited 0.28 percent of the targeted population on average with variations across years (Figure 3). The average annual benefit per person was between 400,000 and 800,000 shillings (\$100-\$200). The variation in access was partly due to the inability of the groups to meet the required standards by the MGLSD (CSBAG, 2022). The program suffered from low

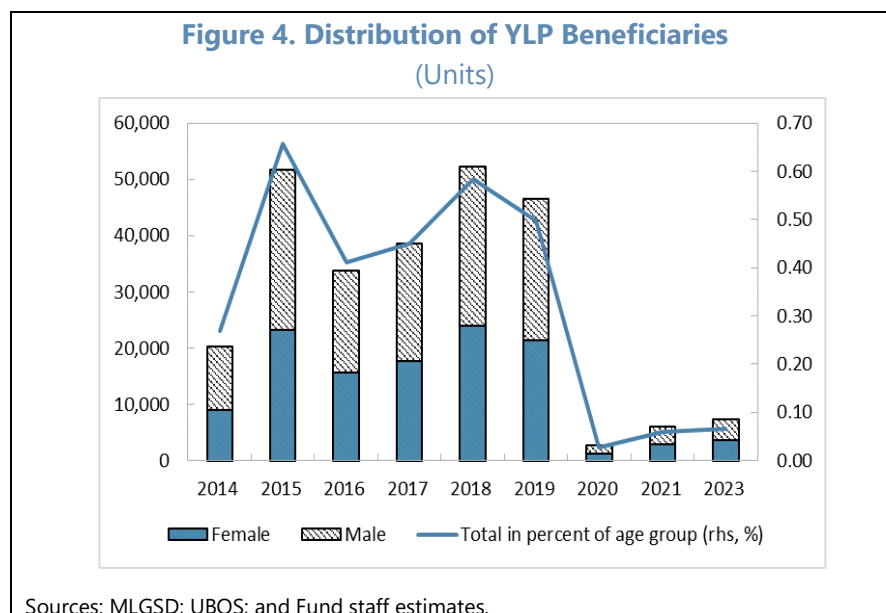
¹ Older women typically obtain information from their spouses or other persons in the community who may have heard about the program over the radio or from the Local Council Chairperson.

coverage, high administrative costs, and misalignment with the government's industrialization and food security agenda (Equal Opportunities Commission, 2023). Access to funds was made difficult also by weak monitoring systems and the lack of business registration documents (EPRC, 2017; Mbaziira and Nduta Njoroge). The program was challenged also by delayed funding of beneficiaries, limited focus on skills and capacity development, and inadequate coordination of partnering institutions (Office of the Auditor General, 2021).



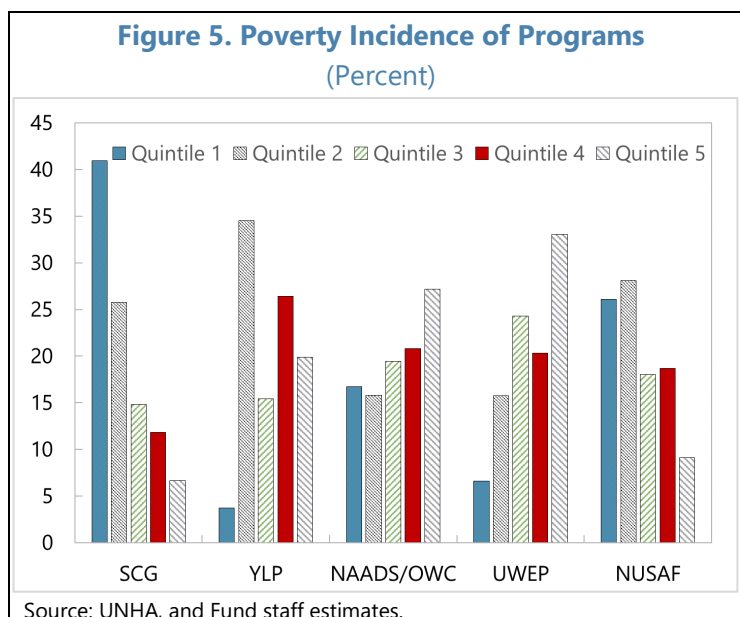
9. The YLP was shown to have had positive effects on skills development and livelihoods despite low coverage. Since inception in 2014, the program has benefited about 6.5 percent of the target population (245,870 youth), 46 percent of whom are female (MGLSD, 2021). The YLP has contributed to job creation by 4 percent, has led to better access to financial services by 4.5 percent and to an increase in youth with businesses paying taxes (24.7 to 29.1 percent) (MLGSD, 2021). A study by Bukenya et al. (2019) evidenced female participants moving from unskilled to skilled and unpaid to paid occupations, while also reporting enhanced access to credit, reduced tendencies for alcohol consumption and smoking.

10. The gender imbalance in NAADS/OWC program is pronounced. By 2015, over 80 percent of program beneficiaries were male. The program lacked mechanisms for dealing with gender barriers, such as limited access to land and advisory services by women, male dominance in decision making in the use of family land, long distances to collection centers, and inadequate access to information by women (USAID, 2017). In 2021, 77 percent of women were estimated to engage in agriculture as opposed to 67 percent for men making this a missed opportunity (Leon-Himmelstine et al., 2021). Some of the realized benefits included adoption of improved production practices and technologies, improvement in food and nutrition security, increased household



incomes and productivity. Key implementation challenges included late delivery, loss and theft of inputs, poor quality of planting materials and low germination rates (MOFPED, 2017).

11. Based on data from the UNHS, the programs' ability to reach the poorest was poor with SCG displaying the greatest progressivity. The SCG mainly accrued to the population in the lowest income quintile, with about 40 percent of benefits reaching the bottom 20 percent of the population and less than 7 percent accruing to the top 20 percent. The NUSAF program also displayed some progressivity with a higher share (54 percent) reaching the bottom 40 percent, followed by NAADS/OWC. The YLP and UWEP were most regressive, with only 4 and 7 percent respectively reaching the population in the poorest quintile (Figure 5).



D. Regression Results

12. We are interested in whether women are more likely to be excluded from social assistance programs regardless of program objectives and design. We run two types of cross-sectional probit regressions using data from the UNHS 2019/20 covering about 14,000 households (Box 3):

- i) a regression with a dependent variable that includes all the beneficiaries of at least one of the social programs and
- ii) a set of regressions with beneficiaries of each individual program separately including the same regressors.¹

The deterministic variable of interest is a male/female dummy (Female = 1). Control variables include individual's age, age², income (households' level), schooling (grade completed), as well as location (rural/urban) and regional dummies (Northern, Western, Central and Eastern).

¹ We do not run a regression on UWEP beneficiaries because they are all women by design.

Table 1. Uganda: Regression Results

	All Programs		SCG		NAADS/OWC		YLP		NU SAF	
Observations	28,077		3,610		28,077		10,911		28,077	
Determinants	Coeff	Marginal effects	Coeff	Marginal effects	Coeff	Marginal effects	Coeff	Marginal effects	Coeff	Marginal effects
Female	-0.079 ***	-0.007	-0.121	-0.002	-0.130 ***	-0.009	-0.012	0.000	-0.042	-0.001
Schooling										
Primary	-0.028	-0.002	-0.256 ***	-0.034	0.135 **	0.008	0.003	0.000	-0.182 ***	-0.003
Secondary low	0.151 **	0.015	-0.100	-0.014	0.254 ***	0.016	0.545 **	0.005	0.023	0.001
Secondary high+	0.145 *	0.015	-0.446 **	-0.054	0.270 ***	0.017	0.566 **	0.005	0.052	0.001
Urban	-0.238 ***	-0.200	-0.048	-0.006	-0.296 ***	-0.017	-0.086	-0.001	-0.154 *	-0.003
Region										
Eastern	-0.067	-0.005	0.327 **	0.035	-0.216 ***	-0.013	0.209	0.002	1.105 ***	0.005
Northern	0.223 ***	0.023	0.765 ***	0.104	-0.152 **	-0.010	0.465 **	0.005	1.625 ***	0.020
Western	0.097 *	0.009	0.279 **	0.029	0.022	0.002	0.009	0.000	1.128 ***	0.006
Income	0.000 *	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000 **	0.000
Age	0.017 ***	0.002	0.464 ***	0.061	0.065 ***	0.004	-0.190	-0.002	0.046 ***	0.001
Age2	0.000	0.000	-0.003 ***	0.000	-0.001 ***	0.000	0.005	0.000	0.000 ***	0.000
Constant	-2.468 ***		-21.456 ***	0.000	-3.466 ***		-1.418	0.000	-4.452 ***	

Source: UNHS 2019/20; and Fund staff estimates

13. The results from specification (i) in Table 1 suggest that women are marginally less likely to be beneficiaries of social programs captured in the survey. On average, female's probability of program participation is 0.7 percent lower than it is for males. The gender coefficient remains highly significant even when we exclude the beneficiaries of the UWEP program which includes only women (not shown). Controls have the expected signs: higher education level is associated with higher likelihood of being beneficiary of a program. On average, individuals who have completed lower and upper secondary have a 1.5 percent higher chance of inclusion into at least one of the programs compared to those with no schooling. Higher household's income is associated with lower probability of being in a program though the coefficient is small. Population in rural areas and in the Northern region has a higher probability of accessing social programs which is consistent with higher poverty level in those areas and may be a sign of system's progressivity.

14. The results from the 4 regressions on subsamples of beneficiaries of individual social programs suggest the likelihood for females to be included in the programs is lower only for NAADS/OWC. In the other three regressions the coefficients are not significant which means that the results from NAADS/OWC are likely driving the significance of the combined government programs regression in (i). This finding is in line with literature (USAID, 2017; BMAU, 2019) which attributes lower participation of women in this program to lack of transport means to distant sub-counties to collect inputs, lack of information about input delivery dates, among others, but also to strict eligibility requirements, such as land, which do not favor women who are less likely to own it or make decisions related to its use.

15. Where significant, controls usually bear the expected signs. Across various specifications rural location increases the likelihood of being included in a government program. This is true for

programs with an agricultural component or that target the poor who are more likely to reside in rural areas. The probability increases with age for all programs except for the YLP which targets youth and is large for the SCG beneficiaries for which old age is the only eligibility criterion. Having a schooling degree is generally associated with higher probability of benefiting from a program except for the case of the SCG where older generation is probably unschooled or reports no formal degree. Region coefficients mostly indicate higher marginal effects for the North (the poorest region), except for the NAADS/OWC which is more prevalent in the Central and Western regions.

16. Different specifications of independent variables do not alter the results materially.

Occupational dummies were attempted but were not significant possibly due to many missing responses and a further breakdown of regions into 15 administrative units did not alter results significantly. Results are robust also to the inclusion of a schooling variable defined as number of years spent in the education system.

E. Conclusions and Policy Recommendations

17. Uganda has a mature and comprehensive social protection and gender policy framework that has evolved over time.

Gender policy was mainstreamed across government units and levels, and into other policies and government initiatives, including, most recently into the Climate Policy (the Nationally Determined Contributions). Uganda was one of the first countries in Sub-Saharan Africa to adopt gender budgeting starting from the late 1990s and features an innovative Certificate on Gender and Equity Compliance to monitor compliance with gender-oriented goals (Kolovich, 2018).

18. The budgets of the once most prominent social programs have declined over time.

There are numerous small social programs scattered across various ministries, some of them funded by development partners, addressing a wide range of vulnerabilities. But the main programs have suffered cuts over the past decade. This reflects an ideological shift by the government away from transfer-based social protection towards industrialization and in favor of lending for development. The NAADS/OWC economic program, and more recently the introduction of the PDM focusing on increased productivity of subsistence households operating in agriculture, embody more clearly this strategic change.

19. Social and economic programs could play a greater role in closing remaining gender gaps alongside other policies.

Uganda has made important strides in narrowing gender gaps but inequalities across several dimensions persist, namely access to education and business enterprise growth as women enterprises remain locked into smallness never growing past the micro level, while male-owned firms are twice as likely to move from micro to small size (The World Bank, 2022). While government programs examined in this paper (other than UWEP whose access is restricted to women) do not appear to have discriminated against women overall, they have been at best gender neutral by design and outcomes. This is certainly the case of the largest (in size) program, the NAADS/OWC with a strong agricultural component from which women benefit indirectly as members of the recipient households but could benefit more if circumstances allowed a higher uptake of female-headed households beneficiaries. Increasing women's uptake in agricultural

programs, including the PDM, would be consistent their higher representation along the value chain and would support their economic potential as the country scales up agro-industrialization.

20. Higher female beneficiaries' social program uptake would need to rely on a multifaceted strategy. At program design level, assigning a higher quota to female-headed households and enterprises would be a welcome target that would have to be mainstreamed consistently along all the stages of the cycle, including implementation, monitoring, evaluation and validation. The latter should include participatory social accountability mechanisms which are currently lacking, such as community scorecards, social audits, and female-headed grievance platforms (FAO, 2028). Promoting gender awareness in communities about women's participation in programs should be an integral part of the strategy and could also help identify training needs across the different challenges to access. To realize the full potential, there is need to analyze and highlight men and women needs, and therefore design some government programs to specifically address these differing needs. Crucially, however, program design improvements would have to be accompanied by other gender-sensitive reforms to strengthen women's access to social and economic programs, some among which include cultural and social norms, unequal household work burden sharing and childcare, practices surrounding land and inheritance rights, and schooling.

21. Further insight into the government programs will be possible with the release of the first post-COVID-19 households survey expected in 2025. Government's programs' effectiveness in reaching women may have changed over time. Moreover, new programs, such as the PDM, may have proven more successful in closing gender gaps which will be possible to examine only with some distance.

Box 1. The Design of Social and Economic Programs Included in the 2019/20 UNHS

The SCG targets elderly poverty. Launched in 2010, the SCG is a minimum unconditional social income (cash) transfer to the elderly population. The SCG was a component of the SAGE program, initially rolled out in 15 districts, extended to 47 districts in 2017/18 and rolled out nationally in 2021. At the pilot stage in 2011, the eligibility age was 65 and over (60 and over in the Karamoja region) and remained such for the first 50 districts but was restricted to 80 and above in the other 99 districts during the national roll out. Beneficiaries younger than 80 and registered prior to July 2020 maintained their eligibility. Currently there are about 330,000 beneficiaries enrolled in the program, of which about 60 percent are female and 40 percent male.

The objective of NUSAF was to address poverty in northern Uganda where it is more extreme and prevalent. It consists of a series of five-year social protection and affirmative programs funded by the World Bank. The first phase (NUSAF1) that closed in 2009 dealt with the issues of insurgency vulnerability through mostly humanitarian type interventions as well as rehabilitation services. The second phase (NUSAF2) that closed in 2016, focused on recovery and rehabilitation, and included access to basic social economic services, institution building, and infrastructure. The third phase (NUSAF3) running to 2021 introduced temporary employment (public works), skills and mindset training, and engagement in productive income-generating activities as tools for boosting income and reducing vulnerability.

The UWEP aims at improving access to financial services for women and equipping them with skills to grow their businesses. It was implemented as a rolling fund, initially in 19 districts and the capital city in 2015/16 and rolled out to the entire country in 2016/17. The program comprises mobilization and sensitization of communities, training and capacity development, access to credit, technology and markets thus enhancing financial inclusion and promoting female entrepreneurship. The target beneficiaries are women of age 18-79 years. The program emphasizes integration of unemployed women and vulnerable ones, such as single young mothers, widows, and gender-based violence survivors (UNICEF, 2023).

The YLP seeks to address high unemployment and poverty among the youth. Launched in 2014, the program targets unemployed and poor youth aged 18-30 years across the country, including school dropouts, youth without formal education, single parents, youth with disabilities, those living with HIV/AIDS, and unemployed youth with education. The YLP is designed as a revolving fund and stipulates that 30 percent of the recipients should be female (MLGSD, 2013). Female youth already benefiting from YLP are not considered as beneficiaries for UWEP (MLGSD, 2019).

The objective of the NAADS is to increase farmer's access to agricultural information, knowledge, and technology. Launched in 2001, the NAADS was redesigned in 2014/15 to deliver a new but similar mandate called Operation Wealth Creation (OWC) focusing on procurement and distribution of agricultural inputs to farmers to support interventions across the value chain - from production and value addition to agri-business development and marketing. The target is to raise households' incomes to a minimum of UGX 20 million (US\$5,400) per household per year (about six times the per capita income) (MAAIF, 2021). Inputs are distributed twice a year during the two rainy seasons.

Box 2. The Parish Development Model

The PDM is a public service delivery strategy for interventions to boost income and employment at the level of the parish which is the lowest economic and planning subnational unit in rural areas. The program targets about 1/3 of subsistence households in the more than 10,000 parishes intending to include them in the formal economy under the NDP III pillar "sustainable industrialization for inclusive growth, employment and wealth creation". The households are expected to undergo a socioeconomic transformation with their productivity increased and agricultural value-added enhanced. There are about 3.5 million subsistence households in Uganda.

The PDM consists of central government transfers to subnational savings institutions that on-lend funds to households organized in enterprise groups. The PDM follows efforts to deepen fiscal decentralization that started in 1992. It was approved by Cabinet in March 2021 with the implementation slated to commence in FY2021/22. The strategy relies on agricultural production, storage, processing, and marketing; provision of infrastructure and economic services; financial and social inclusion; and statistical development. The Organizations for Savings and Credit Cooperative Societies (SACCOs) that distribute revolving credit to are expected to use a computerized payment systems and finance projects at low interest rate (5 percent), with repayment expected over 3 years, targeting in equal shares women, youth, and disabled population. Over time, the PDM also aims at consolidating delivery of social services such as primary health care, education, access to clean water, transport, and communication.

It is envisaged that the PDM will initially be funded for 5 years with the cumulative amount of funds disbursed amounting to 2.5 percent of GDP. In FY2021/22, USh180 billion were allocated for the pre-implementation plan which includes the rollout of the program and revolving credit distributed through about 300 SACCOs in 5 pilot districts. The FY2022/23 budget included Ush1 trillion (0.5 percent of GDP), Ush100 million per parish. In the first phase of implementation 10,585 SACCOs were established and fully capitalized, implementation guidelines developed, communities mobilized and sensitized, and households organized into enterprise groups. Out of the 10,594 established SACCOs, 10,585 (99 percent) have received the full dedicated revolving fund as of end-June 2023. About 877 billion shillings in loans were disbursed (83 percent of target) reaching 880,000 households (88 percent of targeted beneficiaries).

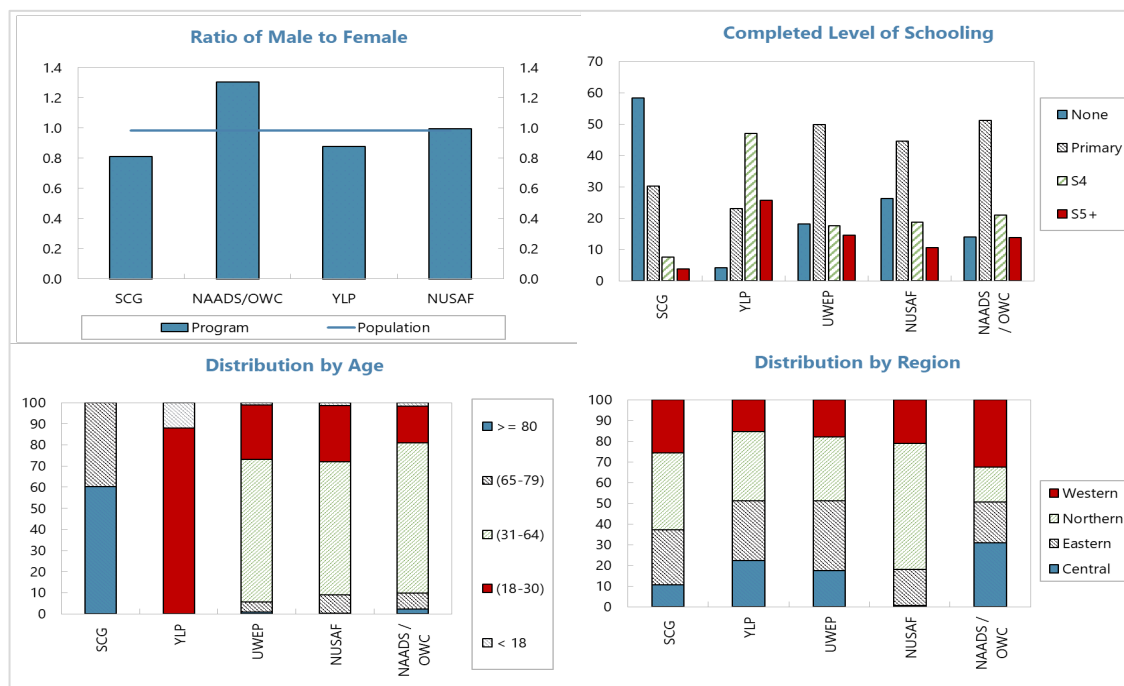
It is too early to assess the economic and social impact of this program as statistic are still being collected. The PDM could contribute to community mobilization, social cohesion, and financial inclusion through the extension of micro credit for MSMEs and support to households. It may also help formalize economic relations and contribute, over time, to financial literacy. Data collection could inform future efforts to strengthen social protection and help commercial banks build credit scores thus addressing informational asymmetries that are one of key barriers for financial deepening and gender inclusion.

Box 3. The Households Survey: Stylized Facts

The 2019/2020 UNHS is the seventh in the series of household surveys conducted by UBOS since 1999/2000. The survey collected socio-economic data required for the measurement of human development and for monitoring social goals, with emphasis on measurement of poverty and unemployment, for the SDGs and the Third National Development Plan (NDP III). In addition to the three main modules—socio-economic, labor force, and community—an informal sector (household enterprises) and small-scale establishments module was administered. Over the years, the UNHS modules have evolved and the 2019/2020 survey is the first one to include questions on the beneficiaries of government’s programs. The survey covers 129 districts and allows generation of separate estimates at the national level, for urban and rural areas, and for the 15 sub-regions. Close to 14,000 households provided answers to the questionnaires. The next survey is planned for the second half of 2024 together with the population census.

The distribution of beneficiaries of social programs was broadly in line with actual outcomes. Male beneficiaries are overrepresented in the NAADS/OWC program while the SCG has benefitted more women in the sample and reality. In the survey, NUSAF has favored women marginally although the actual female beneficiaries’ share over the course of the program was somewhat larger, at 58 percent. Only the YLP displays a higher share of women beneficiaries compared to official data. In terms of schooling, the majority beneficiaries of NAADS/OWC, UWEF and NUSAF completed primary school level and only in the YLP the largest share accounted for some secondary schooling. Not surprisingly, almost 60 percent of SCG beneficiaries are over 80 and have completed no schooling. In line with its design, NUSAF benefited mostly the population in the Northern region.

Box 3. Figure 1. Distribution of Program Beneficiaries
(Percent of total)



Sources: UBOS, UNHS 2019/20; and Fund staff estimates.

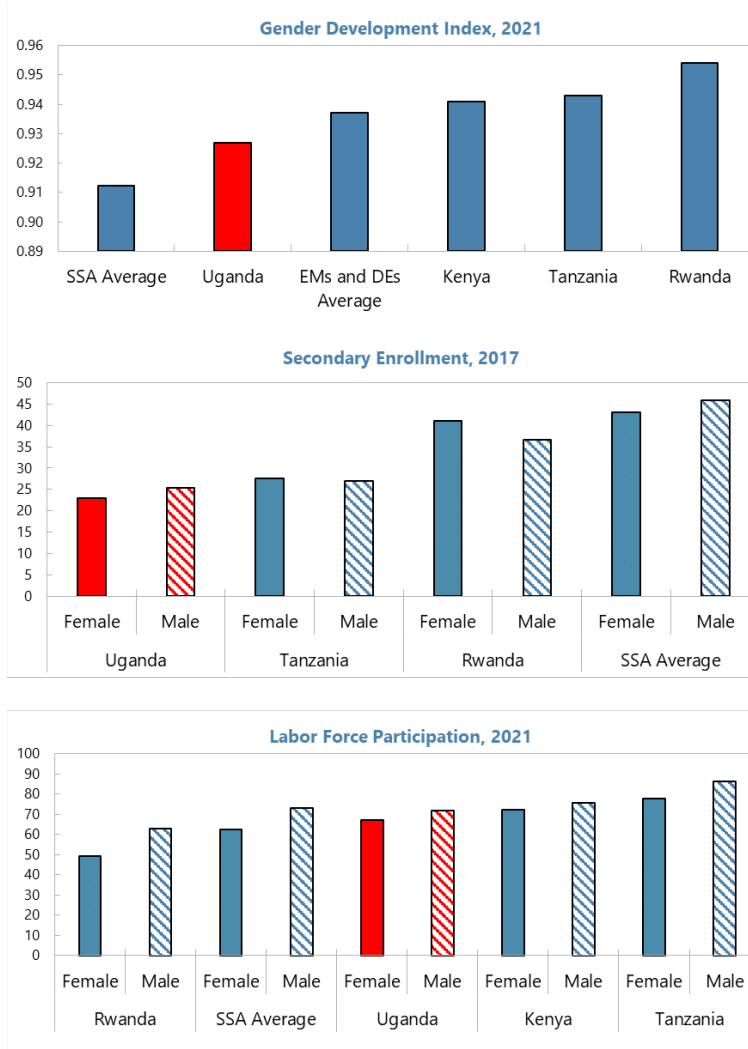
Annex I. Gender Gaps

1. Uganda scores relatively favorably in terms of the gender gap across a few social indicators. Female labor force participation rates have been historically higher than those in other countries in sub-Saharan Africa, which tends to have higher rates than other developing regions (Figure 1). Women comprise 40 percent of all business owners—making Uganda one of seven countries in the world to achieve gender parity in entrepreneurial activity. Women also fare relatively well in financial inclusion: in 2019/2020, 49 percent had access to some form of financial services, compared to 57 percent for men. Moreover, women held 46 percent of local government positions, 33 percent of parliamentary seats and 43 percent of cabinet positions (UNDP, 2022). Uganda ranked 78 in a group of 148 countries according to the Global Gender Gap Index¹ in 2023, though it lost 17 places from 2022, scoring highest in health and survival and lowest in educational attainment (WEF, 2023). Ownership of assets by women (for instance, agricultural land) improved to 27 percent in 2016/17 from 15 percent and joint ownership increased to 40 percent in 2016/17 from 23 percent in 2012/13 because of a law recognizing customary marriages and co-habiting of partners who have been living together for more than 5 years. There is also evidence of reduced gender-based violence (GBV) on account of awareness campaigns and enforcement of the GBV policy. (Ministry of Gender, Labour, and Social Development (MGLSD) and UBOS, 2019b).

2. However, the gender gap across a few indicators persists and has been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. The Uganda National Household Survey (UNHS) shows that female-headed households had a higher poverty rate (22 percent) than male households (19.5 percent) in 2019/20 and were more likely to slip into poverty if not poor. The incidence of multidimensional poverty was also higher in female-headed households (48.9 percent compared to 39.4 percent in male-headed households) (MOFPED, 2023). Poor outcomes in female leadership persist, only 5 out of the 146 district chairpersons are female, only one is female city mayor out of the ten city mayors and only 1 out of 31 municipalities has a female mayor (UNDP 2023). COVID-19-related lockdowns around the world have widened gender gaps in paid work and business ownership, because school closures resulted in a greater share of unpaid care work for women (World Bank, 2021 and C. de Paz Nieves et al., 2021). Although social protection was a key policy lever during the crises globally, less than one in five social protection measures incorporated gender considerations by supporting women in informal employment, mitigating violence risk, and confronting the unequal distribution of care work during COVID-19 (Gavrilovic, 2022). Only 4 percent of households received any type of social assistance by March/April 2021, with direct cash transfers having reached no more than 1 percent of households (World Bank, 2021). A study of the effect of the COVID-19 on women workers in Uganda's showed increased vulnerabilities experienced by women in the informal sector and recommended intentional targeting in the recovery (Wandera N. et al., 2021).

¹ The Global Gender Gap Index benchmarks the current state and evolution of gender parity across four dimensions: Economic Participation and Opportunity, Educational Attainment, Health and Survival, and Political Empowerment (Index = 0-1, with 1 indicating full parity).

Figure 1. Gender Gaps Indicators, 2017-21
(percent)



Sources: UNDP; ILO; WB; and Fund staff estimates.

Annex II. The Institutional Framework for Social Protection and Gender

1. Uganda has an encompassing legal and institutional framework for gender inclusion and social protection which have evolved over time. The first gender policy dates to 1997 and was revised in 2007 to address emerging development needs such as accelerating economic growth, reducing poverty, decentralizing fiscal policy, moving privatization forward, and making better use of public private partnerships (MLGSD, 2007). The 1997 policy increased awareness among policy makers and implementers on gender as a development concern, influenced government programs to address gender gaps and strengthened partnerships for advancement of gender equality. The 2007 policy became an integral part of national development policies linking all government initiatives and programs with the long-term goal of eliminating gender inequalities. It introduced a gender perspective into all levels of planning, resource allocation, and implementation of development programs. This policy gave a mandate to the MGLSD to oversee the mainstreaming of gender and equity in social protection interventions and assigned other line ministries the duty to integrate gender and equity in their operations. The priority areas for integration of gender policies were improved livelihoods, promotion and protection of rights, participation in decision-making and governance, recognition, and promotion of gender in macro-economic management.

2. The social development and inclusion objectives are outlined in three government documents that provide the basis for the design of social protection and economic programs. The Uganda Vision 2040 (NPA, 2013) underscores the importance of social protection for addressing risks and vulnerabilities. The NDP III (NPA, 2020) is founded on Uganda Vision 2040 and highlights social protection as one of the key strategies for transforming Uganda from a “prevalently agricultural society to a modern and prosperous country”. The National Social Protection Policy (2015), launched as part of an effort to expand the scope of social protection, describes social protection as a set of interventions whose objective is to reduce social and economic risks and vulnerabilities, and to alleviate extreme poverty and deprivation while improving quality of life of the citizens.

3. The National Social Protection Policy (Policy) establishes two pillars for intervention: social security and social care and support services. *Social security* is composed of direct income support and social insurance. *Direct income support* consists of non-contributory, predictable cash and in-kind transfers that provide relief from deprivation to the most vulnerable individuals and households. *Social insurance* consists of contributory arrangements to mitigate livelihood risks and shocks such as retirement, loss of employment, work-related disability, and ill health. The Policy defines social care and support as a range of services that provide care, support, protection, and empower vulnerable individuals who are unable to fully care for themselves.

- **Direct income support programs** currently and previously implemented include the Social Assistance Grant for Empowerment (SAGE) and NutriCash. The Northern Uganda Social Action Fund (NUSAF) and Urban Cash for Work are public works programs. There are also livelihood programs such as the Karamoja Livelihoods Improvement Program (2010-15) and Agricultural

Livelihoods Recovery Program (2010-15) and other social protection initiatives, such as the Orphans and Other Vulnerable Children Program and the Community-Based Rehabilitation Program for the Disabled. Development partners have also developed some initiatives: the Development Initiative for Northern Uganda (DINU) by the European Union aims at consolidating stability in Northern Uganda, eradicating poverty and under-nutrition; the Development Response to Displacement Impacts Project (DRDIP) by the World Bank provides direct income support to the poor and vulnerable within refugee hosting districts in Uganda and aims to improve access to basic social services (health, education, water and sanitation).

- **Social insurance.** While public sector workers enjoy a non-contributory public service pensions scheme, about 24 percent of those employed in the private sector are insured under the contributory private pension schemes (Uganda Bureau of Statistics (UBOS, 2021)). There is no formal social insurance for those employed in the informal sector except for a few cooperative savings schemes that support members in times of financial difficulties. Extending social security to informal sector workers remains a challenge (MGLSD, 2017).

4. As the 2015 National Social Protection Policy (MLGSD, 2015) highlighted gender mainstreaming as a prerequisite for social protection, the MGLSD developed the Gender and Equity Strategy for Social Protection in 2017. This strategy seeks to enhance access to equitable social protection services for men and women, boys and girls of all categories and indicates that social protection can make important contributions to gender equality outcomes, recognizing that gender inequality exacerbates vulnerability that social protection policies can mitigate. The strategy identifies the main obstacles for successful gender policy implementation as the limited capacity, inadequate gender disaggregated data, inadequate systems and structures for coordination, and inadequate financing. It proposes to eliminate discrimination in the selection criteria in social protection interventions by addressing the specific geographical, climatic, socioeconomic, and household contexts, creating awareness of various initiatives aimed at addressing gender and equity concerns, and harmonizing targeting criteria for direct income support programs across regions and sub-regions (MGLSD, 2017).

5. With developments on the international front, including adoption of Sustainable Development Goals in 2007 and changes in fiscal programming and budgeting, the new Gender Policy is currently under discussion in Cabinet. The revised policy considers emerging global issues such as the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic and emergency response, climate change and the role of clean water and energy in shifting the burden of unpaid work away from women, regional conflicts and refugee issues, digitalization and gender divide, and others. It prioritizes interventions to address social and cultural norms and practices that are contributing to the resistance to gains in gender parity trends leading to high levels of gender-based violence and low levels of income (MGLSD, forthcoming).

6. There are many government and non-governmental actors involved in gender initiatives in Uganda. The MLGSD oversees and coordinates gender issues across Ministries, Departments and Agencies. Other stakeholders include CSOs, international organizations, United Nations agencies, development agencies of diplomatic missions, and regional bodies. The Uganda

Women Network promotes women's access to economic opportunities (UWONET, 2022) while the Forum for Women in Democracy has led the way in nurturing transformative leadership for women's rights (FOWODE, 2022).

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